

Artful Thinking A Ghost Story

By Artie Maglionico (September 2013)

This, believe it or not, is a true story. The girl who shared this experience with me and the street where she lived is best left a secret. It been decades since this story took place and the girl has long since moved away. The people who live there today would no doubt become unnerved if they discovered that their back yard was home to a ... dare I say it? A ghost!

It was the spring of 1964, my junior year at Lodi High School. I was keeping company with a pretty blonde girl whose house was located on a dimly lit side street somewhere...perhaps closer than you think...in the town of Lodi NJ. The entrance of her home was at the side of a two family building in an alley way at the end of which was a small cluttered yard. Not far from the rear of the alley way stood a weather beaten cement wall. I can't recall the exact height of this dilapidated structure I do know, however' that you had to stand on a garbage can to see over it. On the other side was the forgotten end of a gloomy cemetery.

As the weather became warmer, we'd unfold her neighbor's lawnchair and spend the evening hours sitting in that alleyway doing whatever teenage kids did in 1964. On this particular evening, we heard what sounded like a heavy cinderblock being dragged across a sidewalk. The eerie sound was coming from the direction of the cemetery. Seriously folks, this isn't a scene from a B horror flick --this friend is the real deal. A one day ticket to frightville! We both heard it and looked at one another as if to say "What the heck was that?" Needless to say, I went home early that evening.

A few nights later, I was back at my girlfriend's house helping her take out the garbage barrels which , to my chagrin, were located near that decrepit wall. As I looked cautiously at my surroundings, I noticed that the sudden wind gust seemed to make the trees come to life. The moonlight, as it flickered through the branches, danced across the landscape like miniature ballerinas. We heard it again--that sound--the long and agonizing movement of a cement block coming from behind the wall. Just then, the night air turned frigid and a putrid odor entered our nostrils and soured our stomachs. We dropped the garbage cans and ran up the alleyway, me first, and into the kitchen where my girlfriend's mother was sitting at the table sipping coffee and puffing on a cigarette.

We told her about the strange sound, and the foul smelling odor that emanated from beyond that wall. "What did you expect from a garbage can?" she laughed, "Roses?" My girlfriend wound up taking out the garbage the next morning.

Life went on as usual over the next few weeks. Summer was in full swing and my girlfriend and I were enjoying teenage life to the fullest. The incident in her back yard was all but forgotten. That, my friend, was about to change.

It was moonlit night in mid-July when it happened. We had just returned from the birthday party of a mutual friend. As we approached the doorway we heard that dreadful sound again. A grinding sound that echoed in the alleyway and caused the neighbor's dog to let out a blood curdling howl. Then came a sudden gust of cold wind that rushed through the darkness like a chariot of demons that had escaped from the fires of hell. I turned away and faced the street while my girlfriend stood close, still facing the backyard. Suddenly her hands began to tremble and the expression on her face became one of utter fear. "Look!" she screamed. "There in the yard!" I decided to take her word for it and ran full speed across the street.

I don't know how she did it but my girlfriend was waiting for me there still trembling, still pointing, unable to speak. I took a deep breath, turned around and there to my astonishment was a ghostly apparition. It had an angelic presence that appeared to be floating just inches off the ground as it passed through the yard. Though I couldn't make out any distinct features, the indications were that of a woman with flowing long hair and a dainty countenance. She was wearing a white gossamer gown that moved in the breeze like a cobweb. Not believing my own 16 year old eyes, I abandoned my fears and took a few paces forward. Whatever it was paid me no mind as it turned toward the wall and vanished into the darkness of the July night.

What was I experiencing? What the heck was I looking at? Even now as you read this I'm trying to make sense of it all. Was it, in fact, a ghost? It certainly looked like one to me and I can tell you that it wasn't someone lurking in that back yard wearing a bed sheet with eye holes cut out of it. It was the most startling presence I have ever seen, and the memory of which stays with me till this very day. My girlfriend moved away a few months later never to return and neither did I. Happy Halloween!