Why did Crossroads City have a good dosage of crazies?

I asked myself that each time a less-than-stable denizen stumbled into the coffee shop, asked Daniel or his employees where my office was, then asked me to prove their sanity about something any reasonable fur would chalk up to delusions or a bad drug trip. There were more of them in my field of work than one would assume. During my college mentorship with former P.I. Hunter Donnelley, the aged coyote told me lucid tales about the countless number of UFO sighters and self-proclaimed MIB abductees who swamped his office building during the Seventies and Eighties. One of his first cases involved trying to find proof for a client that his filthy rich employer owned and operated a snuff film studio, only to discover it happened to be a (very consensual) BDSM dungeon.

Me? My first ‘crazy client case’ happened to be one of my very first solo missions, believe it or not.

It had been a few months since moving into Daniel’s apartment above the coffee house. Things were slowly becoming less awkward between us, and I already finished compiling the invoice for a nasty infidelity case when an elderly mixed-breed female dog knocked on my door, trying her best to convince me she needed my help.

“I’m sorry, but can you please repeat that for me?” I struggled not to point and laugh at her behind my desk, “There is a…a ghost in your home, Mrs. Smithson?”

“Yes, Mr. Leander,” she nodded fervently while clutching her purse like it were her lifeline to sanity. “I know I am not crazy—my doctor can prove it, young man—I know it! My family sometimes says I need to move to a nursing facility or that I can’t take care of myself anymore, but I know I’m not…not delusional.”

Basically, Mrs. Agatha Smithson lived happily as a retired nurse who started to notice odd things around her two-story Victorian-styled house. Furniture, lamps, chairs and even appliances would move about during the night. It started off small at first like how her coffee table would be at a certain angle or the chairs of her kitchen table were mysteriously teleported into the living room, but things began to unravel. All the fresh food and cold items in her refrigerator would be left out on her kitchen table, as if the alleged poltergeist wanted to make a midnight snack, only to let it all go to waste and leave the fridge door open. Other examples included finding the arrangement of her furniture changed each morning, the TV remote in her freezer, all of her photos on the wall tilted, as well as losing her credit card.

Mrs. Smithson swore on her dead husband’s grave she did not do any of it. At first, I felt inclined to disbelieve her, given my experience with unstable clients. However, protocol and my professional demeanor dictated that I accepted her case after giving me a deposit.

The case seemed simple enough: set up a hidden camera or two inside of her home, primarily the kitchen as well as the living room, then wait. I had expected the entirety of it to go the same route. I’d sit back for a few days, review the gathered footage for hours to find nothing, then maybe inform the client’s immediate family about it. If her reaction to the lack of evidence concerned me enough, that was.

Just to be safe, I decided to use two hidden cameras for this case. The primary one looked like a stuffed teddy bear with the small lens in its right eye while the secondary camera was hidden in a digital alarm clock (with its own battery as a power source). My reasoning given to Mrs. Smithson had been that I needed the digital clock to be visible to the primary camera for me to know the time when reviewing the footage.

Three days later and she returned the alarm clock to me, claiming that the hidden camera had disappeared, likely taken by the ‘ghost’. I looked through the footage, bored and expecting to find Mrs. Smithson in a trance of some kind, moving everything during the night or maybe even nothing at all. And then, as if the very earth itself rose up in defiance: it happened.

3:10 A.M. The second night.

Two figures entered the house in a quiet fashion. One looked to be mixed breed of dogs while the other figure appeared to be a feline, perhaps a tabby or calico like myself. Both were in their mid-twenties to early thirties, completely dressed in black. And for a good two hours, they did all that Mrs. Smithson claimed had been happening to her. Moving furniture, leaving stuff out of the refrigerator, pocketing a few things. Such as my primary hidden camera.

After showing the footage to my client, it turned out she recognized the canine. It turned out that Mrs. Smithson had an infestation problem, but they were neither ghosts nor rodents of the feral kind. No, they happened to be a parasitic kind in the form of her impatient great-nephew, whom she had left as the sole beneficiary in her will following a toxic family reunion from years past.

Apparently, the simple-minded prick thought he could get all her assets through power-of-attorney by gaslighting his poor great-aunt. He even employed one of his closest friends to help him by making copies of Mrs. Smithson’s house keys, then walking through the wooded area in the back of the house in order to avoid drawing suspicion from neighbors. When she spoke to her great-nephew’s father and mother about hiring me, it got back to the prick, who was unaware I placed two hidden cameras in the house. He had been correct about the teddy bear, but ignored the digital clock, which captured everything for me to give the police.

In the end, I did learn an important lesson along the way: almost always take a client’s claims seriously with a grain of salt, no matter how insane they may seem. Also, question what you see coming and what you don’t see coming. You never know what crazy things may happen during a case, after all.