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THE GHOSTS THAT HAUNT ME

by Meagan Elixabeth

Three ghosts stood at my door. I scowled at them, peeping through my peeping hole. They couldn't see me, but I could clearly see them. The one standing in the middle must've been the one to rap the knocker against my door- he was the tallest of them.

It was growing darker outside. The sun sank slowly below the horizon, hiding behind the houses surrounding mine. The soft orange glow illuminated the ghosts standing at my door, also casting shadows so I could not make out any distinctive features. They were child-sized, covered with white sheets. Their arms stuck out, clutching orange pumpkin pails in their hands, offering them to my door. Their legs kept them sturdy beneath their sheets, held by two pairs of shoes, each planted firmly on my porch. Holes had been cut in the sheets to provide the opportunity to use their vision- but blackness peered out, staring at my door. I could not see their eyes. Only blackness.

Frowning, I began to walk away from my door, planning to ignore them. My porch light had intentionally been left off, in hopes to deter any unwanted guests. Obviously, my plan had failed.

So, I began attempt two- ignore them. Hopefully, this second attempt would succeed. They would grow bored and uninterested, move on to the next house who would warmly invite them. Unlike my cold, dark porch. I moved away from the door.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

A chill ran along my spine. I thought that was ridiculous. They were children. Mere children, nothing to be fearful of.

Something told me that I had been seen.

My windows were covered with the thickest of curtains. The only light in my house a few flickering candles (which I enjoyed reading by). I couldn't possibly have been seen.

However, something still told me that I had been discovered. That they had seen me through the door. Again, I reassured myself of the ridiculous notion. They were simply children, after all. I took another step away from the door.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

I hurried back to the door- my eye pressed tight against the peep hole.

The ghosts hadn't moved.

They stood on my porch, holding those stupid orange pumpkin pails.

"Go away!" I yelled at them- loud enough to be heard through the door. "Get lost!"

It was as though they stared directly at me. As if the door were not even there. The blackness of their eyes penetrated through the wood and threatened to cross through my threshold. In an effort to escape, I started again to walk away.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"I don't like tricks! I have no treats! Scram!"

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"Go away!" I yelled.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

"I told you to GET LOST!"

Knock. Knock. Knock.

“I hate tricks! I hate treats! LEAVE,” I screamed, “I hate them, I hate them, I HATE THEM, I hate them...”

My voice cracked- hoarse from all the yelling, my throat dry and raw. I clutched my chest, unfolding into a fitful cough. My knees shook as I doubled over. I struggled for breath.

I held the wall to steady myself. My steps were feeble, but I managed to walk down the short hallway on my own. The only assistance I needed was the support from the walls. My walls were dull and dingy. Blue wallpaper had turned to gray and peeled away, exposing the drywall underneath. However old they were, my walls supported me just fine.

Even though my hands shook, I managed to rummage through my cupboard. A few bottles fell out, rattling onto the counter, bouncing to the floor. My vision was beginning to grow blurry, but I managed to find the right medication- one of the many to treat my poor heart.

From the sink I grabbed a cup I had left and filled it with water from the faucet. For a moment I struggled to open the bottle, my hands so weak. But, I did succeed. I placed a small round pill on my tongue, tilted my head slightly to chase the pill down with a gulp of water. Sighing, I sat in my chair (the only chair in the kitchen) at my small round table, where I ate my meals.

My eyes closed- the ghosts, forgotten in that moment.

I hadn't realized, not yet, that there hadn't been a knocking at my door.

Twenty minutes or so went on before my medication began to kick in. My heart felt a bit lighter, the pressure of stress receding. I looked at the clock on my stove. Seven-thirty, the clock read. Time for bed, I thought.

I prepared my tea. No kettle. Just a plain white mug, water from the faucet, and a microwave. I dropped the bag of chamomile into the steaming water. The tea bag would remain in the cup the entirety of time it took me to drink, so it could steep all the while.

No sugar. No honey.

Nothing so sweet for me.

I continued about my nightly routine by carrying my barely steaming cup of tea to the living room. I had to squeeze through piles of old newspapers to make it to the lonely chair, one of the few pieces of furniture I owned. Except for the dim light from one flickering candle that sat on a small end-table beside my chair, the room was dark. The windows were boarded with moldy, rotting planks of wood and then covered again with the blackest of curtains. During the day some few strands of sunlight would creep their way into the room between the cracks in the boards and the holes in the curtains. Too much light gave me a headache.

I had settled comfortably within my chair, sipping my tea. When I reached for my book, I realized that it had been forgotten in the kitchen. With a groan, I struggled to my feet. I shuffled forward into the hallway- and stopped dead in my tracks.

The front door was open.

Impossible, I thought. The door had been locked tight, from floor to ceiling. Padlocks, chains, a wooden plank barring the door from entry. And yet, a cold draft of wind struck me, sending a chill through my bones.

The door was open, swinging loosely on its hinges, the chains and locks clinging together in a melody that poisoned my ears. The ghosts were nowhere to be seen.

As quickly as I could manage, I shut the door. My hands fumbled with the locks. Though I had succeeded in closing my door, a chill still ran through me.

Slowly, I turned around.

Before me stood the ghosts that haunt me.

Silently, they stood there- looking at me through black holes behind their sheets, holding out their orange pumpkin pails. I knew they were judging me, in their silence. But I had nothing to offer them. I had nothing at all.

I remember clutching my chest before I fell to the ground, looking up at the ghosts who now looked down on me. They remained there, watching me while everything turned to black. And for that, I think that I am grateful.

END