

Mr. Robert's Bones

(2nd round Austin Film Festival, semifinalist Moondance Film Festival)

Tag line

“Some skeletons don't stay in the closet”

Log line

When three precocious children seek to unlock the mystery of an old haunted house, they discover hidden treasure, greed, and the ghosts of the neighborhood's racist past.

Synopsis

With their Mom dead and their Dad in Iraq, Annie and Melissa are on edge when they get to their grandmother's mid-city neighborhood. When they start exploring the old Robert Marigny house with a neighborhood kid, Cedric, they expect the house to yield up a little fun and a fortune in hidden silver. But the house holds much more than that. The kids hit strange obstacles at every turn, and the path to the silver runs through unwelcoming ghosts and forgotten tales of racism and betrayal.

The quest for the silver is especially nerve-racking for Annie, the one who actually sees the ghosts, both of her mother and of the bygone denizens of the house. Her friends want to believe her but can't, and she herself is torn between running away from it all and following the ghosts into the house's dark history.

As the past slowly tears open, the old neighborhood misfits become implicated: Mr. Claude Marigny (Robert's brother), a self-proclaimed “Southern Gentleman”; Mr. Jimmy, a mysterious old black man and Claude's nemesis; and Ladybug Lopez, an ancient but sprightly Latina. Mr. Jimmy's creepy stories fill the kids in with a partial history of the old Marigny house and some clues about why it is unable to rest in peace.

The quest ramps up when two young villains hatch a plan to hoodwink Claude out of his retirement money, get the silver, and get both the haunted house and Ladybug's house.

When the crisis hits, the kids pull together in a dramatic fashion to save the house from its own past. They get the silver and confront the villains at Mr. Robert's tomb, where Mr. Jimmy emerges as a kind of neighborhood shaman, the keeper of its stories who can use the past to give meaning to the present. He gets the silver to its rightful owner, Mr. Claude, who promises to buy Ladybug's house.

The neighborhood order restored, Annie has one last ghostly vision, as her mother appears to her – and for the first time to Melissa – to say goodbye and tell them that their dad is almost home. Thus Annie's “gift” is confirmed in Melissa's eyes, and both girls gain closure with their late mom and returning dad.