

and my grandmother would whisper to me, “Tell them they should leave now.” And I would turn to the ghost watching the ceremony and say, “Grandma says you need to go.”

And each time the ghost would turn and walk into the glow of a white Light that was always hovering nearby. I would watch them walk into the Light; then the Light faded, and the ghost was gone. My grandmother would study my face, then ask, “So they’re gone?” And I’d tell her that they were, and home we’d go.

As pretty as this lady ghost was, and as much as I wanted to ask her why she seemed so sad, I knew better than to question my grandmother. And so I told the ghost that she needed to leave.

“I want to leave,” she said, bursting into tears. “But I want to be sure I go to heaven.”

This made a big impression on me. I was about to begin second grade. It was the year I would make my First Communion, and I could understand how going to heaven would be a high priority. I’d been thinking about making my First Communion all summer and was trying to be extra good and holy, so I felt pretty confident when I told her, “Okay, then just go to a church.”

The ghost smiled sadly. “I’ve tried that,” she said. “I’ve gone to churches all over the city. But I can’t get to heaven from there.”

My grandmother and Gina were watching me intently. “Is she gone yet?” Gina whispered to my grandmother.

“Mary Ann, has she gone?” my grandmother asked.

“No, Grandma, she says she wants to be sure to go to heaven,” I said helplessly.

“Well, tell her to go to a church, then,” my grandmother said, with a note of impatience in her voice.

I knew better than to argue with my grandmother when her voice had that tone. Besides, when Gina heard that the ghost wasn’t leaving, she began to sob, pulling a big white hankie from the pocket of her sundress. I looked from *comare* Gina to my grandmother to the ghost.

“You *have to* go,” I said. “You’re making everyone upset.”

The ghost nodded, and as she passed me, she raised her hand as if to stroke my cheek. She walked out of the parlor and into the dark foyer, toward the front door. And then she was gone.

“She’s not here anymore,” I told my grandmother and *comare* Gina.

Gina hugged my grandmother and then me, all the while exclaiming: “How proud you must be, Maria, to have a grandchild with such a gift!”

My grandmother beamed and nodded. This part, at least, was just like at the funerals.