[Theme music fades in]

Devon: You're listening to Ouija Broads, this is Devon.

Liz: This is Liz.

Devon: Liz, we're back!

Liz: We're back.

Devon: It's good to be back. We have some patrons to thank, I believe.

Liz: We do. I would like to thank our new patrons: Andrew, Megan, and Stephanie, thank you for coming on board.

Devon: Thank you for joining us.

Liz: I appreciate your support. Current patrons, past patrons, and welcome to our new patrons. People want to get in on that, its patreon dot com slash Ouija Broads. But you know. You know the drill. You know what's up. Stephanie, Megan and Andrew know what's up.

Devon: This is going to be an interesting episode for us because it's our very first sponsored episode.

Liz: Yes. And we've turned down a lot of suggestions.

Devon: We've turned down so many.

Liz: Various, uh... my favorite, I don't remember if I told you about this one, but I think-- I don't know if I get our Instagram emails or what was happening or if they, like, find the email and I see it because it comes to Ouija Broads at Gmail?

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: But we repeatedly have gotten people who are, like, wanting us to sell yoga pants or, like, juice fast shakes and stuff. My favorite was this-- it was some like, you know, Beachbody, you have our expensive shakes and--

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: -- be underfed and you'll lose weight thing, and they contacted me during the Donner Party episodes, when they were running those.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: I don't think you've listened to our program...

Devon: Oh, dear, oh, dear. Well, clearly, I mean, that's a... That's a wonderfully ironic episode to contact us about. But also, if you've-- if you've spent five minutes with either of us, you know that we're very body positive, femme, fat-bodied people who... Oh, gosh, what a terrible fit.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: Oh, marvelously terrible fit, oh. Well, this is a good one. I'll be able to tell you about our sponsor in the middle of the show. But just so you all know, she is a broad after your own heart. She's a kick. I'm really excited to work with Jesse.

Liz: Awesome. All right. Well, lay it on me. I've done my part. Now I get to sit back and enjoy.

Devon: I hope that I can be your late night radio DJ with my sultry voice lulling you into a sense of security and safety with tonight's ghost story.

Liz: I love it.

Devon: This story came to me from Haunted Washington by Adam Woog, which is a book I recently picked up. And then the history, the historical parts came to me thanks to our newspapers.com subscription. So, patrons...

Liz: Hooray.

Devon: You're the ones that are keeping this factual, because I got to tell you, Haunted Washington by Adam Woog is... There are very few ghost story compilations that I would recommend to someone, and this is not one of them.

Liz: Oh... yeah.

Devon: He tried, God love him.

Liz: Yeah. Sometimes I think people are just looking for something different from those books than what I'm looking for.

Devon: Yeah

Liz: Lyd has her Big Little Book of Ghost Stories, and we read them with her and she... We've taught her, and she goes through it like the tiniest little broad that she is about, you know. "Well, couldn't they have looked up whether there was a plane crash?"

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: Or "Why doesn't this guy have a name?" or "What happened to the other people in this story?" And I'm like, that's my girl.

Devon: Dude, Lyd's going to hate this one.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: We get to the ghosts and you're just going, how is it possible that you you have so much information, yet so little data?

Liz: Ooooh, see, that's-- that's a phrase for the ages, first of all--

Devon: You like that one?

Liz: [crosstalk] It goes way beyond the ghost story thing, yeah. But I, I personally like when we try to punch up ghost stories that we're given like that one about the singing barber lady in Pike Place where she, like, fell through the floor or something?

Devon: [laughing] She fell through the floor? We think?

Liz: We think? Maybe?

Devon: It's just--

Liz: Were you about to attach it to anything? Or, like, Glover Mansion, which I was thinking about the other day because I was watching that Hot Club of Spokane "That was a very good beard" video.

Devon: Yeah

Liz: That always makes me smile?

Devon: Yeah!

Liz: And they filmed it in the Glover Mansion, I'm pretty sure. And so I was thinking about the ghost of that, where you're like, why-- none of this is based on anything.

Devon: None of it.

Liz: These-- I just-- ground your ghost stories, folks.

Devon: [crosstalk] You need something.

Liz: Like you need the little, the little central core of this. You need the hazelnut in the Ferrero Rocher, or you just have a big handful of chocolate and it's a mess.

Devon: I would so much rather have a big handful of chocolate. Fuck your hazelnut.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: However, I understand the metaphor as it pertains to ghost stories. And this one's got a hazelnut, but I mean... Well, no, this one's got is a Ferrero Rocher and it's got, like, a walnut in the middle of it.

Liz: OK, that's wild. I'm here for that.

Devon: You're just thrown off. Let's set the scene, though. We'll start at the beginning. And the beginning of this story is a man named Peter Gessner.

Liz: 'kay.

Devon: In turn of the century Seattle, Peter Gessner was a wealthy gambler and had his fingers in many sinister soups around town.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: What is that from? Is that Venture Brothers?

Liz: Yes, that's a safe bet. It's our Star Wars, you know, we can absolutely not reference it every time we talk to each other,

Devon: God, it's our touchstone. That's-- shout out to Lauren Hatcher for sending me the very first Venture Brothers DVD disc. My goodness.

Liz: Yeah. And I think I've talked about it on here before because it's informed so much of our humor and our references.

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: And I look back at it now, which-- it just got canceled.

Devon: Oh, did it?

Liz: They're not bringing it back for another season.

Devon: Oh, bummer.

Liz: And, I'm like... That's a bummer. But also, the last season I wasn't that excited for and I think it was just a matter of kind of outgrowing it because--

Devon: Okay.

Liz: The humor and the stories... I no longer have patience for, um, shows with no women.

Devon: Uh-huh!

Liz: [laughing] I'm over it. I'm just-- I walk in, there's no women. I turn around and walk right back out.

Devon: Uh huh!

Liz: I just-- I'm not here for that at this point. And so, although I really enjoy the female characters that they do put in Venture Brothers, if you can't really commit to having somebody in your core cast who's not literally Doctor Girlfriend?

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: And you know, and I love the character and I love the voice that they did and I love what's going on with her. But I just want things to pass the Bechdel test these days. And I... Yeah.

Devon: There's-- yeah. There's not a single female character in that that doesn't revolve around a male character.

Liz: Mm-hmm, and they never talk to each other at any point.

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: And it's like no. Over this.

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: Somebody the other day called it default settings. I'm just sick of default settings characters and--

Devon: [agreeing] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Liz: I'm not here for it anymore. I'm sorry. It's been said.

Devon: [cackles]

Liz: Please tell me your ghost story!

Devon: Peter Gessner was not only a gambler, he owned a poultry farm, among other things, as well as the Central Tavern in Seattle, which also goes by the Central Saloon and apparently has had another name or two. But it's all the same place. It's actually Seattle's oldest tavern.

Liz: Oh, it's still operating.

Devon: It's still operating. It opened in 1892.

Liz: Wow.

Devon: Which was three years or so after Seattle's Great Fire and it's still in operation. I looked at their history webpage and it sounds like it's been under the same management this time since the 1970s.

Liz: I was really hoping you were going to say since 1892.

Devon: It's the same guy.

Liz: Nothing spooky here!

Devon: He's a vampire. That's a different episode.

Liz: [laughing] It's a fun coincidence. Nothing to do with the ghost.

Devon: Nothing to do--

Liz: It's just an immortal who runs this bar. And we leave him because he's doing a great job.

Devon: He's doing fine. I don't-- I don't really want it to tip, you know? I'm worried that if you all hear about this vampire owned bar, you're going to go change the vibe.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: So, Peter was doing pretty good for himself, you know. He had this saloon, he had this poultry farm, he was doing great for himself as a gambler. So in 1902, he built a mansion in the Georgetown neighborhood for himself, his wife and possibly his three children. I've heard from different sources that he had three kids and another source, that he had one kid. So he built it for his family, his immediate family, however big that was.

Devon: Today, Georgetown is a really cool neighborhood. It's a-- it's a place where Jason and I had talked about, like, if I'm going to live in Seattle proper, I would love to live in Georgetown because it's got these old brick buildings, of course, because it was, 20 years ago, like an inexpensive artist enclave, like this safe haven for artists and low rent, now it's becoming gentrified as fuck, so I can no longer afford it.

Liz: That's the only setting that Seattle has anymore.

Devon: Oh my God. That's why we're out in the suburb that we're in. My goodness. Back then, it was not part of Seattle proper, and it was actually the red light district.

Liz: [intrigued sound]

Devon: Outside of the city limits, still close to the waterfront... Red light district. This is where Peter Gessner said, I'm going to build my five thousand square foot Victorian home.

Liz: Cool.

Devon: It's got nine bedrooms, it's got a turret. And it became known as the Georgetown Castle.

Liz: I am sold.

Devon: Oh!

Liz: I'm sold on this.

Devon: Oh!

Liz: Once you got past five thousand square feet, because that means nothing to me.

Devon: It's--

Liz: It's like you told me it was green big. I'm like, I don't--

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: I got nothing. But nine bedrooms? Okay. I understand that.

Devon: What color is it? It's a Wednesday, like a light Wednesday.

Liz: [laughing] You're on a roll with this.

Devon: Speaking of Venture Brothers quotes...

Devon: The Gessner House or Georgetown Castle, as we now know it, was originally built for one of two reasons. The first one, I already said - it's possible that it was a home for Peter's young bride, Lizzie, and their kids. It's also possible that he built it specifically to be a gambling den that was outside of Seattle's jurisdiction.

Liz: Okay.

Devon: He had a good reason for that. He was currently being sued by the city of Seattle for letting minors gambles. Minors, the young people, not the people with pickaxes.

Liz: [laughing] Yeah I'm like "no, stop, go back--"

Devon: Either is possible in Seattle in the 18s, early 1900s.

Liz: Some were both!

Devon: Where both he was letting kiddos gamble at Central Saloon and he wasn't about to stop letting people with money to burn gamble. So he, y'know--

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: As opposed to being--

Liz: He's like, "that's not my problem. I got one to three kids, not however many these are."

Devon: Yeah, that's fine. So he built this beautiful, large, green-sized house in Georgetown. You would think life was going pretty damn good for Peter Gessner. Narrator: Life was not going that great for Peter Gessner.

Liz: Is it something to do with the poultry farm? Because you mentioned it twice, and now I'm just waiting to find out.

Devon: Aren't you a smart little cookie? You!

Liz: I just think about chickens a lot.

Devon: Well, the thing is, the poultry farm had a manager and that manager must have been some kind of looker because Lizzie--

Liz: [gasps]

Devon: started a-wanderin' before the house was even completed. Peter and Lizzie separated and she stayed at their farm near Sunnydale, Washington. He moved into the soon to be completed and then completed Georgetown Castle, and she started hooking up with the manager of their chicken farm.

Liz: God, sorry. I have just the worst joke and-- keep talking, please. I don't want to think about this.

Devon: [laughing] You don't want to think--

Liz: It's-- it's the crappy kind of low that's \*not\* worthy of us for once.

Devon: So I can't make a-- I can't make a cock-a-doodle-doo joke? You're not going to allow that?

Liz: No that's pretty - that's pretty good.

Devon: All right. Thanks.

Liz: Yeah. There's just something about... "this low hanging fruit doesn't smell right. I'll let Devon keep talking."

Devon: [laughing] Terrible. Terrible! Peter Gessner's castle-- Victorian house, but we're going to call it a castle because that sounds sexier -- was completed in 1902. In 1903, one year after the house was completed, Peter Gessner was found dead in his bed with chemical burns on his lips and his mouth.

Liz: Oh, no. Okay.

Devon: He died by drinking carbolic acid.

Liz: Oh, my God, no.

Devon: Isn't that a horrible way to go?

Liz: [distressed sound]

Devon: The Seattle Times of the Day reported that Peter Gessner died of a, quote, broken heart. It-- no, it was carbolic fuckin acid, y'all. The shady thing is the death was ruled a suicide. The coroner decided not to hold an inquest. But Peter's family, other than Lizzie, said that it was quite suspicious and they suspected foul play.

Liz: Well, they would say that, yes.

Devon: Wouldn't they?

Liz: Someone probably always should, because that is the thing where you're like, look, just because somebody was depressed doesn't mean they can't get murdered.

Devon: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, if I die, I want you to make them hold an inquest because I've got treasures, I'm sure of it. Somewhere.

Liz: [laughing]

Devon: The upshot is that Lizzie inherited the mansion four months after her husband's death. She married the poultry farm manager and the two moved into the house. They didn't live there very long. It was like a decade before she rented it out...

Liz: [muttering] Neither did her first husband.

Devon: [laughing] Too soon.

Liz: Too soon?

Devon: He's hardly cold in the ground, my friend.

Liz: It's only been 118 years, show some respect.

Devon: Wow, that was good math.

Liz: Well, 2020 is an easier year to subtract from than most.

Devon: Oh, there you go. There you go.

Devon: Over the years, the house has changed... So over the last hundred and eighteen years, as you said, the house has changed hands so many frickin times, dude. And it's had so many different incarnations. It has been a social club, a baseball clubhouse, a brothel, a gambling den, a brothel again, a speakeasy, a boarding house--

Liz: Speakeasy, which was kind of a brothel, boarding house which was, you know, a brothel when it needed to be...

Devon: A brothel lite, yeah! And then it was in a state of disrepair until the early 2000s when a mother and son duo bought the place and lovingly and painstakingly restored it to be their residence.

Liz: When did it get neglected? Like they picked up in 2000s, but when did that start?

Devon: The nineteen eighties...

Liz: Okay.

Devon: ...is when the neglect really started and apparently I only read this in one article, so I don't know how truthful it is? But apparently houseless persons broke into the house and were living in it. There were people squatting in it for a while. They tore up some of the original hardwood to burn for fires. Then--

Liz: I'm OK with that, actually.

Devon: I mean, if it's going unused, right? But when the mother and son -- Lynda and... Micah is his name- when they bought the house, they had to redo everything.

Liz: Yeah.

Devon: Just about, you know. The roof was terrible, parts of the floor were collapsing, but they made it really beautiful. And we will come back to Lynda and Micah here later. But in that huge amount of lifetime and with at least one death on the property that we know of, there are probably going to be some ghosts associated with this place.

Liz: [crosstalk] Well, yeah. Cuz this is like, one of the oldest houses of Seattle.

Devon: Has to be, right?

Liz: I mean--

Devon: Yeah, I'm trying to figure out... We just did the Mother Damnable episode and she moved into the oldest log... The oldest...

Liz: [laughing] The oldest finished timber house.

Devon: Thank you. Thank you. God, how do you remember that and not me?

Liz: Because I had to edit the part over and over when I said, "Wait, so if they weren't made of finished timber before, what were they made of?" And you think about it for a generous pause, then you say "walls!"

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: Confidently!

Devon: That's right!

Liz: It stuck with me.

Devon: That's right! Why didn't I say Danish timber, that would have been funny.

Liz: That would have been pretty good.

Devon: That would have been funny. Ah, hindsight, Devon. Hindsight. Before we get into the ghosts, I think that this is probably a pretty natural pause point so we can talk about our first new sponsor.

Liz: Cool! Do that. I have no idea what this is going to be like.

Devon: This is like I said, this is a broad who one hundred percent gets us. This episode is sponsored by Jesse Ingles and she's a Pacific Northwest land broker.

Liz: OK,

Devon: You want to go check her out on Jesse\_Sells\_Land so it's Jesse Underscore sells underscore land on Instagram and check out--

Liz: how do you spell Jesse?

Devon: Oh, good point, J-E-S-S-E.

Liz: OK, not what I would have come up with.

Devon: There's no I in it. J-E-S-S-E. What is different about Jesse is, y'all she sells weird houses and properties, so her stuff is off the grid. It's remote and it's also possibly haunted.

Liz: [sounding delighted] It comes with a ghost?

Devon: Oh, my goodness. She's one of the few realtors in Washington State who doesn't shy away from houses that have the reputation of being haunted. Like if you go to New Orleans, it-- it's necessary on the, on the listings, they have to put haunted or not haunted. It's just part and parcel of what you're buying, to know the paranormal history of the place. And here, you know, it's a little more buttoned up in the Pacific Northwest when you're talking about, is this property haunted or not? And Jesse just goes, like, balls in.

Liz: [giggling]

Devon: And will sell the haunted properties.

Liz: Just so folks know if they're going to check out the Instagram, Jesse is a hunter. So there are pictures of hunting in there and I just didn't want to stress anybody-- stress anybody out.

Devon: Yes. Thank you.

Liz: With a deer picture they weren't ready for. But--

Devon: [crosstalk] Thank you for pointing that out.

Liz: [crosstalk] There are also some very beautiful properties. I want the cherry orchard and I want the horse farm.

Devon: Oh, my goodness. So if you're looking at her stuff right now, she's-- her two recent ones that are my most favorite, uh, she just did a post-- she just did a list of affordable off-the-grid Washington homes? And one of them is the-- apparently, it's the original site of the infamous Kelly Hill Gold marijuana operation.

Liz: Oh, wow.

Devon: I didn't really know what that was. I had to look it up. So apparently there was this ranch in Kelly Hills and it the the rancher was like, in debt? Or he wasn't able to pay the taxes on it? So he kind of did the Breaking Bad thing where it's like, I guess I'll grow pot so that I can pay my bills so that my sons can inherit my ranch. And he got good enough at it that he got caught.

Liz: Oh!

Devon: Sold too much weed and--

Liz: I see.

Devon: Went-- went to prison for five years. This was in the nineties. The one that I really want right now is... It's a 442 acre ranch near the Canadian border. It was built in 1891.

Liz: Neat!

Devon: And what I-- [starts laughing] It's just so random! The poultry barn... the poultry barn has been designed for emus.

Liz: That's an extremely Washington sentence.

Devon: Right? Like, what's so specific about-- would it-- [becomes serious again] would it work for a smaller ostrich? I don't know.

Liz: [laughing] Where... where do you stand on cassowaries?

Devon: Fuck those birds. Those are the assholes of the bird word. [sic] Cassowaries can eat me. They are monsters.

Liz: Every bird is the asshole of the bird word. That is hard to say! Bird world.

Devon: I know. It gets you. You kind of liked my cockatiel Boo Radley. You kind of liked him.

Liz: [laughing] Sorry, I'm loving... "Other, comma, Idaho."

Devon: [laughing] Yes.

Liz: I think what it means is "in no township," but it makes it seem like there's a city called Other.

Devon: I want there to be. I truly do. Oh my goodness.

Liz: Okay. Yeah. I did like your cockatiel and obviously I like my chickens. But they are, you know, they are what they are, which is tiny dinosaurs. Their culture is different, isn't it.

Devon: Very different. Again, we want to thank Jesse Ingles so much for sponsoring this episode. Again, you can find her at Jesse Sells Land. J-E-S-S-E, underscore, sells, underscore land on Instagram. And I often repost her stuff to our Instagram stories, just--

Liz: [crosstalk] Oh, you do? Cool.

Devon: When they're, they're so bizarrely fabulous that I think you need to see them without actually going over to her page. Just see them immediately.

Liz: Devon's like "I can't take the chance that you're not going to see this weirdness."

Devon: You have to see the emu ranch. How could you not? So thank you very much, Jesse, for sponsoring this episode.

Liz: Yeah, thank you. I'm going to just make myself stop looking at properties now.

Devon: Good luck.

Liz: [effortfully] I don't need....

Devon: But don't you?

Liz: It's the menu effect, you know? You see something, you're like, "which one's for me? Sometimes I go to the website for private islands.

Devon: I love the website for private-- but doesn't this-- I don't know, dude, looking at this made me want to buy property with you.

Liz: Yes!

Devon: It's just, why not? We know a guy now! So I bet she could get us a deal. Let's buy acreage in the middle of fucking nowhere, Washington and then we just have it.

Liz: Yeah. I will say, like, in 2020... The whole "hey, I live close to downtown" thing really just doesn't hit the same.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: Who cares? Give me 200 acres near nothing.

Devon: All I need is a Wi-Fi connection and I can do my job. So here I come to middle of nowhere.

Liz: [laughs]

Devon: Let's get on to the Gessner mansion ghosts, my friend.

Liz: I like to talk about ghosts.

Devon: I love to talk about ghosts. The very first ghost we're going to talk about is the one we have...

Liz: Multiple ghosts?!

Devon: Multiple ghosts! There's more than one. I'm not bringing you a one ghost wonder, my love. I'm bringing you a buffet.

Liz: Thank you. Cuz a 19th century Victorian-style mansion with a turret, if it stops at one ghost? What's wrong? What went wrong?

Devon: [agreeing] Oh!

Liz: You've made a misstep. This thing should have been pre-installed with ghosts.

Devon: Came with like three or four, shouldn't it have? Just from the get go.

Liz: Yeah!

Devon: Yeah, this ghost is the most, like I said, high on info, low on data ghost I have ever encountered. And it is frustrating.

Liz: That says something. Some of the stuff we've had here...

Devon: We've had some of the most... Most, like, nebulous -- pardon the word nebulous when we're talking about ghosts, but-- the most... oh, my goodness. I'm just going to jump right in and I'm going to tell you, don't get attached to the first story I tell you about this ghost, because we've got four other iterations of the same haunting.

Liz: Wow! Okay. Okay.

Devon: One of the supposed ghosts is that of a young woman who is trapped in this world mourning the death of her infant.

Liz: Mm-hmm.

Devon: According to an article in the Daily News, the ghost is Peter Gessner's daughter in law. So Peter and Lizzie had a son together who's also named Peter - confusing-

Liz: [irritably] They did that.

Devon: And Peter married a woman named Sarah.

Liz: Yes, one of the four names that white people had at the time.

Devon: That's all you can do. I mean, thank God we're going to get some other male names in here, because Peter is taken twice. Peter the Younger and Sarah had a baby, which, according to this Daily News article, Peter murdered and then buried under the front steps. He then locked Sarah up in the turret where she went mad with grief and died, and the ghost that is seen is supposedly that of Sarah, who haunts the house to this day, mourning the death of her baby.

Liz: [skeptically] Huh.

Devon: The Haunted Washington book that first brought me this story says, it's totally possible that that was Sarah. Yeah, but it also could be the ghost of a sex worker named Mary Christiansen, who worked in one of the brothels, and that the baby wasn't Peter the son's baby, it was a baby of one of her clients, and the illegitimate baby was killed by the father and then buried under the front steps. And he somehow was able to lock her in the tower and she went mad and died.

Liz: I like that it's just taken as read the turret and the tower lock. Like--

Devon: [emphatically] Mm-hmm!

Liz: They're like, "obviously you're not just-- if you've got one of those, you're not just going to put somebody in the pantry and shove a chair in front of the door. What are we even doing here? We're wasting time." If you don't lock the woman up in the tower, you are not even putting your heart into this game.

Devon: This is a Cinderella situation where it's up a million rickety steps. There's a skeleton key and Lady Tremaine--

Liz: Yup.

Devon: And there are no mice to help Sarah, possibly Mary, get out.

Liz: Yeah.

Devon: I wanted to corroborate this, so I kept researching and I found Atlas Obscura, which does not help the situation. In fact, Atlas Obscura further complicates this by separating the incident into two separate ghosts and makes it an entirely different woman.

Liz: Because-- Here's the part I'm not tracking is, what is, the, the, the step baby skeleton part, like? Why is that in there? Did somebody find something? Did they have a dream of something under the steps?

Devon: [in a 'you got me there' tone] Eh? Walls?

Devon: Like, I have no idea, you cannot find any, "oh, well, then they actually exhumed the steps and found the skeleton of a young baby." No, it is just taken as gospel in all of these sources that a baby died on the property, was buried under the steps and that its mother still haunts the place.

Liz: Okay...

Devon: Atlas Obscura says the baby didn't die because the father killed it, the baby, accidentally fell out of a second story window.

Liz: Mm-hmm.

Devon: And you can still hear its cries on the property today. And that the woman who haunts may or may not be the baby's mom, but we definitely know she either appears as a specter with flowing red hair and a white nightgown or with black hair and kohl-rimmed eyes.

Liz: Maybe it's two different ghosts.

Devon: No, this is apparently... It's one or the other of those things.

Liz: [laughs]

Devon: But we know it's the same ghost. The part that really threw me for a loop in this entire ghost charade is that Atlas Obscura says it's also possible that the ghost of the woman was indeed Mary or another sex worker, and she was strangled by a magician.

Liz: [bursts into uncontrollable laughter] WHAT?!

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: [muffled] I just blew out my microphone.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: What?

Devon: It's... the quote...

Liz: That thing hit me like a speeding garbage truck [both laughing. Magician at the end of that sentence! I could have given you a thousand guesses as to where that sentence was going, and I would not have gotten it.

Devon: [laughing, high-pitched] I know! The quote...

Liz: Give it to me one more time. Give me-- give me that mo' 'gain.

Devon: The quote is actually, do you want the whole thing again for real, or do you just want to hear it?

Liz: Yeah, I do, actually.

Devon: Atlas Obscura says the ghost is indeed of a sex worker, either Mary or someone else, but than she was inexplicably strangled by a magician.

Liz: [starts laughing again] So-- there's so many-- there's so much to unpack there that we're just going to throw away the whole suitcase.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: You know, like, what do you mean "of course, it's a sex worker." Like, she had a nightgown on? What are you talking about?

Devon: I just-- and that's where fucking Atlas Obscura ends it. What do you--

Liz: That's it? There's not more information?

Devon: Where did the magician come from?!

Liz: [high-pitched, losing it] "Did you just say magician?!"

Devon: Is this the Futurama Lost city of Atlanta episode-- "And a magician just climbs aboard!"

Liz: I mean, I have a theory as to what happened to the Atlas Obscura writer.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: Which is that they were inexplicably strangled by a magician.

Devon: By a magician! Oh, my God...

Liz: It's because you expect that the end of that sentence is going to give you some insight as to why.

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: Like, "by a jealous lover," "by a rival employee," by a something. It's like "No, a magician."

Devon: "A magician."

Liz: "Goodbye forever."

Devon: And you just you picture the white gloves and the cape.

Liz: Yeah, oh, yeah!

Devon: [bursts into laughter again, struggling to talk] And so... so... the Gessner House is most famous--

Liz: [still laughing] I'm not over this, hang on...

Devon: I can try to talk. My face hurts.

Liz: At least it's not in Everett, because then it would be illegal for him to do hypnosis.

Devon: It would be! It would be, as long as it was in a, a public window--

Liz: Mm-hmm.

Devon: Remember, it had to be--

Liz: Yeah, no secondary location, not in a window for display.

Devon: Not for display purposes, no.

Liz: No aesthetic hypnotism.

Devon: This can be in private only. [deep breath] Regardless of whether this was Mary, was Sarah... She was locked in a tower or she was strangled by a magician, she is the Gessner--

Liz: [starts laughing again]

Devon: [catches laughter from Liz, tries to keep going with decreasing success as sentence goes on] The Gessner House's biggest or most famous ghost is apparently this woman--

Liz: [through laughter] Stop it, we're professionals. We've been doing this for 150 episodes.

Devon: [hysterically] I know! I know! This is like me with the beaver episode. I can't get it together, Liz.

Liz: I can't get it together. Okay. [deep breaths from both as they calm down]

Devon: But, no matter who it is, I guess in the 60s and 70s or whatever, when this was a boarding house, that was the most frequently seen ghost, was a sad young woman. There was a woman, Catherine Johnson. She was a neighbor who lived near the house in the 80s or 90s. I guess. She visited the house when it was not just derelict, you know, and apparently there was a painting of Sarah or Mary or whomever it was. Again, I don't know how she knows that this is Sarah or Mary, but she says it was a painting of Sarah and it was hanging on the wall and it flew across the room. And as she was sitting there in the living room after this had happened, apparently, the door opened and a dark-haired young woman in an old-fashioned dress poked her head into the room, looked around and then left.

Liz: Ooh.

Devon: [long pause, sigh] I just can't get over the magician.

Liz: Oh, don't start me again.

Devon: Don't-- no. People have also said they believe Peter Gessner himself to haunt the second floor, particularly the bedroom where he was found dead. Then there are unnamed ghosts. After it was a boarding house in the 70s, the Gessner house was bought by Ray McWade and Peter Peterson, who lived there while kind of trying to renovate it? There was only one or two rooms that were habitable and they were also running the Castle Inn catering company from it.

Liz: Oh, my God, where's this movie? They're-- they're not in love when it starts, I'm going to say.

Devon: Of course not.

Liz: I'm going to say that they're just friends.

Devon: Okay.

Liz: But as they build their business and their home, something magical grows.

Devon: [snorts] The magician?

Liz: The magician! I didn't do that on purpose.

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: No, I'm just saying they're-- they're falling in love and they're solving problems together and they're decorating. They do the cute, you know, I don't know, dab paint on your nose thing--

Devon: They get in a flour fight with with cooking flour! Not the-- the things that grow.

Liz: OK, I'm sorry, just you calling flowers [imitates lilting intonation] "the things that grow."

Devon: I'm making a hand gesture to-- plants! That's what I meant to say.

Liz: [laughing] "The things that grow!"

Devon: Those ones.

Liz: I'm sorry, just-- sometimes you inhabit these characters where you're like this, I don't know, thousand year old elf who's just lived in the same tree their whole life.

Devon: Yes

Liz: "The things that grow!"

Devon: "The things that grow!" That's very much me. I tuck up like a little squirrel at night.

Liz: Nice.

Devon: When Peter and Ray were in the house-- they've given interviews about this and so there's a lot of information on what they experienced and they found a small room that had been walled off and said that after they uncovered it, this room remained perpetually frigid. It was just one giant cold spot for no reason.

Liz: I mean, I got an old house, too, let me tell ya-- there can be a 20 degree temperature differential between rooms.

Devon: Yeah. I'm like, maybe that's why they walled it off, because it was a heat sink, y'all.

Liz: Yeah. It's like every time I go to the Corbin Mansion and I remember the thing about how Anna sits in that one windowsill. [spooky voice] And it's always cold... [normal voice] Cuz it's single paned glass.

Devon: Because it's single-- because it's not even double-hung, y'all.

Liz: Yeah. And we're in a building that they don't heat that warmly.

Devon: No, they don't.

Liz: And it's usually winter when I'm here for some reason. But, y'know.

Devon: It's because you don't want to be proven wrong.

Liz: [crosstalk] That's it.

Devon: You're a nonbeliever and you don't want to be proven wrong. So you surround yourself with the scientific explanations as to why things are the way they are. So you've got plausible deniability when you go over there and it's cold as fuck, and it's actually Mrs. Corbin, you're just like, [serene/smug voice] "Mmm, no, science is on my side."

Liz: [in a 'not arguing' voice] And I've shut myself off to joy because they're inherently incompatible, you're right.

Devon: Yeah. There you go.

Liz: Mm-hmm.

Devon: Ray has reported that he often heard what sounded like vicious brawls occurring upstairs.

Liz: Ooh.

Devon: And they had a guest one evening who was with them in the kitchen and apparently wondered around [sic], "Where do you keep the bread?" And once they said that, a loaf of bread suddenly rolled out of the pantry.

Liz: Oh, that's helpful.

Devon: Quite helpful! I would be: "Where's the thousand dollars?" And then it just unfolds itself from a drawer. Ray and Peter both report that they frequently saw the ghost of an elderly woman with, they said, coal-black eyes and a long white dress.

Liz: Hmm!

Devon: She's also kind of a confusing one because they said she would appear and clutch at her throat with one hand while striking out in the air with the other hand. And behind her floated a ghostly portrait of a sinister looking man.

Liz: A portrait?

Devon: A portrait, apparently. And--

Liz: Like, literally?

Devon: Like a literal oil painting, gilt frame portrait of a sinister looking man who Peter and Ray decided was this woman's murderer.

Liz: And the portrait followed her around as she died like the letter U in a Sesame Street sketch?

Devon: [laughing] Yes! This death brought to you by... portrait! It's.. What they saw. We're going to muddy this already muddy picture by saying that Peter was actually a painter and he painted this woman. He painted what he saw--

Liz: Okay, I was like "yeah, he was renovating the place. He could do a whole room in an afternoon, two coats!"

Devon: [laughing] Sistine fuckin' Chapel there, Peter, good job! He was an artist, painter, not just a wall painter. And like I said, at some point, he--

Liz: [mockingly] Oh was Da Vinci a 'wall painter,' Devon?

Devon: Yo, Da Vinci? We're talking about Michelangelo with--

Liz: [giggling]

Devon: What is-- get your artists right!

Liz: I'm talking about frescoes!

Devon: 'Fresnos'? You mean frescoes?

Liz: I said frescoes!

Devon: I have this volume down so loud, I'm guessing at half of the words you're saying. And I wanted to be right.

Liz: Well, fine.

Devon: [laughs] Peter, the not wall painter, because he wasn't Da Vinci or something, painted this old woman and apparently they had another living old woman come visit them, who saw the painting and said it looked exactly like her great-aunt Sarah, who had met an unfortunate end in that house.

Liz: Okay, back up.

Devon: Yeah.

Liz: [stammering] Who-- who-- who they ran-- who'd they run this by?

Devon: some old woman. They don't say why she's there: if she's a friend, if she's a neighbor, if she's a looky-loo, if she is a random psychic magician stopping in on for Tuesday tea. The article that I read just says that an old woman visited the property, saw the painting and told Peter and Ray that it looked exactly like her great-aunt Sarah, who had died in that house.

Liz: Okay.

Devon: You may recall, Sarah was the name of Peter Junior's wife, who he supposedly locked in the tower.

Liz: [serenely] I did not recall.

Devon: Well, it doesn't make any sense because she supposedly died as a young woman after he killed her infant. And this portrait is supposed to be of an old woman who's, you know, choking herself to death or something with the portrait floating behind her. Like, don't-- don't try to make it make sense because it doesn't

Liz: Having a second portrait in this is really confusing.

Devon: There's so many portraits. Is this like Dorian Gray? So now the ghost ages, but the portrait doesn't.

Liz: There's the ghost who's being chased by a portrait ghost.

Devon: Mm-hmm.

Liz: A ghost portrait.

Devon: Mm-hmm.

Liz: Unclear.

Devon: That's some Scooby-Doo shit.

Liz: And then he paints a portrait of the... In the picture of her that he painted, is the ghost portrait also there? Behind her?

Devon: Didn't mention. I don't think it's a real accurate portrait of her without the ghost portrait in there.

Liz: This is just hard to follow.

Devon: [agreeing] Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's like the people that take-- they have that one photo of them with their dog and they get it printed on their shirt and then they take a photo of them wearing it-- and it just keeps layering like that.

Liz: Exactly.

Devon: Like an infinity mirror.

Liz: Yeah.

Devon: Not the only confusing ghost in this house.

Liz: Okay?

Devon: One of the early owners of the house, Willis Corson, was the King County Hospital and poor farm superintendent, and paranormal investigators and other people who visited the property over the years believe that Willis, as well as some of the patients from his hospital, have come back to haunt the house. Boeing Field is very nearby, and many Georgetown residents feel that ghosts from crashed Boeing planes haunt the neighborhood in general, and are attracted--

Liz: Okay, I was gonna say--

Devon: Yeah, they have nothing to do with the house but are in the area. And they're kind of attracted to-- it's like the Poltergeist house, like it's got bad energy radiating in. It makes them all, like, wild and woolly. There's a final connection. And I always get-- I don't know, dude, I always get really weird telling stories about Native Americans because it's--- ahh, just feels wrong for me to do. But the Seattle Met did say that the neighborhood sits on a Duwamish burial ground that was dug up when early Seattle rerouted the Duwamish River through there. And Chief Seattle apparently warned that there would be shadowy returning spirits because of the digging up of this burial ground.

Liz: Look, I mean, I'm obviously not the right person to vibe check that exactly, but that seems like you did a good job telling the story... Now that we have such an understanding of how often cemeteries get moved, I think it evokes an interesting comparison between all the early pioneer cemeteries that get moved?

Devon: Mm-hmm.

Liz: And sometimes they lead to ghost stories and sometimes they don't. But we definitely only ever hear about a Duwamish burial ground if it's associated with a ghost story.

Devon: Absolutely. Absolutely. It's always that, that terrible cliche of, like the "ancient Indian curse." I will buy... Any holy place or cemetery that is not treated with respect upon its removal being a place of bad vibes. So the early pioneer cemeteries that we've talked about on the show being moved so far? Yeah, they've been moved, but it sounds like they were done with as much respect as people in nineteen hundred were doing anything with respect. They were at least gathering up the bodies and taking them to a new place and interring them with Christian burials. Maybe that plays a part. I don't know. That one's got me.

Devon: But I wanted to get back real quick to the mother and son, Lynda and Micah, who bought the property and renovated it in the early 2000s.

Liz: Okay.

Devon: Lynda did say that at first when they were renovating, they encountered some strange things like cold spots, like banging noises, like heavy footsteps. And they had one houseguest who said that he was pushed on the stairs. They did let a couple paranormal groups come out and investigate. But since the restoration has been completed and Lynda and Micah are living there peacefully, Lynda says that the paranormal activity has stopped. She thinks that, like a lot of people have reported, any kind of big change to an old property kind of stirs up the energy, stirs up the spirits if you believe in that sort of thing. And that now that that's all done, things are kind of in a normal groove and the spirits see that the place is being taken care of and loved. They have no more reason to kick up a fuss.

Liz: Hmm, okay. I have a question about the remodel that Ray and Peter were doing, one, when was the era of that and did they not finish it or did they finish it and it got torn up again? Or what?

Devon: That was the 1980s, and it sounds like they didn't do a whole lot. They just kind of made the rooms they were inhabitable.

Liz: All right, and then they sold it on?

Devon: And then, uh, yeah, they sold it on, and then there was a period in the 90s? To early 2000s? Before Lynda and her son bought it when it was, as far as I can tell, vacant.

Liz: Okay.

Devon: I thought that that was a really nice, neat kind of wrap up to the Gessner House, that it had this kind of tragic beginning with the affair and the suicide or murder and then the, y'know, ghost of the woman, if that story is true, is... Is quite sad. And it goes through all these permutations to eventually become loved by a mother and son who take such great care of it.

Liz: Yeah.

Devon: Who are now there putting nothing but good energy into it. And the ghosts can rest.

Liz: Yeah, by the logic of a ghost story, it would have to be a mother and son.

Devon: It would have to be a mother and son.

Liz: But we're not done with ghosts quite yet.

Liz: Wow.

Devon: You recall that Peter Gessner owned Central Saloon.

Liz: Yes.

Devon: That has a history and it has its own ghost stories. It is known as one of the-- during the days of grunge, I mean, this place was ground zero for grunge. It hosted Jimi Hendrix, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Bikini Kill, when they were babies. And it's actually probably the first place that Nirvana played a gig.

Liz: Wow.

Devon: Supposedly the first gig that Nirvana played was at a place called the Vogue. But Bruce Pavitt, who's the founder of the Sub Pop label that signed Nirvana, said, "No, actually, their very first gig was here at Central Saloon. It was April 10th, 1988. And no one would remember it because they played to me, the bouncer, and like three people who were in the bar."

Liz: Oh!

Devon: So it's really cool in that it's got this great musical history. It's got it's one of the oldest operating places in Seattle, let alone taverns in Seattle. And it's also known to paranormal believers because investigators have gone there and found EVPs, footsteps, shadow men, flickering lights, and even the apparition of a woman.

Liz: [beat] Oh, I thought you were going to give me more information about this woman.

Devon: That's all I have! There's very little distinct information on it, but I thought it was really cool that these two places that Peter Gessner is really associated with both have their own place in Seattle's history, plus a lot of paranormal associations.

Liz: And they both made it to the present day.

Devon: They did both make it to the present day. Isn't that marvelous?

Liz: I have a question about how he died, though. I thought there was going to be more about-- it doesn't sound like he's much of a player in the ghost scene. And it doesn't sound like anything ever came of the investigation.

Devon: They didn't have an investigation.

Liz: Ohhh.

Devon: There was-- the coroner decided not to do an inquest.

Liz: Okay.

Devon: He said it was suicide, that it was because of this, you know, "his wife spurned him." That's just what they ruled it as. And the family wanted an inquiry done, but the coroner declined it.

Liz: [crosstalk] Okay. There's a lot of question marks about that.

Devon: [crosstalk] There's not a lot of details other than-- So many question marks, right? There's not a lot of details that I could find in, you know, the dozen articles that I read about Peter Gessner haunting other than people thinking that he haunts the second story, particularly the bedroom where he died and that he might be responsible for some of the heavy footsteps that they hear.

Liz: Yeah, that's... It feels like that's one where you could build such a thing about the spurned man and the acid and everything.

Devon: Couldn't you?

Liz: Instead they're like, "yeah, he walks around."

Devon: Yeah. Why isn't it like, the-- the visage of some facially deformed, angry man rising up before you from the bedclothes? Why is it Mary, slash, Sarah, slash, we don't know who this woman is who's maybe got red hair, pr maybe got brown hair, or maybe she's an old woman. Like, why did that take on a life of its own when you have an actual rooted in history, grisly death on site that you could have come up with all these tales for?

Liz: Yeah. Huh. All right.

Devon: Yeah, so that's my tale about the Gessner House, and then tangentially, the Central Saloon.

Liz: I liked that very much. That was confusing, but in a way I enjoyed.

Devon: It was all redeemed by the magician, I feel.

Liz: [laughing quietly] The magician... Just so many unfinished plot threads from when Gessner House got canceled.

Devon: [snorts]

Liz: And, like I -- the magician stuff, I don't know where they were going with that.

Devon: Yeah!

Liz: I feel like they were going to come back and tell us something about the carbolic acid mystery and hen they just kind of left that... I don't know if they couldn't get the actor back, or what happened...

Devon: [laughing]

Liz: They keep recasting Sally like we're not going to notice. There's a portrait. It's just... it does not hang together.

Devon: I would imagine there were some kind of scheduling conflicts. Someone was a little bit of a prima donna on set.

Liz: Great season of American Horror Story, though.

Devon: Wasn't it marvelous?

Liz: This would be so good.

Devon: Oh, friends, thank you for listening to my story about the Georgetown Castle, also known as the Gessner House. If you want to hear more about this particular story or really any of our stories, you want to head on over to our website, ouijabroads.com which is where we have show notes, so you'll be able to find links to all of the materials I referenced for this episode and all the materials we reference for any episode.

If you are a patron, that's at patreon.com, you not only get outtakes and first pass edits of our episodes, Liz is also putting up some of the articles that we have written for Nostalgia Magazine. So if you don't have a subscription to Nostalgia, but you still want to read the stuff with the Broads are doing for not Ouija Broads, that's a great way to do it, really. It's as little as a dollar a month gets you access to that.

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Devon: Other than that, I, of course, my darlings, hope that you live weird.

Liz: Die weird.

Devon: And stay weird. Thank you for listening.

[Theme music fades out]