

Locale Profile: The Murder House – My Snowy Night at Lizzie Borden's

The mystery and the macabre surrounding the Borden family on that fateful August day in Fall River has long captivated the nation. We love a good slaying, our primal American bloodlust drawn to the horrors of murder and ultimate family betrayal. Some of us even yearn to be among what remains in our present realm, and seek out these houses and havens of ultimate horrors. For thrill, for scares, for the turn on ... our reasons are many.

It was that yearn and fascination with the Borden mystery that led me to spend a frozen night with my wife in a bed feet from where Abby Borden met her violent end by a still-unknown assailant.

We arrived at the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast at dusk as directed when making the reservations. Stepping into the house was an immersive experience, great efforts have been put forth to re-transform this urban home to its former turn-of-the-last century glory. Everything is presented just as it was in August of 1892. We were met by the charming and eccentric caretaker, who was wrapping up the last of the day tours. We had booked accommodations in the John V. Morse room, the very same room Abby Borden was discovered slumped over, 20 hatchet blows to her head. The room was quaint, like the guest room at any one of a million grandmothers' homes, if the grandma's house ever hosted an axe murder. Our caretaker for the evening advised us to go to dinner before we returned to the house for the special night tour, which was to begin at 8. She also smiled wide and told us where we could find and explore the Borden family burial plot.

After a robust dinner and a brisk walk around a darkened graveyard, finding the last resting places of the entire Borden clan, we returned to the house just as a light snow began to fall, giving the streets long shadows and the cold wind a sharp edge. I enjoyed several cocktails at dinner, and decided to sneak some nip bottles in with me for the tour. We waited in the sitting room as other guests arrived, and our caretaker again emerged to begin spinning the history of the notorious house and the dynamics of the ill-fated family. The tour moved from room to room, and nonstop and well-versed litany of information flowed from our host as she brought us back to the 19th century with everything from lurid tales of intimate family drama and local history to anecdotes about nuances in the houses design and construction. We soon made our way to the various murder sites, her tone almost hushed when detailing the timeline of the brutal slayings and discovery of the bodies. Immediately, one is cautioned against judging Lizzy off the bat, yet overwhelming evidence as to the contrary is coyly provided. By this point in the evening, we had made our way to the attic of the home, and the snow outside had turned into a genuine winter storm. The tale turned to the sensation of Lizzie's arrest, the spectacle of a trial and her subsequent acquittal, which shocked the nation. Each sordid detail washed down with my secret refreshment, the icy chaos outside a perfect pair to the fire in my belly and horror movie tingle on my spine. A midnight seance was to conclude the evening, but our host informed us the weather prevented the medium from coming, and that she, too, would have to leave immediately to avoid being snowbound with us for the night.

Upon our host's departure, the guests were given free reign over the house. Some sat up talking about the murders in the sitting room, feet from where Andrew's eyeball was cleaved in half. Some headed to the attic, Ouija boards in tow to summon the restless Borden spirits. My wife and I decided the best

thing was to drink the rest of our booze, lay in bed near Abby's last breaths in the pitch darkness, watch the snow howl outside and softly whisper our various thoughts and theories, almost as if Abby could hear us. We drifted off as a deep cold settled into the room, a gloom of both winter and death.

We awoke to the sun glittering off a powder-covered street, a solid night's sleep free of specters and spooks. However, as soon as I rolled over, I noticed something amiss. Our coats, hung the night before after dinner on the coat rack by the door, were in the middle of the floor folded in half and stacked upon each other. My wife immediately began laughing and punched my arm, chiding me for the joke. The joke, I must iterate, I was not in on. To this day, when we tell this story to friends, she still does not believe that I did not fold the coats. I am hoping this article compels her to finally believe me. An odd prank for a ghoul, sure, but who's to say how we'll get our kicks once we kick the bucket. The coat mystery too remains unsolved.

After our wonderful hosts returned to prepare a large hot breakfast of Johnny cakes and fresh fruit and eggs, allegedly what the Bordens were to have consumed for breakfast upon the infamous day, and laughing conversation with fellow guests about the intense weather and their various experiences the night before, we pointed our truck back to Rhode Island.

The Borden mystery is one that will never be solved, part of what still draws paranormal investigators and murderabilia enthusiasts alike to find a small house on a busy street in Fall River and immerse themselves in a story rich in blood and betrayal and historical high society. The Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast offers this glimpse into another world, where you too can become a part of the history and indulge your inner macabre fascinations.