

Artful Thinking
The case of the Ghostly Intruder
by Artie Maglionico August 2011

It was a Saturday afternoon in mid October when Mother Nature descends upon the landscape with an explosion of colors and the autumn breeze penetrates deep into the fading breath of summer. I was at home just about to throw a Mac and Cheese dinner into the microwave when there came a loud disturbing knock at my door. I knew by the way the door was all but rattling off the hinges that this was not a social call...If it was then the caller would have lazily rung the bell until he or she heard me call out "I'll be right there." But this was an urgent , unsettling knock that, in the few seconds it took me to reach the doorway, grew louder still. "Who's there?" I asked, in fear that I was about to let in the devil himself. "It's cousin Gen...open up!" I barely had a chance to crack open the door when she bolted into my living room as if she were being chased by a mad Pit bull.

" You gotta come up to the house with me." she said in a panic. " My tenants are being harassed by a ghost."

This wasn't the first time that I heard about ghosts prowling around in that house. My late Aunt Clara ...Gens Mother ...who lived on the first floor claimed to have seen visitors from the spirit world standing at the foot of her bed on numerous occasions. According to my Aunt the apparitions were that of two young girls...sisters perhaps...who might have shared that same bed room while they were still of this world. The house is well over a century old and was no doubt home to more than one family over the years. What really fascinated me about these stories was that my Aunt always boasted a warm smile as she spoke of them...you know...no different than the expression she had when she talked about her grand children. " Weren't you frightened Aunt Clara?" I'd ask. "Not really" she'd answer. " They're children...what harm can children do...besides maybe they're wondering what I'm doing in their bed."

My cousin Gen claims to have seen those same images over the years so I was surprised to hear her speak about this visitation in so frantic a manner...I gave her a moment to calm down in the mean time putting my mac and cheese dinner back into the micro-wave. I ate while she spoke...I offered her some but she was too nervous to eat which was good news for me since the dinner was hardly enough for one and I was hungry. She told me that she had recently rented the down stairs apartment to a middle aged man and his teenage son. From the moment that they moved in there were strange goings on such as the phantom ringing of the door bell during the wee hours of the night or the sound of footsteps in the hall way. "First they heard the door bell ring?" I asked

Gen shook her head ...yes

" Then the footsteps in the hall?" I muttered. "Whoever was ringing the doorbell must have let himself in."

I was only kidding but Gen took me seriously.

" Oh yea" she answered " That spirit is definitely in and I think ,whoever it is , doesn't like the fact that I rented that apartment !"

"Why do you say that Gen?" I inquired

"I'll tell you why" she answered. "A few hours ago, I went down stairs to change the flushing mechanism on the toilet bowl. As I did this ...the Father was standing a few feet behind me watching me install the new part. Just then I heard him shout in pain and when I turned around I saw him

rubbing the back of his head. Evidently someone or something smacked him in the head and it obviously hurt. Thinking that he was the brunt of one of his son's practical jokes he turned and began shouting expletives at him ...now here's the weird part...I looked out of the bathroom window and saw his son out in the driveway with his head under the hood of his car."

"So it couldn't have been the son ...could it? I asked

"No way!" she insisted. "He'd have to be Superman to sneak up behind his dad smack him in the head ,run all the way to the front door ,around the front of the house and all the way to the end of the driveway, pop open the hood of his car stick his head under it all in the time it took his Father to say ouch.

"Then what happened?" I asked as I wolfed down the last forkful of Mac and Chee

"We got the hell out of there...that's what happened!" she answered.

"Ya think it was the two little girls?" I asked.

"Maybe...but I doubt it." Gen replied. I don't think they could have reached that high."

"Gee your mother died in the house," I told her. "Ya think it was her?"

"I don't know" she replied "If it was my mother she would have hit me instead of my tenant...don't ya think?"

"Well, I guess there's only one way to find out who or what the problem is" I sighed. "We'll have to go and see for ourselves."

"My sentiments exactly" she said "Any more Mac and Cheese?"

"Sorry," I replied as I gulped down the last morsel. "Just ran out!"

As we pulled into the drive way we were met by the Father and his young son...They were carrying suit cases which to my cousin Gen , was not a good omen.

"Where you going?" asked Gen as we got out of her car.

"To a motel!" answered the Father. "To tell ya the truth ...that house gives me the creeps...you were there...you saw what happened!"

"Someone is playing a joke on us" insisted Gen in a semi believable tone

"Yea well ...when you find out who give them a smack in the back of their head for me." he replied "We'll be back later ...maybe!"

Before Gen could offer a reply her tenants were in their car and heading down the street.

"Let's go inside?" she suggested "I wanna know what the hell's going on here."

The moment that we entered the hallway we heard a crash coming from inside the kitchen. The sound stopped us in our tracks and caused us to turn around and head back out the front door...with me leading the way!

"What the hell was that?" I nervously asked.

"Unfortunately we're not gonna find out standing out here!" she reasoned "Let's just go in!"

"What do you mean go in? I asked. "This house is freaking haunted...you said so yourself!"

"I never said it was haunted." Gen insisted.

“What about those two children who appeared at the foot of your mother’s bed on a regular basis...you saw them yourself.” I told her.

“ That doesn't mean the place is haunted,” she said. “Not haunted?” I asked. “There's ghosts roaming around the house and smacking people in the back of the head... If that ain't being haunted then I don't know what is!

“Don't tell me that you're afraid of ghosts all of a sudden” She asked sarcastically.

“ You bet I am!” I replied.

“ I thought you had run-ins with Ghosts before?” she inquired.

“ Yea!” I answered “Each run in resulted in a run out...I was the one running out!”

“Alright... I'm asking you for your help.” she said in an angry tone “ my tenants are ready to pack up and I don't want that to happen...you coming with me or not?”

Needless to say I followed her into the hallway and we stopped just short of the entrance . Gen put her ear to the door listening for any sign of activity from inside the apartment. She then turned to me and with a nervous grin on her face asked...jokingly...if we should knock first.

“ No!” I said in a whisper “ Somebody might answer.”

With that bit of ghostly humor having been uttered ,we opened the door very slowly, looked around and entered. The entrance lead directly into the kitchen...to the immediate right was a large white refrigerator next to which was the sink. Over the sink was a large window that separated two wall cabinets...light brown in color with brass handles. Straight ahead was the kitchen stove which was situated next to the entrance that led into the bedroom. off to the far left against the wall was the kitchen table, a few feet beyond the table was the entrance to the dining room which eventually gave way to the living room.

The first thing we noticed as we entered the kitchen was a broken dinner plate the fragments of which were scattered along the side of the table. Mixed in with the broken pieces were remnants of a recent meal...breakfast perhaps since the scraps included morsels of egg whites and fried ham. We found two similar looking dishes in the sink caked with the same scraps of food.

“ Yea these are breakfast dishes alright ” said Gen. “ I guess they would have gotten around to washing them sooner or later.”

“A ghost was chasing them out of the house for heaven’s sake” I replied “ What did you want him to do ...stop and wash the dishes ?

Our attention then turned back to the broken dish...the question remained...how did it wind up on the floor? We both knew the answer but neither of us had the guts to say it ...suddenly Gen lifted her head and grabbed me by the arm...her faced turned as white as ...dare I say it? A ghost!

“ I just felt my mother pass through me” She said “ I can smell her perfume...can you ? Can you smell her perfume? Chanel #5!”

As Gen spoke her body grew tense and for an instant began to tremble...on second thought it was me who was trembling! Gen continued to sniff the air like a blood hound, trying to catch another scent of her mother. Finally she let go of my arm and gave a long drawn out sigh.

“My mother's presence is definitely here.” whispered Gen. “She was trying to tell me

something”.

“What?” I asked. “ what was she saying?”

“I'm not sure “Gen replied “But I think she wants you to wash the dishes...and while you're at it clean this mess on the floor!”

I was just about to ask where the dish soap was when Gen cracked a smile and told me that she was just kidding.

“ It was definitely my mother” she insisted. “ I'm dead serious about that.”

“ Do you have to use the word ...dead?” I asked

Gen gave me a frown and reminded me that her mother's spirit was most definitely in the house and that she was most likely the cause of these sudden acts of dismay.

“ My Mother probably pushed the dish off the table to let me know that she didn't like the way the tenants treated the kitchen.” Said Gen “This was her favorite part of the house...she took great pride in this kitchen God bless her.”

“ Then it was she who smacked the guy in the head!” I surmised

Before she had a chance to answer our train of thought was interrupted by what sounded like the muffled giggling of children...it was distant as if it were being carried away by the wind ...we followed the sound into the bedroom and became transfixed by the images that drew us there. At the foot of the bed appeared two little girls dressed in gossamer gowns . Their hair was shoulder length the color of which could not be determined due to the brightness of the light that emanated from within them. A feeling of harmony seemed to caress the room and with that came a peaceful calm and a sense of well being unknown to me until that moment.

Then , between them, smiling that warm soothing smile that was so familiar to all who knew her, appeared the luminous vision of my aunt Clara. It was then that I heard my cousin Gen speak.

“You can go now, Mom ”she said in a faint whisper. “We don't live here any more .”

My Aunt gave Gen a deep motherly gaze ,reached out her arms and then as if by the flicking of a switch the light had ceased to shine and they were gone. They found a new home now...eternity!

As we left the house we saw the Father and son waiting for us on the front porch.

“Did you get rid of that ghostly intruder?” asked the Father

“That was no ghostly intruder!” Replied Gen in sarcastic tone. “ That was my mother...and yes she's no longer here...oh and by the way...clean up that mess in the kitchen!”