

have realized that this visit wasn't going to be like a trip to the funeral home.

Gina lived in an elegant town house on a tree-lined street in New York City. We entered into a dim foyer paneled with dark wood, and I waited patiently while my grandmother and Gina exchanged greetings and gossip. Gina led us into the parlor, where my grandmother turned her attention to me. "Is anyone here?" she asked.

I nodded. But before my grandmother or Gina could ask me any questions, I blurted out, "Oh, Grandma! She's so pretty!"

It made such an impression on me that I can still clearly remember the spirit who was standing in the parlor with us that day. She was a slim, pale woman, maybe twenty years old, with dark hair that hung almost to her waist. She was wearing what I now know was a peignoir set (but to my seven-year-old eyes looked like a very bare evening gown and jacket). Her silky white gown floated down to her bare feet, and her long fingers were nearly hidden by the marabou-feather cuffs of her robe.

I really didn't know what to think. The men and women I had talked to at the funeral homes were old. They had lived long and full lives. It had been time for them to die. But this pretty ghost seemed lost and sad.

My grandmother and *comare* Gina asked several questions, and I relayed the ghost's answers. Ghosts are perfectly capable of hearing what everyone is saying. And when they talk to me I just sort of hear their answers in my head. Furthermore, when I talk to spirits, I don't speak aloud, it's more of an internal dialogue. As I grew older, I was particularly grateful for this, as I often got more information from the ghost than I wanted to share with the people in the room—remember, ghosts can observe the people they're living with at any time! And it came in handy to be able to offer silent comments if the things people were saying upset the spirit in the room with them.

From the young woman ghost's answers, it became clear to everyone that she had, in fact, been causing problems in the house. Gina had been suffering from terrible headaches. Her important jewelry was always being misplaced. She was convinced that she had a curse on her, which was why she had summoned my grandmother. My grandmother suspected that the problem might be a ghost, which was why she had brought me along. Once Gina was satisfied that the young woman's ghost was the source of her problems, my grandmother was perfectly clear on what had to happen next.

"Okay, Mary Ann, you tell her to leave now," Grandmother said.

I had done this before on occasion. We would be at a funeral, or occasionally at the grave site,