

CHAPTER ONE

“A few simple instructions are all that is necessary, and I shall be pleased to give these, free of charge, to any one.”

—ALEISTER CROWLEY ON THE OUIJA BOARD

Although simply titled, this book is about far more than the Ouija board, one of the most underappreciated ceremonial implements of modern times. Like astrology, Tarot cards, crystal gazing and other forms of magickal techniques and paraphernalia that have made their way into mainstream society, the talking board has been reduced to little more than toy status. In some ways we have to thank the spiritualists' movement of the nineteenth century for this folly. They've degraded this and many other sacred mysteries in their often fraudulent quest to communicate with the deceased or the spirit world. It has been almost impossible for the board to shake the negative stigma that it works only in the lower astral plane or with subconscious meanderings. And because of this blemish, many ceremonial magicians refuse to acknowledge the possibility of using the board in a ritual setting, fearing ridicule by their peers if it became known that they were using a talking board.

Although magicians like to claim that they approach all subjects of magick from a scientific point of view, many would rather perform safer rituals of a subjective nature,

which, although important in their own right, give little evidence outside the mind of the beholder that anything has really happened. Rarely is any *objective* magick undertaken in which we hear about a magician invoking an entity from another realm into ours. The idea of communicating with demons, angels or even elementals and a whole host of other “little folk” is mythic at best in the minds of most. Many believe these entities don’t exist and will argue that they are merely allegorical.

However, history has shown that some magicians have dared to step outside this belief structure and have actually communicated with invisible entities. Aleister Edward Crowley (1875–1947) knew that human sexual polarity or magnetism could be utilized in such a way that two individuals working together could open a doorway into these subtle realms. Although this book is not meant to be a treatise on western Tantra, or sex magick, I’d like to point out that Crowley used both women and men in roles that enabled him to lift the veils and draw down invisible entities. His first wife, Rose Edith Kelly, put Crowley in contact with an entity known as Aiwass. Other examples are Mary d’Este Sturges, who put him in touch with Abuldiz; Soror Roddie Minor allowed Crowley to communicate with the spirit Amalantrah; and the poet Victor Neuberg helped Crowley work with the Enochian Angels. With his teachings, the art of ceremonial magick and the talking board can merge because the same principles of polarity are applied in both cases. Two people working together can open a doorway.

Aleister Crowley took the practice of magick into depths few individuals could ever imagine; many believe he is indisputably the greatest of all authorities on the subject. His writings provide us with a unique glimpse into the nature of the talking board’s capability as a ritualistic implement, something that many people seem to ignore. In fact, Crowley *advocated its use*. If it were only a parlor game, would the likes of the Great Beast have given this implement any consideration at all?

Grady Louis McMurtry (1918–1985) was the previous world leader of Aleister Crowley’s infamous fraternity known as Ordo Templi Orientis. He had been one of Crowley’s students since the early ‘40s and had met the Great Beast numerous times while serving as a young Army officer during World War II. I met Grady in 1977, and he spent time at my house in Connecticut on several occasions. During one of our many talks on magick, the conversation drifted into spiritism and ghost-hunting. On this subject we shared common stories and good laughs; however, one topic made Grady extremely serious. When I mentioned the Ouija board to ask his opinion on its use, without hesitation he stressed strongly that it was his and Crowley’s belief that it was not a toy to be played with lightly, and that the average person walks on dangerous ground when using the board. In fact, he said, knowing what he does about the board, he’d never use it casually. This bewildered me while piquing my curiosity.

He obliged me with a lengthy discourse, the gist of which was that a talking board utilizes the same angelic principles practiced by the Elizabethan magician John Dee (1527–1608). The board could be used to summon Enochian or lower elemental forces, which, as any true magician will attest, can be very dangerous if left unchecked. Grady further pointed out that John Dee looked *into* the invisible realms, known as Aethyrs, through the use of a crystal ball. Here the angels appeared and communicated their messages by pointing to one letter at a time on huge boards of letters.

The same principle, he said, holds true for the talking board, but, instead of going within the realm of the angels, we bring the entities out into our world to communicate in the same fashion, allowing them to move the triangle from one letter to another to spell out messages. Enochian magick is so unique that it comes with a warning that no one should dabble in its affairs unless extremely well-versed in the subject. Even non-believers who have attempted experiments have had

strange if not dangerous things happen to them. Like the Ouija board, it doesn't matter whether you believe in the system or not; it simply works.

However, intellectually what many individuals achieve through their Enochian workings is frighteningly similar to what is usually obtained when using the board as a parlor game. Grady said it best, and I have come to agree with him, that the ultimate secret when beginning to use the board is not to simply ask "Is someone there?" You must know exactly who is being summoned and from where. You do not want to blindly open a doorway into the lower astral plane. Otherwise, what one obtains through a Ouija board, if not from a lower elemental, is little more than a lucid window whereby uncontrolled imagery from the subconscious mind is allowed to ramble forth, filtering through into reality. Magickal success with a Ouija board can only be achieved if it is used in conjunction with ritualistic and ceremonial techniques of High Magick. This is where the teachings of Aleister Crowley come into the picture.

In some ways I agree with those researchers who have wondered whether or not the board is safe for the average person to use; like Grady, I too believe that it is probably one of the most dangerous devices ever placed in the hands of humanity. It easily opens the doorway to an invisible world, allowing individuals to immerse themselves into realms beyond their wildest fantasies by merely laying their hands upon an instrument called the planchette, or pointer. The Ouija board is well known for causing such tragedies as obsessions and possessions, hauntings, or the unleashing of terrifying poltergeists. It is an instant portal into the lower astral plane. Yet these types of manifestations *prove beyond a shred of a doubt* that the board is capable of bridging the invisible world with our own.

Magicians have long known that many of the problems with the board have occurred through its *misuse*. But if the average person on the street can use the board and accidentally unleash something from the lower astral, which can terrorize

their home in the form of a poltergeist, then why couldn't one well-versed in the magical arts use the board more effectively to communicate with the invisible realms? After all, the board is simply an implement that acts as a doorway. The ability to utilize the board correctly is determined by one's magical and spiritual training.

The most hardened critics who speak out against using the board may feel otherwise. To them the question is simply, "How do we stop the unearthly or demonic manifestations from occurring?" The magician, on the other hand, should be asking, "How do we open the portal *correctly* and control those invisible beings that are normally attracted to the Ouija board like a moth to the light?" Some uncontrolled antics of these invisible mischief-makers are legendary. The Ouija board is not a toy, but instead of shuffling the board into a closet, or burying it in "about a foot and a half of earth" and then sprinkling it with holy water¹ as those self-professed demonologists or the exorcist team of Ed and Lorraine Warren would have you do, it would be better to attempt a serious understanding of its mechanics.

Some may wonder why I quote Ed and Lorraine Warren, considering that their reputation amongst occultists is that of Christian fearmongers who have done little more than spread paranoia about the Ouija board rather than try to understand its mysteries. This couple claims to have investigated nearly 8000 cases of ghosts, apparitions and demons, as well as possessed people, places and things. They have been doing this for decades; widely lecturing and writing books on their experiences, they have waged a personal war against what they feel are diabolical forces of demonic possession. They believe that the Ouija board has been responsible for some of the tragedies that they have witnessed. For this reason alone I feel that some of their highly publicized comments need addressing.

After reading their paperback biography *The Demonologist*,² I felt that I had immersed myself into the Dark Ages as the book was trying to scare me with religious evils. I could only think of

Aleister Crowley who, after reading Arthur Edward Waite's *The Book of Black Magic*, stated a piece of profound wisdom: "Ah! Mr. Waite, the world of Magic is a mirror, wherein who sees muck is muck!"³

I am not saying that the Warrens' fear is not well-founded, or that the board could not be problematic and should not be used by children unless carefully supervised, but these two take any danger regarding the Ouija board to religious extremes. When Ed Warren appeared on the *Coast to Coast A.M.* radio show in October of 1999, he said, "... don't use Ouija Boards, don't hold seances, don't go into any kind of occult practices. If you want to learn about the supernatural, go to church." But if one person after another disappears in shark-infested waters, should we advocate that humanity never swims again and that it must run off to the Church for sanctity and information on fish? I believe the Church is often too blinded by the premise of good and evil, categorizing everything as either black or white, and claiming things to be evil simply through ignorance.

I do not agree with the Warrens' assessment of the Ouija board, but that one should learn the subtle nature of the board and the laws which govern the inner terrain, rather than burying the board in the backyard under a foot and a half of earth. The Warrens believe "The Ouija board has proven to be a notorious passkey to terror,"⁴ reflecting the standard folklore regarding the Ouija board. For instance, it is the general belief that if you dispose of the board improperly then the spirits you've summoned will come back to haunt you. Many sources claim that you should break the board into seven pieces and put the remnants into a deep hole, then you must say a prayer over it and sprinkle it with Holy Water before burying the board. I have also read that if you burn the board it might scream, and those who have heard the Ouija scream have all died within thirty-six hours.

Some other typical myths and superstitions regarding the Ouija are that if the planchette goes from one corner to

the next, hitting all four, it implies that you have contacted an evil spirit, and if the planchette falls off the board while you're playing, the spirit will get loose. Another way to tell if you have an evil spirit is if the planchette repeatedly makes a figure eight. However, if a silver coin is placed upon the board from the start, then no evil spirit can come through. All these, of course, are pure balderdash. There have been some cases that ended tragically after an individual began using the Ouija board, but these are rare considering the thousands of uneventful excursions daily.

As further evidence that the board is dangerous, the Warrens point out that the original story behind *The Exorcist*, written by William Peter Blatty in 1971,⁵ is completely true and it occurred when a young boy (not a girl) began "using a Ouija Board!"⁶ They are correct; *The Exorcist* is based on a real incident. It began in January of 1949, when a young boy was given a Ouija board as a gift by an aunt who had a strong interest in the occult and spiritism. She was dying of multiple sclerosis, and, being extremely close to the boy, gave him the board as a means to keep in touch with her after death. She died later that month on January 26th, 1949. Unfortunately, instead of reaching his aunt he opened a portal and allowed an entity to manifest that reportedly invaded his body. At the time this story broke, both *The Evening Star* and *The Washington Post* ran articles about this young boy's possession. The headlines of the *Post* on August 20th, 1949 told the story: "Priest Frees Mt. Rainer (Md.) Boy Reported Held in Devil's Grip."

It serves no purpose to go into all the gruesome details, but it is well known that William Blatty, a student at Georgetown University at the time, read these stories in the paper and years later based his book upon them. Blatty himself has even stated that "*The Exorcist* is, of course, based on an actual case that is factual, documented"⁷ and he has referred to this incident. The Ouija board was involved in the original event that allowed an entity to cross over between the planes and possess a young

boy. However, we should not think of this as baneful, but as a lesson in learning about the board's capability: it can draw down entities, plain and simple.

The movie *The Exorcist* was released the day after Christmas, December 26th, 1973. In addition to being one of the most horrifying movies ever made, it was probably the single most devastating piece of propaganda that gave the Ouija board its notoriety as being evil. Even the priest Father John J. Nicola, who acted as technical advisor to the movie, is quoted as saying, "I don't think I would release the film to the general public if it were up to me because of the dangers of hysteria."⁸

In the movie and the book, the Ouija board is portrayed rather graphically as the passkey. At the beginning an eleven-year-old girl named Regan MacNeil is asked if she was "playin' with the Board?" Regan simply replies "Yep." It is during this conversation that one learns that she is communicating with an entity calling itself Captain Howdy. When asked why the entity chose this moniker, Regan casually explains "'Cause that's his name, of course."⁹ What wasn't really obvious in the movie was that the name was carefully chosen by the invisible intruder to mimic Regan's father, whose name was Howard. The entity knew that Regan deeply missed her father after her parents' divorce, and used a twisted version of her father's name to gain Regan's unconscious trust. In time we learn that this entity is nothing less than the epitome of pure evil and through the Ouija board he gains access into our world. The end result is the possession of young Regan with an exorcist being called in to rid the body of the demon.

Unfortunately, the entire gist of the movie seems to imply that if one plays with the Ouija board you'll become possessed, spit pea-green soup, learn fascinating sexual tricks with a cross, and speak foully to whomever you want, priest and mother alike. After it was released, people started to believe that if they played with a Ouija board they would suffer the same fate as poor little Regan and become possessed by Pazuzu or some

other ill-favored demon. Although the Most Rev. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, responded that “I believe there is genuine demonic possession and genuine exorcism but that which is portrayed in the movie is largely superstitious, morbid, fiddlesticks and a sign of religious immaturity,”¹¹ *The Exorcist* is most likely the single greatest reason why many people got rid of their Ouija boards.

The Exorcist is not the first movie to portray a Ouija board as an evil doorway. In 1920 Max Fleischer released a cartoon called *Ouija Board, Koko the Clown*. It is very short but carries the distinction of being the very first film ever to feature the board. Since then, there have been dozens: for instance, the classic 1960s movie *Thirteen Ghosts* has a great Ouija board scene where the ghost tells the family that it was going to kill one of them. And there was the third in the Amityville series, *Amityville 3-D* (1983). It was one of Meg Ryan’s first films, and probably one she’d like to forget. (Obviously she hadn’t seen the first two movies; otherwise, she would have known the answer to her question when she asked the board, “Is there anyone in this room who is in real danger?”) Even the Warrens, who had investigated the house at Amityville, would have found this movie tragic and pointless.

The board also played a key role in *The Devil’s Gift* (1984). The plot is simple: a mother looking for a birthday gift for her son finds a cute little cymbal-playing monkey in a second-hand store and buys it. What she doesn’t know is that an evil spirit had been conjured through a Ouija board and now resides in this little toy which, when angry, becomes a bad monkey. Another movie is *Spookies* (1985). With a redundant plot like an old mansion, a group of kids who all deserve to die and a Ouija board being found in a closet, is there any wonder of the outcome? There is also the classic *Witchboard* series of movies that portrays the board as a means of conjuring evil spirits.

Many movies have used the board to explain how an evil entity was able to manifest and cause havoc in our world.

However, not all portray it as an evil implement: closer to the truth of a positive application of a Ouija board is seen in the movie *Awakenings* (1990). Here a doctor (Robin Williams) is experimenting with catatonic patients. While using a Ouija board with one of his non-responsive patients (Robert De Niro), he discovers that the man is actually functioning at a deep subconscious level.

As for the standard toy-like Ouija board, it has been distributed quietly for years without fanfare, yet it is beginning to enjoy a modest comeback with a new generation of people who want to dabble in its affairs. You can find the Ouija board displayed in toy stores across the country and advertised in gift magazines recommended for children as a means of entertainment. One advertisement humorously claims, "The Ouija Board is back and it's smarter than ever!" Another ad asks, "Remember when scaring the heck out of yourself was easy and fun?" There is even a Ouija Board mouse pad: "Stuck for an answer? If your computer can't tell you, try consulting 'the oracle!'"

The Ouija is once again coming out of the closet and the time is ripe for understanding the Truth behind the magickal mechanism that makes the triangle move. The most difficult thing will be to convince the public that the Ouija board is not a child's toy or a passkey to evil spirits. The talking board is simply a magickal instrument that can be used correctly or incorrectly. There is the possibility of serious problems occurring if one is not careful or well trained in the Arts, but it is our belief that one should not wallow in the negative stigmas regarding the Ouija board any more than discussing the problems, both practical and magickal, which are inherent in any topic. If you believe in the fears that the board is the archetype of pure evil, you'll miss out on the wealth of rewards that can be achieved through its use. With this book we shall discuss how to achieve positive results through the board and avoid the pitfalls normally attributed to it.