

The Blumhouse Book of Nightmares: The Haunted City

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Original and terrifying fiction presented by Jason Blum, the award-winning producer behind the groundbreaking *Paranormal Activity*, *The Purge*, *Insidious*, and *Sinister* franchises.

Jason Blum invited sixteen cutting-edge collaborators, filmmakers, and writers to envision a city of their choosing, and let their demons run wild. *The Blumhouse Book of Nightmares: The Haunted City* brings together all-new, boundary-breaking stories from such artists as Ethan Hawke (*Boyhood*), Eli Roth (*Hostel*), Scott Derrickson (*Sinister*), C. Robert Cargill (*Sinister*), James DeMonaco (*The Purge*), and many others.

“Geist” by Les Bohem…“Procedure” by James DeMonaco…“Hellhole” by Christopher Denham…“A Clean White Room” by Scott Derrickson and C. Robert Cargill…“Novel Fifteen” by Steve Faber…“Eyes” by George Gallo…“1987” by Ethan Hawke…“Donations” by William Joselyn…“The Old Jail” by Sarah Langan…“The Darkish Man” by Nissar Modi…“Meat Maker” by Mark Neveldine…“Dreamland” by Michael Olson…“Valdivia” by Eli Roth…“Golden Hour” by Jeremy Slater…“The Leap” by Dana Stevens…“The Words” by Scott Stewart…“Gentholme” by Simon Kurt Unsworth

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Editorial Review

Review
“Jason Blum has done it again with this collection of startlingly imaginative and remarkably potent tales. Anyone who loves a brilliant story—scary or otherwise—should read this book.”
—Ryan Murphy, co-creator of *American Horror Story*

"Like the best horror movies, these stories begin in the real world, then slyly move you to a darker place, a nightmare world just beyond our reality. I enjoyed my visit to *The Haunted City*--but I am still shivering."
--R.L. Stine, author of *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street*

“I found myself double checking that my door was locked. This anthology is a compelling reminder that it does not take anything but a good story to terrify.”
—M. Night Shyamalan, writer and director of *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable*

“Great horror storytelling. Jason Blum has assembled the top, twisted talents for this anthology.”
—James Wan, director of *Insidious, The Conjuring,* and *Furious 7*

"*The Blumhouse Book of Nightmares* is the perfect book to read at bedtime...especially if you want to stay awake with the lights on all night."
--Jeff Lindsay, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Dexter novels

“The stories in this book are written by some of the most macabre, original minds working in cinema today...I loved it. You’ll love it too.”
—Leigh Whannell, cowriter of *Saw* and director of *Insidious: Chapter 3*

“The best chills always start with great stories and sometimes short ones too! This anthology shows how sharp Jason Blum is when it comes to finding fresh blood to haunt our nightmares.”
—Alexandre Aja, writer and director of *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Mirrors*

"An impressive company of screenwriters and novelists...The star power of the contributors, combined with significant promotional effort organized by Blum's film production house, will draw fans of both horror fiction and horror films to this ambitious anthology."
--Publishers Weekly

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author
Jason Blum is the founder and CEO of Blumhouse Productions, known for pioneering a new model of studio filmmaking that gives creators more freedom. Blumhouse Productions films have grossed more than a billion dollars worldwide. Blum was nominated for an Academy Award for producing *Whiplash* and won an Emmy Award for producing *The Normal Heart.* He and his wife, Lauren, live in Los Angeles.

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Hellhole

By Christopher Denham

“One point three million for a one bedroom?”

Sam and Martha Rathbone stood still in the vacant apartment. As if any sudden movement would further reduce the square footage. “That’s just the asking price,” the Broker said. “Two bids came in at one point eight. Cash.”

“It’s one bedroom,” Sam said. “And there are three of us. Three people.”

“Technically, two people,” the Broker said. “One child.”

“Technically, the child is a person.”

“A small person.”

Martha said, “I think our son needs his own room.”

Sam checked the stairwell, where their six-year-old son, Max, was coloring in his coloring book. Max made a funny face at his dad. Sam made the face back. It was their face.

“Everybody wants to be in Brooklyn,” said the Broker. “At your price point, Williamsburg is out of the question. Williamsburg is for Alexander Wang models. Greenpoint is for trust funders. Carroll Gardens is colonized by shortlisted novelists. And Bushwick has been bought up by boys in bands. At your price point, you’re going to have to go off the grid.”

“Can you please stop saying ‘price point’?” Sam turned to his wife. “Maybe we should just stay in Manhattan. Keep renting.”

“Renting is just throwing our money away,” Martha told him. “It’s time to leave the Lower East Side. It’s time to buy. Before the interest rates balloon. Everybody’s buying.”

“How can anybody afford this?”

The Broker broke up the domestic disturbance: “Brooklyn does go beyond the first three stops on the L train. Do you want to be followers? Or do you want to be pioneers? Stake your claim in terra incognita. This isn’t just real estate, folks. This is manifest destiny.”

“It’s our destiny to raise our son in a studio,” said Sam. “You’ve showed us ten places and every place is totally undersized and totally overpriced.”

“Well,” said the Broker, “I do have one more place to show you.”

They shared a cab from Williamsburg. Sam, Martha, and Max in the backseat and the Broker up front. Looking out the window, Sam watched the pageant of epicene hipsters in genitally challenging pants drinking forties up and down Bedford Avenue. Sam and Martha used to spend more time in Brooklyn. Back when they used to get tattoos. Back when Sam used to have gallery shows and drink his weight (160 pounds) in Styrofoam Budweisers at Rosemary’s Tavern. The drinking days were done. The days of skateboarding across the BQE with seven cans of Molotow and spray-painting rubyliths across the viaduct, pretending to be

some gutterpunk Basquiat. Pretending he didn't have a BFA in painting from RISD. Sam didn't do street art. Not anymore. He repaired furniture. He refurbished divans. Hell, they had bills to pay. They had a child. And they were about to have a mortgage.

"Dad?" Max asked. "Where's that flag from?"

Max pointed at the faded blue, yellow, and red flag decal adhered to the taxi's Plexiglas partition. Sam said, "I don't know, Mad Max. I sucked at flags in school."

Martha said, "Honey, why don't you ask the driver?"

The taxi driver had a cleft palate scar on his upper lip and was listening to very loud, very foreign music. The music, Sam thought, sounded weirdly pastoral. Incessant tambourine. Russian? Belarusian? Gypsy music.

Max asked for Martha's cell phone and googled national flags and found, on Wikipedia, the corresponding ensign that matched the peeling decal. "Romania," said Max, "the driver is from Romania." Max opened Google Translate. It was his favorite app and he would spend hours translating random languages. Sam and Martha thought it was a better heuristic hobby than all those books about boy witches. Max typed in a few words and an automaton voice translated into Romanian: "Numele meu este Max! Sunt vechi de ?ase ani!" (My name is Max! I'm six years old!) The driver spewed out a spate of foreign declamations and fist-bumped Max: "Baiat bun!! Baiat bun!!"

From the front seat, the Broker turned and said, "Welcome to your new neighborhood."

Crown Heights was not a neighborhood they had considered. Too dangerous. Too far for Martha's daily commute to Manhattan, where, as an advocacy lawyer, she made no profit working for a nonprofit. Sam, Martha, and Max bundled up against the winter wind and followed the Broker across Nostrand Avenue, whose concrete median segregated the Hasids on one side and the Caribbeans on the other. Kosher bakeries. Check-cashing joints. Family Dollar."Trust me," said the Broker, "Crown Heights is a diamond in the rough. It's where everybody who is anybody will be in two years."

Just off Franklin Avenue, they passed a sketchy windowless bar/social club from which a man in a tracksuit emerged and mumbled Eastern bloc obscenities about Martha's ass.

"It's not exactly SoHo," said the Broker, "but there are plenty of places to eat and drink."

"My dad doesn't drink," Max told the Broker. "My dad went to rehab."

"Okay, Max," Sam said, taking his son's hand. "Thank you for sharing."

Sam locked eyes with the West Indian employees inside a bodega. They sold blunts and pirated DVDs. And, judging by their derisive faces, the locals didn't just see Sam and Martha as speculative homeowners. They saw Pilgrims on the shore proffering smallpox blankets, the harbingers of an impending invasion of craft beer and artisanal cheese.

The Broker also attracted his share of sideways glances at his coiffed fauxhawk, skinny tie, and androgynous gait. Impervious, he led the charge past the parkway, past Empire Boulevard, and down Midwood Avenue, a residential side street flanked by ill-maintained, boarded-up, turn-of-the-century row houses. "You'll notice the gabled roofs. Casement windows. Transoms. All the original mullions."

Martha said, “I bet this block used to be beautiful.”

“Yeah,” Sam muttered. “When it was built in the last century. Now it’s just crack dens.”

“What’s a crack den, Dad?”

“It’s a place where plumbers live and you see their butt cracks all the time.”

“Are you ready?” said the Broker. “This is the place.”

They stopped outside 223 Midwood. A decrepit brownstone. Sagging gutters. Graffiti sprayed across the plywood in the windows. A foreclosed sign staked into the moribund grass. Martha said, “It looks like it’s seen better days.”

“It looks like a monster, Mom.”

The Broker unlocked a chain lock, pushed aside the plywood, and led them inside. Sam was stunned at the state of disrepair. The banisters were barely held in place by loose spindles. The high ceilings had water damage, wreaking havoc on the plaster moldings. Sam had his doubts about the structural integrity of the vaulted hallways. The bathrooms were shellacked with rust.

“You’ll notice the fireplace,” said the Broker.

Sam unlatched the flue and the fireplace rumbled an inchoate epithet.

“Santa might get killed coming down this.”

Martha, on the other hand, saw potential in the mahogany floors. The dust-covered cast iron stove. She fell in love at first sight with the copper claw-foot bathtub. She saw children’s names and heights sketched onto the door frame: ciprian 4'11". dragos 5'7". rodica 5'4". This house had a history. This house had been a home. A place where a family lives. A place Martha, raised by a single mother in a series of single-bedroom apartments, had never had.

“Built in 1946,” the Broker said. “Can’t you just feel the history?”

“I can smell the asbestos,” Sam said.

Martha asked, “Who used to live here?”

“It was a foreclosure, so it wasn’t disclosed,” the Broker said. “It’s a great bargain.”

“It’s definitely a fixer-upper,” Martha replied, “but my husband definitely loves power tools.”

“That’s right,” the Broker said. “Remind me, Mr. Rathbone; you build stools or something?”

“Furniture. Not stools exclusively. But this might be a little above my pay grade.”

“My mom makes more money than my dad,” Max told the Broker.

“Thank you for sharing, Max.”

The Broker led them into the dark basement.

“This is huge!” Martha gushed. “It’s totally perfect for your studio, Sam.”

“It’s totally unfinished,” Sam said. “We’d need to insulate. Plus, I bet we’ll be sinking money into a sump pump. This place would need a lot of work.”

“This place has a lot of potential,” Martha said. “Did you see that claw-foot bathtub?”

“Do you hear that furnace? The radiant coils are rusted.”

The Broker said, “For the square footage, you’re not going to get anything close to this at your price point.”

“What’s the list price?”

“Two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars,” said the Broker. “It’s a steal. I have ten other clients seeing this house. Someone will be buying it today. It should be you. C’mon, Max, I’ll show you the backyard. You have a dog, right?”

The Broker led Max upstairs, leaving Sam and Martha alone in the basement.

“I think this might be it,” Martha said.

“Uh. I think it’s a hellhole,” Sam said. “It’s a money pit.”

“It’s the best our money can buy,” Martha said. “It’s exactly what we need. It’s not just a place to live, Sam. It’s a new start.”

He knew she was right. She deserved a clean break. He owed it to her. To Max. After all the shit he had put them through. After what he had done. What he could not undo. “This will be a lot of labor,” he said. “Like some Bob Vila–type shit.”

“Bob Vila gets me hot and bothered,” Martha said, kissing Sam. “I like men who know how to use their hands. All that elbow grease all over me. Why don’t we go upstairs and test out that claw-foot bathtub?”

“Martha. Honey. You can’t seduce me into buying real estate.”

“You can’t resist.”

Her lips were warm on his neck. He said, “You make a good argument.”

“I am a lawyer,” she said.

“I guess we’re buying a house.”

“It’s not a house,” Martha said. “It’s a home.”

They kept kissing, illuminated by the single bulb in the mildewed basement.

On the front lawn, the Broker took a cell phone picture of Sam, Martha, and Max posing for a family portrait in front of their new home.

“We’ll take it,” Sam said.

The renovations began. Sam put his own business on hold and did most of the carpentry. It was a full-time job. He fitted new pipes for the plumbing. He installed new fixtures, only bringing in outside help to replace the termite-ridden ceiling beams. Martha took a couple weeks off and did most of the painting (Opaline latex from Restoration Hardware).

Their dog, Dave, was just happy to no longer be confined to a minuscule Manhattan apartment. The white German shepherd was content to spend his days in the backyard consuming mulch and, subsequently, his own feces.

Max loved having such a big house to explore. It was so big he skateboarded between rooms. Max’s favorite room was a walk-in cupboard built beneath the staircase. His mom called it a broom closet. One day, Max snuck inside the tiny, spandrel-ceilinged room. He spun three times around and pronounced: “Levitas vominos!” like his favorite boy wizard. Dizzy, Max dropped his pencil/wand between the floorboards. Bending down, he noticed a small ring embedded in the wood and lifted up a hatch in the floor, revealing a small storage space.

Behind a wall of cobwebs and dusty canned goods, Max found a doll about his size. Its body was made of sticks tied together with twine and its head was a burlap bag filled with twigs. It didn’t have hair and it didn’t have clothes. Nothing cute about it. Which was fine by Max. He hated cute toys.

He pulled the doll out and asked, “What’s your name?”

Max went down into the basement, where Sam was putting the final touches on his studio, using an electric belt sander on a sheet of Baltic birch. Max knew all the tools by name. Almost before he could walk, his dad had taught him the basics of furniture fabrication. Max knew about the mattock axe. The mallets. The C-clamps and tenon cutters. He even knew the dowel jig and spokeshave. He also knew that tools were not toys. Never play with power tools. Especially the DeWalt. Max thought DeWalt was a funny name. Was it short for DeWalter?

“Hey,” Sam said. “What’s going on, Mad Max?”

Max showed his dad the old doll.

“Wow, buddy. This is quite a relic. Must be fifty years old. I’m amazed the moths didn’t destroy the burlap.”

Max said, “His name is Mr. Sticks.”

Sam turned the doll over. On the back of its burlap head, he saw a faded symbol. Hand drawn. A circle inside a circle. “Well,” Sam told the boy, “this old piece of junk is probably besieged with bedbugs. We should probably get rid of it.”

“But he’s my friend.”

“There’s nothing friendly about bedbugs, Mad Max.”

Martha appeared at the top of the stairs, holding groceries. “C’mon, boys, I need your help. DEFCON 3. We’ve got a party to prepare for.”

The housewarming didn’t feel like a party to Sam. Probably because he didn’t feel drunk. Probably because he wasn’t drinking. Those days were done. He drank coffee instead. He’d need heavy fuel to survive the fusillade of facile insults: “Crown Heights is totally up and coming.” “The neighborhood is so diverse.” “Does Crown Heights even have Seamless?”

The house was filled with Sam’s friends from RISD. Martha’s friends from law school. Friends of friends. Everybody had tattoos. Everybody had beards. Dancing and debating the literary merits of Patricia Lockwood’s tweets. Scream talking over the vinyl Gogol Bordello: “Franklin Avenue is having a renaissance. You have to wait an hour to get into Barboncino.”

“I think I saw Colson Whitehead buying brie at Wedge.”

“Doesn’t Anthony Mackie own a nightclub next to Mayfield?”

“I’m telling you, man, Crown Heights is well on its way to becoming Greenpoint. For God’s sake, there’s an organic Laundromat next to Café Rue Dix!”

Sam stoked another Duraflame as people congregated around the fireplace. Everybody drinking penicillin cocktails and/or PBR while they dissected the recessed bookshelves filled with Sam’s books from art school (Bosch to Banksy) and ate the goat burgers Martha had bought from Whole Foods.

“Is the goat too gamey?” Martha called out from the kitchen. Sam swooped in behind and clutched her waist. “No, honey, the goat is not too gamey.”

“Do people like the house?” she asked.

“People love the house. They hate how much we paid.”

“Manifest destiny, bitches. We’re totally pioneers.”

Sam kissed her. After all this time, after all their work, the house did look amazing. So did Martha. With her vintage dress. With her Veronica Lake hair. “You go socialize,” he told her. “I’ll man the meat.” Martha played with his facial hair, kissed him, and headed into the soirée. Sam opened the Whole Foods bag and pulled out another package of ground goat tenderloin, formed a few dense patties, and tossed them into the frying pan. The grease fomented the flames.

Martha made the rounds through the social circles. Dave, the white German shepherd, somehow managed to fall asleep in the middle of the party, in the middle of the living room. “Did someone roofie our dog?” In the dining room, Martha intercepted Rachel, a good friend from undergrad. “Great party,” Rachel said, “great house. I love the high ceilings. The fireplace. The reclaimed wood. When do you guys plan on flipping this shit?”

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Herman Ovalle:

The reserve untitled The Blumhouse Book of Nightmares: The Haunted City is the e-book that recommended to you to learn. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to a person. The language that publisher use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The writer was did a lot of study when write the book, to ensure the information that they share for your requirements is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of The Blumhouse Book of Nightmares: The Haunted City from the publisher to make you considerably more enjoy free time.

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