[Snap Judgment intro]

**Glynn:** Snappas, I'm asking if you dig storytelling that matters, please support Snap at *snapjudgment.org* because we have just a very short time to make this happen. I get this note from Kathy. And Kathy says, "Glynn, I just want to tell you that I donated as much as I could this month. I'd love to do more, but a fixed income is pretty much gone the day it hits the bank. I don't know what I'd do without Snap. It's without a doubt the highlight of my week every week. I'll try to do more next month. I hope others will too. Sincerely, Kathy. A dedicated Snappa."

Fixed income. [scoffs] No, Snappas. No, no, no. We are not going to allow this. You are not going to allow this. Kathy gets Snap for free. Snap Nation, we need 5000 Snappas to step up because you are not going to have a lady on a fixed income stretch to support this program. That's not who we are. So, please stop the show for just a moment. Yes, it is a banger, but please stop the show. Go to *snapjudgment.org*. Pick a level of support that works for you. For monthly supporters, we've added some good stuff, including, and you heard it here first, backstage passes to join me at Spooked Live in San Francisco or join us for a virtual Snap recording session. But the only way this works is if Kathy can listen for free because this is a community that supports each other. I know it is. *snapjudgment.org.* Thanks.

Welcome to Snap Judgment. Today, we're featuring a story from our evil twin podcast, Spooked, now a weekly show. We are so proud.

You know, when you're out in the woods at night, sitting around a campfire, poking at the coals and folks telling those scary stories, well, you know that one person in your group who just has a knack for the best yarns? The kind of storyteller that can make you scream, make you jump out of your seat, make the hair on the back of your neck stand up? Well, Snappas, be afraid. We found a master storyteller, Todd Narron. If you're not already around a campfire, you might want to dim the lights and get real close. Snap Judgment.

Please understand our next story is terrifying. Sensitive listeners are advised.

**Todd:** My old grandfather had a brother named Uncle Frank and he was mean in everything he did. He was so mean that nobody around there would hire him or even talk to him or have any business do with him. There was a rich moonshiner in the area and Uncle Frank worked for him. That's the only job he could get.

He would either whoop you, if he couldn't whoop you with a knife or a hatchet or something, he'd throw a spell on you, and you'd be dead in less than a week.

Okay. Now, Grandma told me the spell went like this, but she wouldn't tell me all of it because she didn't want me or Walker, Jr. doing it. She said you had to get a cat, a dead cat. You couldn't go out and kill a cat or anything like that. You take that cat and you put him in a pot outside, of course, and you boil it until all the meat and the hair, and everything's gone. There's nothing but the bones left. You take those bones, and you have to take it to a river or a little creek somewhere where there was running water, and you toss the bones into the running water. And then, there's one cat bone in that cat that's afloat. The other ones are a sinking in that running water, but the other one afloat, that's the one you're going to be needing, is that floating bone. You take that floating bone, and you got you a dead man on the way. If you get the floating cat bone and take it back to whoever your enemy is or whoever you want to get, you put it under his rug. When that man stepped out under that rug, they would step on that cat bone and the death spell be all over them.

But that's all she would tell us about a spell, because she knew that Uncle Frank was in us too. His blood was in us, and she didn't want us to turn out like Uncle Frank.

One morning, he got up, slicked back his hair, cussed a little bit, and walked out the back door and stepped on the rug, and he felt a little lump. Me and you might not worry about what a little lump was, but we just keep going. But Uncle Frank knew what that was. He picked up the rug and there it was, a floating cat bone. Somebody had finally gotten Uncle Frank and he was sure mad about it. He had a spell all over him and he [unintelligible 00:05:28] damn sure enough that he was dead. But he was going to do everything in his power to make sure he found out who it was that killed him. So, somebody told him about a witch. That's where Uncle Frank went. She told him there wasn’t nothing that she could do for him, that in less than a week and probably a couple of days, he'd be dead. She said, but there is one thing that she could do.

She said, "Just as soon as you die, you're probably going to go straight to the hell. You're going to see the devil, and you can make a deal with the devil." He would kill the man that killed Uncle Frank but if you had did this and made the deal with the devil, you would burn hot, twice as hot as a regular sinner. But Uncle Frank, he figured hot was hot, so who cared about being twice as hot? So, he made that deal with the witch and the devil. And then, he went back to my grandmama, and he told her. He said, "Just soon as I die, wait for the next person in the community to die, and that'll be the one that killed me."

It didn't take but just a few days. He fell dead as a doornail, just as healthy as he could be and he was a-cussing. Then, he just fell dead right in front of smokehouse. And about 30 minutes after Uncle Frank died, grandma sat down, she listened. After a while, it came in that the preacher died. She was kind of surprised that it was the preacher. When they went through his pockets, they found three other floating cat bones. We don't know how many people he killed, but he sure killed a bunch of sinners and was planning on killing a lot more sinners with the floating cat bones.

They say all the young'uns got together and put Frank up and brought him back in the house in the living room and washed him and cleaned him up and everything. We didn't do no autopsy or nothing like that back then. We just grabbed him up, cleaned him up, and tried to get him ready for burial. They called the funeral man, but the funeral man said they weren't going to come and work on Uncle Frank. He was just too mean.

Well, they laid him out in the living room and hoping some of his friends or somebody would come by, but Uncle Frank didn't have no friends, so they didn't know what to do with him. They called a churchyard and they said, "Can we bury Frank in the churchyard?" And church people said, "No, because we can't sell the lots beside of him." Nobody wants to beside Uncle Frank. They couldn't find nowhere to put Uncle Frank. So, my granddaddy went down to the back of the farm and started digging, but it was really clay, he couldn't get about a foot down in the ground. They had a neighbor, and we all called her Aunt Rue, but I don't really know what her real name was. And they went and asked her. She said he could go way down in the bottom of the farm, but it just had to be far enough away from her house because she didn't want Frank close to her. So that's what he did. He went way down in the bottom of her farm, she dug a hole and buried him. He couldn't afford a stone, so he just got a white azalea bush and put it on top of Uncle Frank.

Aunt Rue, yeah, went to her house quite often, me and my brother. She was real, real, real old by the time me and Walker, Jr. came along. She always had sugar cookies and cola and everything, anything we wanted to do, she would do it. She was one of the sweetest person I'd ever know.

One weekend, I was just too sick, I was down in the throat, couldn't hardly swallow. It was our weekend to go to our grandma and granddaddy's. Well, Walker, Jr. knew that he'd be kind of bored with nobody his age to play with, Walker, Jr. is my brother, so he carried his best friend, Ben O'Neill, down there to play.

Walker, Jr. and Ben O'Neill were looking around, trying to find something to do. Back in the 70s, there wasn't much to do. I mean, even if you look TV, you had to watch what the grown folks watched, and that was no fun. They found some fishing poles. They went and knocked on Aunt Rue's door. They asked could they go fishing. And she said, of course they could, did they have any worms? And they said no. She said, "Well, go down there by the tobacco field, dig up some worms." They ended up going little bit farther than it should. They started digging worms right up under a white azalea bush. This was about 40 years later after Uncle Frankie died. And sure enough, they had hit something. And they looked real hard at it. It was a skull. And it was worms, great big worms just crawling everywhere, in and out of the holes of his eyes and his nose and everywhere else. So, they thought they hit the jackpot. They were just scared of skull.

Ben O'Neill took the skull, and he took it out of the hole, and he started chasing my brother, ain't like he was going to bite his ear off or something because Walker Jr. wouldn't touch no skull or nothing like that. Finally, Walker Jr. told him to take it back. But Ben O'Neill was lazy, so he just put it downside a stump and kept going. But anyway, they went fishing. And them worms were some tough because every time they tried to put them on the hook, he could swear they would grunt. They throw the worms into the pond with the hook and the chain pole, it seemed like every fish in the pond go to the other side of the pond. So, there wasn't much fish caught that day. They walked back to granddaddy's house, and they didn't tell nobody nothing about finding that skull.

They thought, "Well, what else can we do fun now?" They said, "Let's spend a night in the smokehouse, camping out." They got the quilts and Coca-Colas and all the candies they could get or grandma would give them. They went out and they laid out in smokehouse. They're playing and laughing and stuff. And it got kind of late, so they started laying down to go to sleep.

When they did, something started crawling on the toes and went up to their ankles and went up to the legs and just went all over. They started itching all over. We didn't know if they had the chiggers or what was wrong, but they went busting through grandma's bedroom door saying that something was beating them up. She said, "What'd y'all get into?" Like she didn't know if they got in something they were allergic to or something. They finally told her about the skull. Well, she knew exactly who the skull was. So, she put on her clothes, and she said, "Take me to the skull." So, that's what they did in the middle of night, they walked down there with a flashlight and they found the skull beside a stump. Ben O'Neill picked it up and they told her to go put it back in the hole. When they did, they put it back in the hole, the worms just came from everywhere and crawled all over that skull. But the itching went away. Just went away, like somebody put a salve or something on me, it just kind of disappeared.

When they put the skull back where it's supposed to be and they walked home that night, they said nobody said a word, but they just came home telling me they had found a skull. I said, "No. You're lying. Ain't no way in the world." He said, "I did." I was real jealous. Well, actually, I wanted to see the skull, but he never would take me back there. But, yeah, I'm kind of glad I wasn’t there because Walker Jr. and Ben O'Neill were too good little boys. They were real good. They didn't do no harm to nobody. But when they dug the skull of Uncle Frank, them boys seemed like they changed. My brother got a little wilder, doing things he wasn’t supposed to.

My brother was in another town, a town he shouldn't have been in. And the cops saw him. Well, the cops got behind him and Walker Jr. made a bad choice and decided to run. They were running him down, and he overcorrected in a curve, and it flipped him out of the car and it flipped on top of him and killed him. I was 13. He was 19.

Ben O'Neill, I thought the world of him. Everybody did. He was a sweet boy. But after he touched that skull, he took his own way, because Ben O'Neill turned out to be a little meaner than Uncle Frank, really. He joined up with a motorcycle gang. It was a motorcycle club that [unintelligible 00:14:08] ride. All motorcycle clubs ain't bad, but this particular club was bad. After he'd been there a while, he just got to be too bad. I guess that he got so bad that the rest of them got scared. Two of them held him down and they cut his head off and they put it somewhere out in the woods. We don't know where his head is. We know where his body is, but we don't know where his head is. It's somewhere in Johnson County.

I hope it ain't Uncle Frank that did all that to my brother and to Ben, but I can't say he didn't. I guess you could say I was kind of blessed that I had a sore throat that weekend because I didn't get to see what they saw. If I had, maybe Uncle Frank would have jumped on me. There's no telling I would even be here right now talking to you. You never know about evil. It's just got a way of following you around, once you get into it. And sometimes you just can't shake evil.

[sinister music]

**Glynn:** We want to thank Todd Narron for sharing his stories with us. Thank you for giving us the heebie-jeebies, Todd. If you want more stories from Todd Narron, not to worry because he's got a book, *Country Stories of Ghosts and Bad Men.* More on our website, *snapjudgment.org*. The original score for this piece was by Renzo Gorrio. It was produced by Anna Sussman.

[sinister music ends]

[Spooked theme music begins]

Be afraid. Spooked is brought to you by the team that smells danger. Except for Mark Ristich. He smells dinner. There's Davey Kim, Zoe Ferrigno, Anne Ford, Erick Yanez, Teo Ducot, Marisa Dodge, Leon Morimoto, Miles Lassi, Yari Bundy, Doug Stuart, Fernando Hernandez, Lauryn Newson, Eliza Smith, Anna Sussman and Renzo Gorrio. The Spooked theme song is by Pat Mesiti-Miller. My name is Glynn Washington.

And you may have heard that this is not the news. No way is this a news. In fact, you could work a late shift one night at the radio station and receive call after call from various people, describing in exquisite detail each and every aspect of your childhood bedroom lost in the house fire those many years ago. And when you finally called the switchboard to complain, they could tell you that they're not sure what you mean because there have not been any phone calls forwarded to this number. And you would still, still not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

[Spooked theme music]

Snappas, if you've ever been stuck, frozen, unable to move until you heard the end of the story, like, I don't know, maybe right now, that means this show means something to you. It's in you. So, please support the show that makes it happen at *snapjudgment.org*. If we've ever changed your perspective, please put something on at *snapjudgment.org*. Now, you can join, win a virtual pitch session, and even get backstage for Spooked live so much more at *snapjudgment.org*. So, please, hit pause, just for a moment right now, hit pause before continuing with the program and support storytelling that matters at *snapjudgment.org*. Thank you.

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