

The More You Know

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BEING A GHOST is so bogus. Like, what is a ghost even able to do, you know? So I can flicker a light bulb. So what? So can, like, a loose wire. Most of the time when I do that, people think, “Whoa, something is wrong with the lamp.” Mega lame. Like, the major thing I can do corporally is the same as some wires.

You might think being a ghost is fun because you’re invisible and can go through walls and all, but you’d be wrong. You wouldn’t believe the skeezy things people do when they’re alone—pick their butt and put their fingers in their mouths, for example. I saw some barney do that just last night when he thought no one was watching. Gross me out the door.

So mostly I’m so bored all the time, ’n’ stuff.

The 411 on how I died is that I was with Tiffani, and these guys were taking us to this rad bar in Tijuana where they supposedly invented the Fuzzy Navel. My mom was working that weekend and, I mean, I couldn’t pass up my chance to have an authentic Fuzzy Navel, could I? So we were in this dude’s bitchin’ convertible, and I was sitting on the back of the seat, like, screaming, ’cuz I’d had half an Olde English 40, and you know what? I can’t stress enough that it’s not a good idea to sit on top of the seats in a convertible, because sure enough we hit traffic and—BOOM—I tumbled off the car and into the freeway, and that was that. A total bumner.

So, like, Buckle Up, Buckle Baby, as they say in the commercial. It’s true. It’s really true. Like, learn from me. Learn from my mistakes.

Anyways, they say that ghosts haunt places they feel connected to, but I’m here to tell you that that’s bogus. You know where I’m haunting? The house right by where I died. So, like, I died on the freeway and there’s this barrier, or whatever? And then I was over that, and there’s this fugly ranch house with a wall outside that’s supposed

to look like it's made of rocks, but you can totally tell they're cement squares? And then I was inside the house, and that was it. Like, *that's* where I have to spend eternity. Or at least, some time. I've never been here before, never even went to this part of San Diego, but whatever, here I am. Just sitting in this house.

Like I said, being a ghost is lame.

At least the family who lives here now is nice. The couple who lived here before were total dweebs. They had so many fights it was like an *Afterschool Special*. I'd hide in the walls, plugging my ears, like, Oh my God, shut up already. That's how I learned to interrupt electricity—I would try turning off the lights so the dude would stop shouting about the checkbook not being balanced, or whatever, but I could only get the bulb to flicker. And the couple never noticed, not even once. So I didn't exactly weep ghostly tears when they took their yelly fights away with them in a moving van. I'm so sure, no way.

Then this new family moved in, and they're so rad. They have all these friends who are always coming over, and they have parties with bounce houses for the kids. And they have this grandma who they all love so much, and who's, like, obsessed with Mexican soap operas. And the best part is that she makes tortillas from scratch. I know. Can you even? I don't remember my mom cooking anything. I was a latchkey kid, so alls I ever ate were Pop Tarts, and, like, those chicken potpies that you bake in the oven for forty minutes or whatever. I'd eat them while watching *Love Connection* after school.

So the grandma makes tortillas with lard from a can and this weird flour, and then she mixes it by hand and cooks it. And I can't taste anything or, like, smell anything? But I totally want some, you know? So I tend to be there when she does this, watching her make the little balls of dough and flatten them with a special press, and then pop them on the griddle.

Recently she was doing this, and I looked up and saw the milk. And I was like, weird from the planet beard, why's the milk there? Cuz you don't even *use* milk for tortillas. I have the recipe memorized. So why's the milk out like that, just sitting on the counter, all gah, here I am, the milk?

Then I figured out why it was bothering me. Right there, on the carton, was a picture of *me*. Like under the word MISSING, there was my face. Oh my god, can you even? I didn't recognize myself at first cuz I don't have a reflection anymore, so I forgot what I looked like, but it was totally me. And I was like, UGH, put a bag over my face! The photo they used on the milk carton was my last school portrait, and I look straight-out grody. I forgot it was picture day and didn't do my bangs, and now I'm famous on milk cartons with flat bangs. Like, gag me with the spoon.

So, I guess my mom doesn't know I'm dead? So she got me listed as a runaway? Not even. I was totally going to come back! And it's like, didn't Tiffani tell anyone what happened? Like, thanks a lot Tiffani, my BFF doesn't even tell people I died. And now everyone thinks I'm some runaway dweeb with bad bangs, who's like, skanking her body on Melrose, or whatever.

So's anyway, I couldn't get over the fact that the family who lives in the house *fucking drinks the milk with my face on it*. I was like, to the grandma, "Helloooo I'm right here. Right behind you! Gah!" Then I tried tipping the milk over so the grandma would be like, "What's up with the milk? Who's this young girl on the carton? Perhaps it's the ghost who lives in our house." I dunno, maybe the grandma has ESP or something. Maybe that's why she loves it so much when the Mexican soap operas have ghosts in them.

But I couldn't move the carton, so I kind of zipped around the room, Katarina Witt style, for a while. Like, I was totally having a cow! When I finally calmed down, I was staring at the little bubbles that form in the tortillas when they're on the griddle, and I got this mondo plan. Like, maybe I can go into the food. I never tried to make contact that way before. And maybe that's why the milk is there, to teach me that. It has to mean something, my face being in their kitchen, doesn't it? This can't just be a random coincidence. No way, right?

So I tried it. I dove into the dough like it was a pool and the grandma passed me from one hand to the other, and I was like, whoa, whoa, whoa, what a ride, like, GAH and GAH, and then she put me on the griddle. And I didn't feel the heat or anything cuz I'm dead,

duh, but I still got pushed out of the dough with the steam and suddenly I was floating outside the food. So I tried it again and again and again. And then, on like the billionth try, something happened. The grandma pinched off some of the batter, and I jumped in it. I thought I was going on the griddle again, but instead, I went in her mouth. She was tasting the batter, and for a second, I was inside the grandma. It felt like when you shut your eyes in a bright light, and you can see the veins on the outside of your eyes, and it's like seeing the outside and the inside at once? But the inside was someone else, and I was the outside. And then I was done, and I was floating in the air, and the grandma kind of blinked, like she was Teddy Ruxpin starting up again. And I was like, whoa.

But the bogus part is that I couldn't do it again. I like, totally couldn't go back into the grandma or anyone else in the house. It was super discouraging. I tried all the food: the tortillas, the scrambled eggs, the salsa, the potato chips. Nothing worked. Somehow, every time I'd get pushed out before I could get into someone's mouth.

I even tried the milk. Duh. Of course I did. Like, the little dudes had it in their Franken Berry cereal, and I was like, OK this is my chance, *this* must be why the milk was there. So I jumped in and was swimming in the milk, and then I was on the spoon, and then I was floating above them again, looking down, so not a part of them. So separated.

But I haven't given up yet. If I did it once, I can do it again, right? I mean, it can't just be that I'm supposed to stay in this nondescript house for eternity as punishment for wanting to drink Fuzzy Navels instead of staying home and watching *Alf* reruns. No way, right? So I'm still hoping someone could, like, eat me. And then I'd be in their body, and I'd be a part of them, and a part of their family. And maybe I could, like, possess them for a minute. Not *a lot*, just long enough to take a walk outside and maybe go to the mall. I wouldn't stay in the body, or whatever. I mean, shah, I'm not some bogus demon or anything. I'd just use that person's mouth to tell the others about me, and that I used to be alive. And maybe I'd have them tell my mom that I never ran away and that I was always going to come back to her.

Then after I did that, I'd be like, "Okay, duh, of course I'm leaving now, but could you, like, toast me sometimes at your parties with your cervezas?" And they'd be like, "Sure, Stephanie, *of course*." And then sometimes they'd toast me. I'd be here in the house and I'd hear them all say, "Stephanie!" and clink clink clink, and it would be almost like I was alive again, whenever I heard it. Or, it would be like I was being remembered. Or, it would be like I had mattered, you know?