

Low Rent Ghost Story

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I pretend to have a ghost
that I scavenged for it's picture frame
from the parking lot dumpster of my Dad's apartment building in
Valparaiso.

The frame turned out to be plastic but I kept her anyway
in the back of my car for months
named her Lenore, and then Marcelle,
and eventually disassembled her frame to paste her up on the inside
front door of my own apartment.

I like to think that she's mounted high enough for her scribbly black
eyes to see out the window.

That the little doll figure of her picture might be happy to be recused
from the dump

and given a place where her faded pink background offsets so nicely
the dark wood of the door.

And in exchange for the kindness of being able to watch daily
movement of sunlight across the walls and cheap wooden floors,
I pretend that my ghost protects my apartment.

I pretend that she gets along with my cat
that they both play together while I am out.

I made meaningless symbols in red crayon on a white glass plate
and burnt the welcome letter from building management before her in
the entrance alcove.

I'm no practitioner, but I definitely don't have to pretend that Marcel
cares more about my residency wellbeing than the landlord does.

At least the rent is cheap and ghosts, especially pretend ones, have very
few needs.

I don't believe in ghosts, that should be clear,
if I did perhaps I would not invite and love Marcelle into my home as
much as I do, and I do.

But I am no big believer in anything beyond the fact that there is so
much I don't know.

So I don't believe in ghosts

but not so much that I'm interested in hearing about how your second
cousin or your best friend's friend had something totally impossible
and spooky happen to them and they *saw* a ghost with their own eyes
just so you can try to prove it to me or expect me to try and disprove it

back to you-
like most people, I'm not that interested in proof.

All I can tell you is that things going bump in the night
are just bumping noises
that happen all the time
in the night to me.
One more of those banal mysteries
to fill in the corners of the world like dry brown leaves
each one with it's own story I'm sure, but I don't know them.

I don't know Marcelle's story,
all I can tell you is that most likely it's just an old commercial art
print, maybe one of hundreds meant for a kitschy wall, and it doesn't
even look that haunted in the daylight when it's not reflecting a dim
streetlamp from fake gold edges and leaning up against a dumpster in
the late hours of the evening
but I decided to take her home with me. On a lark.
I decided to love her. And I don't believe in magic but,
I do believe in magic.

Or at least, magical thinking. For free, I will tell you that everyone
no-matter how analytical or practical they claim themselves to be
has at least one totally irrational belief.
Deep down in their shifty gut
it's a human right I think, or a gift
to see what isn't there.
I mean, without the vision who makes the art? and without the art
who makes the future?
and without ghosts how could we say goodbye without losing what we
can't survive the loss of?

So I pretend to have a ghost,
who watches over my apartment
in exchange for the kindness of being able to watch daily movement of
sunlight across the walls and cheap wooden floors.
And more than anything I believe that we do not offer kindness
because it is deserved,
we offer kindness because we deserve to be kind beings.

Because love
however received-or not received- doesn't go to waste.
I don't know where it goes, but I have faith in that.