

## **Summerville Lights: A Scientific Ghost Story**

### **By Thomas van Kalken**

<<we're outdoors in the wilderness. it's nighttime. We hear crickets. the campfire crackles>>

Guy: Ahhhhh, there's nothing quite like a good ol' fashion camping trip: ... the crisp South Carolina air ... the smell of a campfire ... the peace and quiet of nature ... <<deep breath in>> ahhhhh ...

<<the peacefulness is pieced by Dennis' screams>>

Dennis: Aghhh! G-Force stop poking me with that stick!

G-Force: I ain't pokin' you with nothin ...

Dennis: Owwww! Guy Raz! She did it again!

Fingerling: Oh no, that was me that time.

Dennis: Guy Raz! G-Force and Fingerling are poking me with their marshmallow sticks!

Reg: Coo!

<<Mindy steps back into the scene through the bush>>

Mindy: Did someone say marshmallows?

G-Force: No!

Guy: Mindy! You made it back!

Mindy: Yeah, sorry. I had to go to like 3 different gas stations to find these marshmallows. Check it out though ... <<pulls out a bag>> Key lime pie flavor ... super rare ... super tasty.

Dennis: Ooh, ooh, gimmie, gimmie, gimmie!

Reg: Coo!

Guy: Sounds delicious Mindy!

G-Force: Pass!

Fingerling: Yeah, pass ... we got our own snacks. <<Fingerling pulls up a big heavy sack>>

Guy: What the?

Reg: Cool!

Fingerling: Alright, whad'ya want G-Force?

G-Force: I'll take a boot.

Fingerling: Leather boot ... <<he retches the boot out of the sack>> good choice.

Mindy: You're going to eat a boot?

Fingerling: Don't be ridiculous ...

G-Force: Yeah!

Fingerling: We're going to 'cook' the boot first ... then we'll eat it.

Guy: Ughh <<gross>>

Dennis: Gross!

Reg: Cool!

Fingerling: Oh calm down, we're going to 'cook' the boot first! ...there we go...

Dennis: Tommy! no!

Fingerling: ok G-Force, you want the mid-sole or the laces?

G-Force: Imma fix me up a part of that heel ...

Fingerling: Ok, then.

Mindy: Alright! Who's ready for some scary storieeeeeees?!

Fingerling: Yeah, let's do it.

G-Force: I guess so.

Reggie: coo

Dennis: Who's gonna tell a scary story first?

Fingerling: Me. I got one.

G-Force: Fingerling you couldn't scare a squirrel off a bird feeder.

Fingerling: Oh, I wouldn't be too sure about that....

<<harp sound fx as we transition into story time>>

Dennis: Ahh, I'm scared!

Fingerling: <<narrating>> Once upon a time ... a family was goin on vacation to a beautiful, secluded, cabin in the woods .... <<forest sfx>> ... but when they arrived at the cabin ... <<a door creaks open>> they realised ... something was wrong ... something horrifyingly wrong!

Dennis: Oh no! What was it!?

Fingerling: Well, ya see... the beautiful, secluded, cabin in the woods... had no wi-fi!  
<<scream sfx>>

<<we come out of storytime>>

Fingerling: Wooooooooooooooooo!

Dennis: Ahh!

Guy: Wait ... that's it? The cabin didn't have wi-fi!

Dennis: What do you mean, that's it!? The cabin probably only had a wired ethernet connection!

Fingerling: Exactly. ooooo!

Dennis: Ahh! no! It's terrifying!

Mindy: Terrifyingly inconvenient maybe!

G-Force: That ain't scary Fingerling! This is scary ... <<clears throat>>

<<we go back into story time>>

G-Force: <<narrating>> Once upon a time ... two best friends went out to watch a movie at their local cinema ... <<city atmosphere>> as they left the theatre ... both of them said goodbye to each other ... but then ... out of nowhere ... they both walked in the same direction for a little bit and it was super awkward!

<<we come back out of story time>>

G-Force: <<echoing herself>> Awkward, awkward, awkward...

Dennis: Oh no! Now they can't make eye contact probably!

Guy: I don't know you guys ... these don't seem that scary to me.

Mindy: I agree, Guy Raz, but fear not I got a real good spooky story for y'all!  
<<Mindy shoves a marshmallow into her mouth>> Ooh, ah! Hot marshmallow! Hot marshmallow! <<big gulp>> Phew. Okay, now, watch how a pro tells a spooky story!

<< we transition into storytime again>>

Mindy: <<narrating>> A long time ago ... not too far from here in South Carolina ... in a town called Summerville ... a wife was sending her husband off to work on the railroads.

Fingerling: Well, I'm off to work the railroads dear, see you in a couple of weeks.

G-Force: Yeah, yeah, whatever.

Guy: <<interrupting>> Wait, Mindy, are these the same railroad tracks that we crossed to get to this campsite?

Mindy: The very same Guy Raz! Anyway! <<back to storytime>> <<narrating>> Eventually the wife's husband did return from his work on the railroads

Fingerling: Honey, I'm almost home.

G-Force: Oh goodie ...

Mindy: But just before he got back to his wife ... as he was crossing the tracks ... a train came rattling down the railway behind him!

<<train horn!>> <<chuga chuga>>

G-Force: Watch out! You're gonna get hit by that train. and that would be bad!

Fingerling: Awe, phooey! i'll be fine.

<<splat sfx>> <<train whistle>>

Fingerling: Nope, nevermind.

Mindy: The train scattered his body into a thousand different pieces!

Fingerling: Whelp, looks like i made a mess ... I gotta a finger over there ... a toe way over there ... how am I ever gonna put myself back together again!

Mindy: It was his wife who ended up spending her remaining days retrieving the pieces of her scattered and splattered husband.

G-Force: How in the Sam Hill am i supposed to pick up all these pieces ...you're all over the place husband!

Fingerling: Sorry dear!

Mindy: The old lady ended up dying before she could pick up all the pieces of her husband ... so now ... it's said that she still spends her afterlife haunting those railroad tracks ... still looking for all the guts that were strewn about all over the place ...

G-Force: You mean I still gotta clean up his mess? Even after i'm dead?

Mindy: They say that on some summer nights, you can still see the eerie glow from her lantern ... hanging in the air above the train tracks ... searching for the rest of time!

<<we come out of story time>>

<<everyone is enthralled>>

<<all at once>>

Guy: Oooooooh!

Fingerling: Oooooooh!

Reg: Oooooooh!

G-Force: Oooooooh!

Guy: Now that's what I call a ghost story!

Dennis: I didn't like it! It was too scary and splattery!

Mindy: Awe, Dennis, it's okay! It's not a real story ...

<<an eerie music starts playing>>

<<G-Force and Fingerling gasp>>

Guy: <<scared>> Uhhh, Mindy ...

Mindy: One second Guy Raz, I'm trying to console Dennis! <<to Dennis>> There's no railroad worker. There's no old lady picking up her husband piece by piece. It's all make believe

Guy: Mindy!

Mindy: One second! <<to Dennis>> And finally, there is dolphinetly no haunted light!

Guy: Mindy!!!

Mindy: What?

Guy: Look!

<<the eerie music peaks>> <<theres a humming sfx>>

Dennis: w-w-w-w-w-what is that?

Guy: It looks like a floating glowing light.

Fingerling: It's the old lady! She's back to find her husband!

Dennis: You mean it's a ...

Everyone: Ghost!

<<everyone starts freaking out!>>

Mindy: <<Mindy yelling over the top of everyone>> everyone calm down! It's not a ghost! There's a logical scientific explanation for this! I can explain!

Dennis: No way! It's every Dennis for himself! run!

<<Dennis darts off into the forrest>>

Mindy: Dennis! No! Come back!

<<we hear Dennis' footsteps fade away as he makes his way into the bush>>

Fingerling: Oh hey, looky that! The weird mysterious floating light is disappearing!

<<the humming stops>>

G-Force: Well, looks like i was able to scare off that ghost for everyone. your welcome.

Mindy: It wasn't a ghost grandma G-Force! That's what I was trying to tell everyone before Dennis ran away.

G-Force: Well if it wasn't a ghost then what was it?

Mindy: It was a ...

Everyone: Yes???

Mindy: It was a ...

Everyone: Yes???

Mindy: It was an earthquake light!

Guy: A what?

Reg: Coo?

G-Force: sounds made up.

Fingerling: Yeah! It sounds like another scary story!

Mindy: It's not made up! Come on, I'll explain it to you all while we look for Dennis, we can't leave him out in the woods all by himself.

Fingerling: Why not? There's bears out there?

G-Force: I sure hope so. It's been too long since I tangled with a bear. I need to get some practice in.

Guy: What?

Mindy: Nobody's wrestling any bears! We just need to find Dennis.

Guy: Yeah, last time he was in the woods by himself he got mistaken for a giraffe and got tranquilized by animal control.

<<swoosh flashback>>

Dennis: Tra-la-la, walkin' in the woods by myself today...

Animal Control: There it is! The escaped giraffe! Get it!

Dennis: I'm not a giraffe! I'm a real boy!

Animal Control: That's exactly what an escaped giraffe would say! Hiyah!!

<<thwump from a trunk tube>> <<Dennis falling unconscious>>

<<swoosh back>>

Mindy: Yeah, that really wasn't pretty.

Guy: Alright, everyone grab your flashlights! We are going to look for Dennis!

Mindy: Follow me everyone!

Reg: Coo!

Fingerling: Okee doke!

Mindy: Walk, walk, walk, walk ... turning on my flashlight ... <<click>> Okay, everyone keep an eye out for Dennis <<yelling out>> Dennis! Here Dennis! Where are you?

Guy: So Mindy, explain to me what that floating light we just saw was?

Mindy: Oh like i said, it's called earthquake light Guy Raz.

Guy: Earthquake light? I've never heard of it before.

Mindy: Well, it's a pretty rare geological phenomenon, Guy Raz.

Guy: Geological phenomenon? You mean something to do with geology; the study of rocks?

Mindy: Exacteritos, Guy Raz.

Guy: You mean that light that we just saw hovering above the ground had something to do with ... the rocks beneath our feet?

Mindy: Yup! It only happens under very specific circumstances and in very special places. Why do you think I invited you all out to Summerville, South Carolina?

Guy: Well, I assumed it was because you wanted to have a nice relaxing time outside of the city with all your friends.

Mindy: Well, that is true Guy Raz, but it's only half true. The other half of that truth is that I wanted to see this earthquake light for myself.

Guy: Uh huh. And this specific location in South Carolina is a place where it happens?

Mindy: You know it!

Fingerling: Oh, hey! Lookey there! I think I see him!

G-Force: Yup, that's definitely him.

Fingerling: Hey feller! Why you just standing there?!

Reg: Coo!

Mindy: That's not Dennis, Mr. Fingerling! That's just a very skinny tree.

Fingerling: Oh.

G-Force: Is that him?

Fingerling: Yep. That's him.

Guy: No! That's just another tree ...

Fingerling: Ok, fine! What about that then?!

Mindy: Those are all just skinny trees! They just have the same haircut. Keep moving!

<<the gang moves on and continues to trudge through the wilderness>>

Guy: So Mindy, how exactly does this earthquake light occur?

Mindy: Well, you need two things. First you need to be far away from the edge of a tectonic plate.

Guy: And tectonic plates are like the giant puzzle pieces that make up the earth's crust that are deep underground.

Mindy: Yeah, and when they move or bump into each other they can cause earthquakes.

Guy: Right, so you want to be far away from the edges of these puzzle pieces.

Mindy: And then, thing number two, is that you need to be in an area that has lots of magnesium and iron ...

Guy: Which are both types of metal that can be found in the ground.

Mindy: Yeah, and Summerville, South Carolina where the earthquake lights have been spotted, checks both those boxes.

Guy: Okay, but how does being far from a tectonic plate and also being in an area with lots of magnesium and iron cause these spooky floating lights?

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Mindy: Well, there are a lot of theories Guy Raz. athis sort of thing has actually been observed all over the world, but one theory suggests that when the ground shakes ever so slightly from an earthquake, the iron and magnesium gets bent and squished and this creates an electrical charge.

Guy: Huh, kind of like when you rub two balloons together it creates a static charge.

Mindy: Exactly, this electrical charge can then travel up to the surface of the earth and create an electrical field that causes the molecules in the air to glow.

Guy: The electrical charges from the ground cause the air to glow?

Mindy: Yeah, sort of like how particles from the sun can excite the air around the north pole and create the northern lights.

Guy: So, the glowing orb we just saw was actually some air that was excited by some metal in the ground shaking from a really small earthquake?

Mindy: You got it!

Guy: So, no ghost?

Mindy: Nope! It's something more spectacular! Science!

Fingerling: Oh, hey! There he is! I found him.

G-Force: No you didn't! I did!

Fingerling: No! Me!

Reg: Coo!

Mindy: That's not Dennis! That's a very old and decrepit sign.

Guy: No, Mindy look. Behind the sign post!

Dennis: Mindy? Guy Raz? Is that you!

Mindy: Dennis! We found you!

Dennis: Don't come any closer!

<<they stop in their tracks>>

Fingerling: What's a matter, feller? You don't recognize ole Thomas Fingerling?

Dennis: How do I know you're not a ghost!

G-Force: Could a ghost do this! Yee yah!

<<starts to wrestle Dennis>>

Dennis: Owe! Grandma G-Force, stop wrestling me!

G-Force: Hold still, you giraffe!

Mindy: We're not ghosts Dennis! Ghosts don't exist.

<<Dennis and G-Force suddenly stop wrestling>>

Dennis: Oh really? Then what was that giant floating orb of light I just saw back there, huh?

Guy: It's a geological phenomenon called earthquake light.

Mindy: Yeah, and we can tell you all about it on the way back to camp.

<<Dennis dusts himself off>>

<<the gang begin walking back to camp>>

Dennis: Oh whew! You know what? I thought it might be earthquake light. Didn't I say that it was earthquake light Reggie?

Reg: Coool!

Dennis: Yes, I did too!

<<there's a crumble from a bear in the distance>>

Guy: Uhh, Mindy. I thought you said there weren't any bears in these woods.

Mindy: Uh, yeah, about that ...

G-Force: Bears? Where? Let me attem!

Mindy: Uh, maybe we should move a little faster.

<<a much closer bear growl>> <<the gang run away>>

Fingerling: Good idea.

Guy: Muuuuuuuch faaaaaaster!

Mindy: <<while running>> so basically Dennis, earthquake lighting happens when you're far away from a tectonic plate and there's a lot of magnesium and iron in the ground.

Dennis: Oh wow, that is so interesting.

Guy: Not right now Mindy! Explain later!

<<bear roar>>

G-Force: <<in the distance>> Get back here you great big hairy mammal! Yeee yah!

END