

Haunting Tales of Estate Planning Nightmares

With Halloween's arrival, it's time for a spine-tingling journey into the world of estate planning horror stories. These are no ordinary ghost stories; they are the eerie accounts of what can happen when individuals meet their untimely demise without a plan in place. From unresolved adoptions to estranged children, unfinalized divorces, and murky claims of common-law marriage, these tales are sure to give you the chills and remind you of the importance of proper estate planning in this haunting season.



1. The Case of the Phantom Adoption

When Emily was young, she was assaulted and became pregnant. Instead of terminating the pregnancy, she decided adoption was her best option. As Emily grew older, she met William and together they created a family of four. Upon her passing without a plan in place, William learned that he did not inherit the family home and the estate owed a significant amount of money to the adopted kid and his other children. To make matters worse, probating the estate turned out to be a spine-tingling legal battle that lasted for years and cost tens of thousands of dollars.

2. The Unsettled Divorce

John and Sarah met 18 months ago. John was a widower, having been married for 35 years. When his first wife died, John inherited a substantial amount of money. She didn't have a plan in place and things worked out just fine. John thought the same would be true for his estate. Maybe it was too soon for him or maybe he was just set in his ways, but after being married for only 6 months, they just couldn't

seem to make the marriage work. John and Sarah agreed that the best thing would be to file a divorce—which they did. But, before the divorce was finalized, death's hand came for John. The children had no choice but to watch in horror as their inheritance was divided with Sarah

3. The Ghostly Debts of the Deceased

Bill was known for his generosity during his lifetime. He lent money to friends and family without keeping proper records, often to his own detriment. He didn't hesitate to use his credit card when he was low on cash. When he died without a plan in place, his heirs were haunted by the numerous claims on his estate, including unsettled debts and unpaid loans, creating a nightmarish financial mess.

4. The Specter of Common-Law Marriage

Lisa, was never married. She came close once and even had two children with the man. But, institutions like marriage were just not her thing. She was very vocal about her disdain for marriage. About 6 months before she died, she moved in with her boyfriend of two years, James. Before the children even knew what happened, the boyfriend filed to probate her estate—as the common law spouse! This led to a terrifying battle for the kids, who had to face the horrific possibility of dividing the estate with the boyfriend.

5. The Haunted Second Marriage

Jerome got his life together when he met Anita. Both had young children and a divorce in their wake, but together things just worked. Lisa stayed at home with the kids as Jerome worked hard for his family. The couple never put an estate plan in place. Both partners grew to love and accept their step-children as their own. After 30 years of marriage they enjoyed playing with the grandchildren, and were looking forward to Jerome finally being able to retire. But, that was before the car wreck. Jerome didn't make it, and Anita was left with crippling back trouble. Even though she lacked the resources to take care of herself, Anita was alarmed at the property division's outcome that awarded a large portion of the family estate

to Jerome's children, leaving Anita with the menacing prospect that she will eventually run out of support.

Don't Live a Nightmare

These eerie tales of estate planning nightmares serve as cautionary tales for all of us. The absence of a well-structured plan can lead to ghastly disputes, financial chaos, and strained family relationships. This Halloween season, remember that a well-thought-out estate plan is your best defense against these spine-tingling scenarios. Don't let your legacy become a haunting tale—call me at 281-425-1300 to schedule your planning session today, so you can rest in peace knowing your loved ones are protected. Happy Halloween, and may your estate planning be anything but scary!

—By Marc Pinney