

The Watcher – Family Flees New Home from Threatening Letters

By: Chaz Wilke - Staff Writer



“Bring me young blood,” an anonymous letter [reads](http://bit.ly/1LA042E) (<http://bit.ly/1LA042E>). “Once I know their names I will call to them and draw them to me.” On June 4, 2014, shortly after closing the sale of the Broaddus’ new home in a suburb of New Jersey, the first of three letters arrive.

“Who am I? I am the Watcher”

Derek and Maria Broaddus were over the moon when they closed on their \$1.3 million home just outside of New Jersey. A safe neighborhood to raise their three young children and a home large enough to give each child their own room was high on their list. But the dream turned to a nightmare almost instantly. The first of three anonymous letters arrived almost immediately after the sale of the home finalized.

Weeks later a second arrived, and a month after that a third letter appeared in their mailbox.

The threats in each letter appear directed at the Broaddus’ children, referred to chillingly as “young blood.” But, it appears “the watcher” is most interested in the home itself. From the cryptic letters it appears the family’s new home “has been the subject of [the watcher’s] family for decades” and now “I have been put in charge of watching and waiting for its second coming.” The letter explains that three generations of watchers have slavishly observed 657 Boulevard.

The letters also clearly make reference to the watcher contacting the previous residents. This is where the Broaddus family felt a seller disclosure would have been in order when purchasing this home. Earlier this month the Broadduses filed a lawsuit in Union County, New Jersey, stat-

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ing that the previous owners should have been forthcoming with the established nuisance. The lawsuit reads (<http://bit.ly/1BHi3kn>) “the Plaintiffs absolutely would never have purchased the home had they known about ‘The Watcher.’”

The argument the Plaintiffs are posing is the willful and deliberate concealing of an intangible fact about the home at 657 Boulevard. You may recall how [difficult it is](http://bit.ly/1BIZqaa) (<http://bit.ly/1BIZqaa>) to pin down what an intangible fact is about a property.

“Have they found what is in the walls yet?”

“In time they will.”

Three letters spaced out over a month and a half immediately after buying a home are not an accident. The previous owners have yet to respond to the lawsuit. But given that the watcher deliberately says contact was made with the seller, it appears the previous owners knew about this shadowy figure who claims some amount of ownership over the Broaddus’ new home.

“It cries for the past and what used to be in the time when I roamed its halls,” the third letter reads.

Anyone would be rightfully freaked out if they received numerous letters threatening their children’s safety. But is there any legal right to sue the previous owners for not disclosing this nuisance?

New Jersey real estate law is hazy on the subject of threatening letters as an intangible fact about a property. The Garden State includes an implied [warranty of habitability](http://bit.ly/1GBZLx3) (<http://bit.ly/1GBZLx3>), which essentially removes the ability to sell a property “as is.” However nagging letters from a creep who watches the windows of your home, allegedly each night, might not fall under the stringent definition of habitability.

“Who has the bedrooms facing the street? I’ll know as soon as you move in,” one letter reads. “All of the windows and doors in 657 Boulevard allow me to watch you and track you as you move through the house.”

While these letters are clearly intimidating, they don’t impede the habitability of the structure, which New Jersey law only requires guarantee of elements that can affect the health and safety of its occupants. But the Broadduses are making a plea to the court that direct and informed threats toward their children are grounds for a direct impact on their safety, even though the watcher has yet to physically attack their property or members of the family.

“I am in charge of 657 Boulevard,” a letter reads. “It cries for the past and what used to be in the time when I roamed its halls.” “Will the young bloods play in the basement [?]”

These eerie questions show a stark and deranged mind obsessing over the property, which the Broadduses argue would then require an intangible disclosure during the sale of the house. But how hard is it to demand restitution from unwittingly purchasing a stigmatized home? It may end up being up to a judge to decide.



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Nolo.com [explains \(http://bit.ly/1GBZLx3\)](http://bit.ly/1GBZLx3) “a property may, for example, be ‘stigmatized’ if it is affected by psychological or other factors that have nothing to do with its physical condition but affect whether it would be desirable to live in.” But this requires the courts taking “the watcher” at his word that he contacted the previous owners.

Nolo reminds us that intangible disclosures are still predominantly caveat emptor in nature: “In New Jersey, you do not have to disclose these things BUT, if the buyer asks you about them, you must answer honestly.”

Since the Broadduses had no previous knowledge of the watcher or his eerie attachment to their new home, they had no grounds to even think to ask. This fact may ultimately be the deciding factor in their lawsuit.

“Let the young blood play again like I once did.”

There is an unfortunate ambiguity to this case that doesn’t play well in the Broadduses favor. First there is the intangibility of the home’s stigmatization. Second, the entire argument of the lawsuit hinges on taking this anonymous letter writer at his word that he did contact the previous owners. Then there’s the fact that while clearly threatening there has been no material attack on the Broadduses home or family. All this may ultimately lead a judge to rule in favor of the previous owners. There is a much more clear cut case against whoever calls himself the watcher.

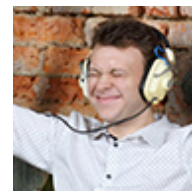
Takeaway

Unless the home has a publicly known intangible issue or stigmatization, it can be incredibly difficult to prove the need for restitution from a previous owner. The laws have evolved to protect the buyer considerably more than decades ago. But when it comes to psychologically troubled individuals in the community targeting your children, you may just be better off fleeing your home and calling the police, like the Broadduses have done.



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We all dream of finding the perfect home. We obsess over the number of bedrooms, being close to good



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Few things are permanent in this disposable culture of ours. But it’s still hard to believe how quickly to-



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There is no more potent image of American prosperity than a sprawling tree-lined street filled with large single-family

homes in a word: suburbia. Here,

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