

The Ghosts in Me

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Not too long after I moved into my new house, I was visited in my sleep by what I thought to be a sitting ghost. It pressed me down against the bed. I tried to resist it with all the strength of my body, but any movement I made seemed to be only in my head. I said, “Stop it. Stop it and get out.” But the force of the ghost only grew stronger. Only a couple days before, my friend A. told me how she had once successfully negotiated with a spirit who was bothering her in a cottage where she was staying for a writing residency. Since then, after she moves into any new abode, she will have a conversation in each room with possible residing spirits. Remembering her story, my anger turned to entreating.

I said, “I’m sorry. I just need to sleep. I have to get up early in the morning. I just can’t play tonight.”

I couldn’t move my arms, but I could use my hands to caress the sides of my body. A few rubs later, I felt a surge of tingling through my entire body, and a cold stream of energy leaving it. The only other experience that could approximate this feeling was the time when I got too high on something and it tingled my brains. I began to hear the noises from the pipes, the same noises that I occasionally heard on other nights – typical house noises even when the house was still. The tingling and streaming lasted a long while. And I asked it, “How many of you are there?”

The figure 8 came into my mind’s eye. In that stream of energy, I didn’t know where one spirit ended and another began. After the figure 8, I sensed a being getting really angry with me. I couldn’t make out what he was yelling about. “Hold that thought,” I said. Now that I had my faculties back, I needed to pee. And I didn’t want to offend him anymore, so I told him exactly what I was going to do.

“I will open the door, and I’m not trying to make you leave by that gesture,” I said as I got up from the bed. “I won’t turn on the lights, so you don’t have to worry about that. I know my way to the bathroom in the dark.”

When I was doing my business, he complained that I was peeing too loud. I explained patiently that I had to make sure I’m hitting the toilet bowl. In the dark, the sound was the only thing that let me know I wasn’t off on my mark. When I was done, I went back to the room.

I didn’t necessarily want them to leave. They probably had been in this house longer than I had. I don’t believe in God, but I’d like to know that if I wander homeless in my afterlife, someone would afford me the same courtesy. So our negotiation began.

The angry one told me that they envied me. They missed having a corporeal form, and this was why they went into my body when I was asleep. I found that rather thoughtful. I mean, they could've done it in my waking hours, like when I'm chopping tomatoes or making love to someone. Instead, they chose to borrow my body when I wasn't using it.

I told him that I couldn't take all 8 of them at the same time. That was just too much. It would always wake me up and then I would have no choice but to chase them out. What if they took turns each night? And they didn't have to come fully into my body. What if one or two of them just slept next to me? I put my arm around my waist. "Here," I said. "You could assume the shape of my arm. This way I wouldn't feel so lonely, too, sleeping by myself." My arm grew heavy, like it now belonged to someone else. I could feel him enter my body hesitantly, back and forth a few times, like he was adjusting himself next to me. The house went a little quieter, and we slept the whole night through.