

Common Mystics Podcast
Episode 4: Good and Evil in Rome City, IN
Jennifer James and Jill Stanley

00:00:11 On this episode of Common Mystics, we encounter one of the most haunted locations we've ever discovered. What ghosts linger in Rome City, Indiana. And why are they not at rest? I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics. We're sisters. And we are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places. And, Jill, the story we found in Rome City, Indiana is the stuff of horror movies. It's true. Oh my gosh. Let's get right into it because I cannot wait. Okay. So we started by setting the intention. It's true. And do you remember what it was? I do. Well, first and foremost, we wanted to get out of the state of Michigan. So we headed towards Indiana and we also wanted a verifiable story. Like we always do, and we wanted to give a voice to the voiceless. True. So we are headed south out of Michigan, towards Indiana.

00:01:09 And I have this location in my head that I had driven past. I've never gone there. I don't know what it is, but I think I know where it is, but I didn't want to give Jennifer any direction because she's my navigator and I didn't want to disrupt her spidey senses. Right. So our system is, in case you haven't heard other episodes, Jill is the driver and I'm the navigator. So Jill had a place in mind that she wanted to go. But even though I was navigating, somehow we got there. Crazy. That is crazy. That is really crazy. It's really interesting in and of itself. And before we realized what, before I realized that that's where we're going, I was getting little breadcrumbs that apparently had to do with the location. So, in my head, I was feeling, Immaculate Heart of Mary High School (my high school) and nuns lived in a building attached to my high school.

00:02:09 It was a convent attached to my high school and I was feeling a dormitory and I was really getting the sense of Catholicism, like, just thick and rich with Catholicism. Also school, my high school, I kept thinking IHM, Immaculate Heart of Mary High School, school dormitory. So you're getting all of these impressions. I, again, am navigating. Exactly right. And we ended up there somehow anyway. So we actually see this building after driving around some time and going through some other small towns in Northeastern Indiana. It's true. We see this immense brick building. My tail is slowly wagging as we approach it. I was so excited. And at first it looked like it was all closed up, right? Like all the gates were closed. But as we turned into the driveway, there was a gate that was swung open. What were you feeling? I was feeling like, Holy crap, this is scary. I felt, like, hesitation. Like, Oh, should we be doing this? I was so excited because I really wanted to go there with you.

00:03:28 So we drive in through this gate that is open and we are on kind of a circle drive. And in the middle of the circle drive, there's a little grassy area and there is an old, weathered white religious statue there. So right away it was kind of a creepy, creepy site. Yeah. The vibe definitely changed. What did we do next? Next? We parked. We did park. Okay. And at that point we were in the shadow of the building. Literally, we were parked kind of up against the building. And I remember, I remember as we parked and I was getting out of the car, I felt so really small. Like I was already feeling intimidated. Right? Well, the structure itself is immense as we found out. But do you remember what happened? As soon as we parked and we got out of the car, what do you remember?

00:04:27 What did we do? We didn't talk about it. But both of us got out of the car and walked away from the building. We were like, "Oh, too much, too much, too much, too soon." So we walk across the parking lot to where it looked like the lawns were. And at that point we, we could notice more about the building, right? So we put some distance between us and we could see that it is an immense structure. It was also in a state of disrepair. A lot of the windows and doors were boarded up. If you recall, the paint was peeling. The windows that had window dressings on them, they were like torn and old. Just think the creepiest place you can ever think of in your head. That times a thousand. Right? And from that angle, it just looked like one big rectangle, right?

00:05:23 So we're over there and for whatever reason, we're not going over to the building yet. But what we do see is a sign on the lawn and it's pointing away from the building. And it says this way to the Stations of the Cross. Now, if you don't know anything about the Stations of the Cross, it's a, it's a Catholic thing. It's actually a devotion of 14 scenes of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. And, um, just knowing that that's there, kind of gave me a little bit of comfort. I felt like, okay, Jesus is with us.

00:06:03 Like Jesus is here too. It's not just this big creepy building. Not only that, but people who loved Jesus were here. Yes. And meditated on Jesus, brought the Jesus in. Yeah. We were good. Yeah. I'm good with that. Jesus. I was still a little scared. It was still foreboding, but I was like, okay, Jesus, Jesus, let's do this. Jesus take the wheel. We're ready. What do we do then? That's when we ventured over to the actual building. Okay. So, still not a good idea. Jesus and all, not a good idea.

00:06:37 Well, we're walking around the building and it's several stories tall, maybe three, and we're tall enough so we can look through the ground floor windows. And the stuff that we were seeing through the windows was not at all comforting, looked like a crime scene. It really did. Like, things were like thrown around.

00:06:59 Right, right. Books all over the place. Shredded paper. It just looked like it was looted. Furniture toppled over. Cabinets opened. And then, you know, when we walked around the back of it, that's when we realized that the building was not just like a rectangular structure. The back had hallways and raised walkways, raised, covered walkways. And it kind of jugged out and folded in on itself to create like alleyways and courtyards. So when we were walking through that, we felt like we were inside the building, like the building was surrounding us at this point. Right. And it was vibrating. Yeah. Yeah. A hundred percent. There was so much energy coming from the building and the ground. Right. And so as we were walking through this alleyway, there were plastic totes, just discarded. Ceiling tiles, broken glass, cafeteria trays, and silverware, just like on the ground.

00:08:03 It was so odd. Do you remember, um, looking in and what we saw through one of the windows, the higher up windows? Was it the bed? Okay. I don't know why. Well now I know, but at the time, I didn't know why we were so creeped out by the bed. Well, describe the bed. Okay. So the bed was an old fashion bed. It was a metal frame and it was obviously very old and soiled, without its bedclothes, and it looked like it came from another era. Like it was out of the 1940s or fifties. It's true. And immediately we're both like, Oh, Oh, like that gave us pause. And we wouldn't know till later why. Yeah. But absolutely totally creepy. So we continued through the

courtyard and alleyway, and we got to the dining hall. Oh my gosh. Again, there was a mattress on the floor in the middle of the dining hall.

00:08:57 There were tables knocked over. Like someone was trying to escape in a hurry and was like throwing things out of their way to get out of there. Crazy random, just really random. Right. So, and then, Oh my gosh, stop. And then that's when we saw the sign that said "The Cellars." And so we walked towards the cellars and by the way, it's, this was a creepy old wooden carved sign that said The Cellars. And we went towards it. We were at that point under a covered walkway and we turn the corner and there are concrete steps leading down into, I swear, a black abyss. Like we... literally, it was like the steps disappeared into, like, nothingness, not just, like, black, it was like the blackest black that has ever blacked ever. Literally, I was like, that is, like, nothing. That was so creepy.

00:10:03 Not even you were like, "Hey, let's explore." You were like, "Oh no." So that's when I was like, Jill, we probably shouldn't be creeping around this building. And I said, we need Jesus. Let's go back to the lawns. Let's find the stations. So we did go back to the lawns. But as we were walking around to the front of the building again, that's when I was starting to feel eyes on me. Do you know what you said? When we were going back to the lawns? Well, you looked at the camera footage, so tell me what I said. You said, "Our story is here." I was right. You were absolutely right. Jill, do you know what it felt like to me as I was walking past, it felt, and there were two windows and these windows on this side of the building were black.

00:10:50 Like the doors were closed and no light was in there. So all you could see was like this tattered, white curtain and blackness and two in two of those windows right next to each other, I swear something was looking at me. Oh my God. So I kept doing a double take. I could have sworn... I never saw anything, but something was looking at me. (I'm having an anxiety attack right now.) So anyway, we went away from the building now. So that happened. And we walked again across the parking lot to the lawn area. And that's when we saw that the lawn actually has a decline. Right. And then on two sides is this stone path that winds around down. It wasn't like brand new or anything. There's some level of upkeep here, but still it was clean, but it was still broken.

00:11:49 Yeah. You had to be careful. And then when we started taking those steps around and that's when we discovered the grotto, the grotto to the Blessed Mother or the Virgin Mary. (Now I'm going to use those two terms synonymously throughout this.) But there was a statue of the Virgin Mary, and she was, um, kind of in a grotto setting with a little trickling waterfall. And honestly, when I saw the Virgin, Mary, I felt like a reprieve. Like I almost felt like I was rescued. It was really something. I was like, "Oh, thank God you're here." I felt it was a sudden sense of comfort and an escape. It was so odd. The way the energy of the building was so different from that energy. Dramatically opposite. Yes. In this space. Yes. Yes. And so the grounds to me felt like an escape from that building.

00:12:50 That's when I feel like I was channeling an energy or a spirit. I was channeling something and I, myself, felt dread looking at that building, just, like, knowledge that I had to go there and dread of that knowledge. And I felt like I wanted to turn around and run. I just wanted to run into the field, into the lawns, away, away from that building. That's how I was feeling. Oh my gosh. So while you were feeling that, I felt like I needed to go back to the building and look at it closer. Um, at the front of it because we had gone around the back but we did not explore

the front of the building other than the lawn area. That's right. So, um, as I took Bug the beagle into the lawns, you went back up to the building. I did. And as I was approaching the building, I felt like I was being watched.

00:13:46 But I was, I felt as if the, whoever was watching, was making sure I wasn't getting into any trouble. It felt like someone was making sure that I was walking the line, like a superior, making sure like, "she's, she's following the rules," "she's doing the right thing." Now that would make sense later. So I'm walking towards the building. And on the left side of the building, there is a chapel area and a gentleman was walking out of the chapel as I was approaching and I stopped, he stopped me, and I said, hi.

00:14:18 He's like, what are you doing here? He's like, you can walk around outside, but the building is off limits. I was like, that's all right. Like, don't even worry about it, sir. For real. I'm... we're good. You couldn't pay me to... it's like, as a matter of fact, here's some sage because you just walked out of there.

00:14:38 So his name was Al and he was, um, the supervisor of the grounds for the organization that, um, was managing the property and he was supervising the renovation process for the grounds. And so I asked him if I could ask questions and he said, yes. So I have him on camera. And so I asked him, you know, what is it, what is this place? Because we still didn't know. Right. We had no idea. And he said that it was a sanitarium and it was built in the late 1800s. And it was managed by nuns. And I said, well, what happened here? And he said nothing. I was like, uhhh...

00:15:18 I was like, yeah. Okay, whatever you got to tell yourself to make it through the day I get it. Okay. And he said that, um, I asked him if it was a school because I felt that school vibe. He said no. He said that they were renovating the building to turn it into a retreat center for Catholics. Interesting. Yeah. Well, after we left, we were able to do a little bit of research. And the name of the building right now is Our Lady Mother of Mercy Center. Now, it is a religious center, but it has a long history of other names and other functions. In 1895, it was established as a Sanitarium. And that Sanitarium followed the teachings of a Sebastian Kneipp. Now Sebastian Kneipp was a German priest and he had tuberculosis and he supposedly cured himself of his disease by plunging into the Danube River several times a week until he was apparently cured. So he wrote a bestselling book about it in 1886 that was called "My Water Cure." It was a big hit and everybody was trying this cure because there was no effective treatment for TB at the time.

00:16:51 So that was in 1895 when it was first established. And at that time it could only accommodate 10 guests. But by 1902, it was bought by the Sisters of the Precious Blood order. And they improved and expanded the Sanitarium. And that's the building that's there today. By 1920, it could accommodate 250 guests. Wow. So it was really booming and doing well. So the little nuns really helped the place out, upgraded it. Right? And so, um, they had 80 acres of grounds that they used for farming, but also, uh, for paths and gardens. And of course those natural springs, which were super important for this water therapy that this Sebastian Kneipp developed. Right. So treatments were not free here. And so there were affluent people who were staying here at the time, although the nuns did do charitable work and took on charity cases as well.

00:17:54 But I found something super interesting in one expenditure report. It noted that "incurable and objectionable cases are not admitted." Interesting. Interesting. Now I don't know what 'objectionable' cases would be, but incurable cases... that means that those cases that were terminal were not allowed or were not admitted. Okay. So the people who were there would have had hope. They would have been hopeful. Right. They would have been people with means, mostly, who are going there hoping and expecting a cure. Right. You know, that's interesting because from my research, I found two specific cases of suicide on the property. Ooh. Yeah. So the first one was a young man, John Ring, he was a farm laborer and was a patient at the Sanitarium. When he was 28 in 1923, he shot himself in the head with a rifle on the grounds. Yeah. And then, and around 1930, a 73 year old man ended his life in the waters, just off the grounds.

00:19:01 There's a lake just south of the grounds, Lake Sylvan. Wow. So back to not taking terminal cases, these people that were being treated at the Sanitarium, they were expected to live. Right. You wouldn't think then that anyone would commit suicide because they were so upset about their disease. Right. Right. Exactly. We don't know the degree in which they were suffering. Right. Now, admittedly, we don't know a lot about these two cases. Right. Actually we almost know nothing about them other than what you just read. So we kept digging. Right, right. It wasn't enough. It didn't explain the foreboding vibration of the building and the grounds. So we were like, that's interesting, but this isn't it. Right. I mean, that would explain, like, two souls that felt lost, but we felt something much bigger, much more foreboding than that. Absolutely. So I found a very interesting story about a nun who had visited the site twice. She actually was stationed at the site.

00:20:04 Yes. Right. And her name was sister Mildred Mary. Do you want to say her last name? Not really, but okay. So it's Mildred Mary Ephram Neuzil. I'm just gonna refer to her as Sister. Perfect. So, Sister was born to Austrian parents on August 2nd, 1916. She was born in Brooklyn, New York. And shortly after they moved to Cleveland. At the age of 14, she entered into a religious congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. It was the fall of 1956 that Sister went to Kneipp Springs, which was the name of the Sanitarium at the time in Rome City. And this was her second visit. The thing is, she didn't want to go. She had a terrible foreboding feeling about this assignment and asked to not go there. Um, they're like, no sister, you got to go. So she ended up visiting and she was, she ended up being stationed there.

00:21:10 She was supposed to wait tables at the Sanitarium. So one evening when she retired to bed, she was in her room and she had this urge, this strong feeling, as if she wanted to jump out the window. She left her room and she went to the chapel to pray. But the feeling didn't leave her. She said, she felt like she was in a ring of evil and she couldn't get out of it. Everything in her being was saying, get out of there, get out of there. One night, she woke up with the sense of something perched behind her, on her pillow, just behind her head. Before she could discern just what it was, she felt it grab her face across the eyes and pull down on them as if it was clawing her face.

00:22:11 So the next day she went to her supervisor and she was like, no, no, really we, I need to go. And her request for transfer was denied. However, shortly after that, the Blessed Virgin came to her, the first of many visits. During one evening, Holy hour, Our Lady came to her as if she were Our Lady of Lourdes. The blessed Virgin came to her to give her a message. And

the message was that the Blessed Virgin promises to reward the faithful children of America by working through the power of her son's heart and her own immaculate heart. Wow. So Sister would be visited by the Virgin Mary several more times during the course of her life. And this was just the first time that she was visited. Yes. Not only the blessed Virgin, but other saints and angels in different locations. Wow.

00:23:09 So upon hearing that story that you just told, first of all, it's terrifying. Oh my God. Terrifying. But it makes me wonder... if the devil is going to attack you, he can do that anywhere. Right. And if the Virgin Mary is going to visit you, she can do that anywhere. You know, that story, the story of feeling the devil and that immense evil, and then almost feeling rescued by the blessed Virgin reminds me of how we were feeling that day, feeling that intense sense of evil and foreboding feeling, and then finding the blessed Virgin being like, hell yeah. Hallelujah. Like thank you for being here. Yeah. Good point. And then those two suicides, you wonder if they had experienced anything like what this sister, Mildred Mary was experiencing? Oh my goodness. Right, right. Interesting. It's something to think about something to contemplate.

00:24:06 Right. We'll never know. So the question, then, is why here? Right, right. Why are you here? If the devil is going to come to you, presumably he could do it anywhere. Right? Why, what was it about this location that stirred up that type of energy? Right. And what was it about this location that made her feel that sense of foreboding to begin with? Was there something else there? Did you find anything? I did actually. So I wanted to know what was happening on the land before the sanitarium was there. Okay. So as it turns out, the Native American tribes, the Miami and the Pottawatomie populated the area before the white man moved in. And get this, Jill, they revered those natural springs as Holy ground. That makes sense. Right. It really does. And in 1838, unfortunately, they were forcibly removed from Nobel County and relocated to reservations West of the Mississippi. And Nobel County, of course, is the county in which Rome City is currently located. Exactly. So they were forced off of the lands that they considered Holy. Exactly. So that'll leave some bad mojo.

00:25:22 But again, the mojo we were feeling is bigger than that. Exactly. That's why I kept digging. Oh, what did you find? So much. There were people who lived in the area and actually the greater area, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky... It was populated by a group of people that we know now as the Mound Builders. And they were actually there as far back as 1000 BC. That's insane. It is. I mean, we're talking about contemporaries to ancient Egyptians. That's insane. Now at some point... a thousand years before Christ, I just want to say that... Yes. Okay, cool. You heard it correctly. At some point they disappeared and nobody knows when or how or why. That in itself is pretty creepy. Right. But there's more. Now the Mound Builders are called Mound Builders because they left behind earthen structures or mounds. Right. And they're located all over that greater area that I was talking about, all over the Midwest, but there are plenty in the current state of Indiana and there just happens to be three located just south of the current city of Rome City, Indiana.

00:26:49 Shut up. What? I'm not even kidding. Okay. So I have a question. Yes. So they're building these mounds. What's in the mounds? Uh, well, two of the three mounds located just south of Rome City had human bones. Yes they did. They had human bones. And the other thing that we know, and this is information that I'm going to relay now that came from "Counties of Whitley and Noble Indiana". And it was written in 1882. So when the mounds were

discovered, they were pretty much just taken apart without any sort of reverence or care. Right. So a lot of information was lost, but there were skeletons in there. And this is what the, the reference says: "They offered burnt and other sacrifices and oblations to both good and bad spirits. They worshiped the elements such as fire, air and water, and also the sun moon and stars and offered human sacrifices to the gods, [both good and bad] that they worshiped." So that explains it. Yeah. Meaning we have a winter. Oh my gosh. That, that is creepy. So let's debrief. I feel like I need a drink. In good time, my friend, hang in there.

00:28:21 Who's a champ? I'm a champ. Okay. Okay. Debrief. So your impressions. Oh, okay. School? School. Um, this building was bought and run by an organization called The Way International in the 1970s. And they made that building their college. So yeah, it was a school. Good Job. Dormitory? Dormitory. Well, the nuns did live there and also, so did the guests with tuberculosis. So it very much was a dormitory type situation. And stating the obvious: Nuns? Obviously, obviously, Nuns lived there. The feeling of foreboding? Um, well, uh, let me list all the reasons why that might be there. Uh, obviously Mound Builders doing human sacrifices and then people finding the mounds and then just going through them. Right. The Native Americans obviously removed from their lands, right. Forcibly removed from that area that they considered sacred, the springs, which are on the very grounds of the sanitarium. Right. And then you have the suicides, I mean, that'll leave some bad mojo behind. And then let's not forget THE DEVIL who actually came to the bedroom of Sister Mildred Mary. And is that why you think we were freaking out over that old ass bed? Heck yeah, yeah. Yes, yes, yes. Okay. Then you were experiencing the feeling of running away or wanting to run away. Yeah. I feel like I was channeling Sister Mildred Mary. Girl. She wanted... she didn't want to go there. She did not want to go there. And I'm sure she felt like running away. That's what it felt like to me. What about the feeling of peace and comfort at the Blessed Virgin? Is that too obvious? Right. I mean the Blessed Virgin visited sister Mildred Mary, and, you know, we felt that same sort of loving, comforting energy. Right. What do you think, Jill? What do you think we were feeling when we felt those eyes on us being watched through those windows?

00:30:41 I think whatever was in that building knew us... we recognized it and I think it recognized us....Shit. And I can tell you we'll come back to that later. Yeah. So I just want to say some of the research that I found along these same lines is that today in different Catholic online resources, they refer to that area as still a battle ground between good and evil. Really. They really do. And they describe systematically how Christ and the Blessed Virgin were taken out of the building first by, um, the, The Way religious organization. They had the college there. And then from then on, they kept taking relics out of the building. Interesting. So, so some finge Catholic groups are still talking about this specific piece of property as a battleground of good and evil. And we can actually trace it back to 1000 BC. Hey Jen? Yes, Jill. There was a recent publication referring to this site. Can you tell us about that?

00:31:57 Yes. There was an article written on May 7th, 2020 in a periodical called our Sunday Visitor. It's a Catholic periodical. And they say that six bishops got together to kind of decide whether or not Sister Mildred Mary actually did have a Marion apparition or not. And they decided that though she was "honest, morally upright, psychologically balanced, devoted to religious life and totally without guile..." still, she had a "subjective, inner religious experience" rather than an objective, "external visions and revelation." So basically she's a good kid, but the

Mother Mary didn't really come to her. It was kind of all in her head. She's just looking for attention. Exactly. Well. So knowing that, do you feel is if Sister's is the voice that we're meant to give a voice to? I do. I do. Because... think about AI. AI works in that building. That's such a good point.

00:33:17 He knew nothing, nothing about any of its history and knew nothing about the trials and tribulations that Sister Mildred Mary went through, living in that building. That's true. She was attacked by the devil. She was compelled to commit suicide in that building. And nobody knows about it. And not only does nobody know about it, but these bishops just recently came out and said, yeah, it didn't really happen. So Jen, knowing the feelings we were getting from the grounds and the building, the structure, I can honestly say that I believe Sister. I believe I felt it too. Right. Right. And you know, we spent a lot of time talking about how spirit communicates with us. And we know from personal experience that spirit will give you an impression, an image, a situation that you understand, something that's in your wheelhouse, something that you can assign meaning to readily.

00:34:22 Yes. Right. So for you, when we were in Hillsdale, you were getting an image of a character on a TV show, American Horror Story, and that relayed information to you to help you understand the energy that was there on that site. So for Sister Mildred Mary, she was, she was seeing the devil or experiencing the devil, but it's just a representation that she would recognize as the ultimate evil. Exactly. And just the same with the Blessed Virgin. Exactly. So someone else might get a different vision or feeling, but the point is that when the Blessed Mother showed herself to Mildred Mary, she was expressing comfort and love and protection and empathy. And that's what we felt. Yes. Right. And we also felt the creepy foreboding, evil vibe as well. Not only did we feel it there, but we felt it later on that evening. Yes. Because it followed us home, but that will be the subject of a bonus episode for now. Jill, could you please tell our listeners where they can find us, please check out our website, commonmystics.net, find us on Facebook and Apple Podcasts. If you enjoyed this episode, leave us a positive review so other people can find us. Thank you. Thank you. And good night. Good night.