

## THE GHOST OF YOUR MEMORY

by pwatson1974

"You, are going to die." Dell pouts, her arms folded across the frilly party dress, scowling. "Awwww, but, Dell, ye jes' look soooo cute like tha'. Bein' 6 suits ye. 'Specially all them freckles."

"Slowly and painfully." Dell continues, tapping a ballet-slipped foot on the carpet.

"An' I think the pigtails're just darlin'."

"Twice. At least!"

"Don't ye be takin' tha' tone wi' me, young lady, or I'll put ye over m' knee an' give ye the hidin' of ye're life. Especially after what ye did. Playtime's fer back here, girl, not out in front of the punters."

"But it wasn't me! How many times? It was..."

"It was yer imaginary friend, Anne, right?"

"Exactly. Well, she's more of a ghost than an..."

"There's no such thin' as ghosts. It's just woo-woo, just nonsense. Ev'ryone knows tha'."

"Everyone knows there's no such thing as magic, too." Dell sulks.

"Aye, well, tha' just shows..."

"That everyone can be wrong?"

Jackie stops, her finger poised in mid-wag, "Don' start, girl. Not 'less ye're wanting to be in nappies before I'm done wi' ye."

"You wouldn't..."

"Fer that? Oh, yeah, ye'd better believe I would."

"But it wasn't me!"

"Dell, that's enough. I think you'd better go to your room."

"But..."

"Now, Dell. No more arguments."

"Ok, I'm going." she reaches the door, scowling as she has to stretch right up to turn the handle, "But when you find out I'm not lying, I want an apology." she glowers over at Jackie, "And my turn." and closes the door quickly, trying to slam it but not being able to manage at her reduced stature. There's a muffled thump as she settles for kicking it in frustration instead.

"You don't think she might have been telling the truth?"

"Ye're havin' me on, aren't ye, Paul? Ye think there's real ghosts out there?"

"Well, maybe not ghosts, but, something other than Dell."

"An' that somethin' jest decided t' pick on me an' embarrass me in front of all them people? Nah. She jest needs t' be calmed down on stage. An' stayin' as a 6 year old fer, how long are ye gonna keep her like this anyway?"

"A few days. She was pretty insistent, Jaks, even when it was making you mad."

"She's jes' tryin' it on."

"Maybe."

"Ye're not believin' her, are ye?"

"Not exactly."

"An' what are ye doin', exactly?"

"Just thinking. 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"Quotin' Shakespeare doesn't make ye right, ye know?"

"Doesn't make me wrong. And Dell might have learned to tell the truth, in spite of the sneaky, disreputable company she's been keeping lately."

“Oi. Less o' tha'.” she swats his arm, “Less ye'd be likin' less o' the disreputable comp'ny yerself.”

Dell's door shuts with a click, followed by another thump as she still hasn't managed to get the hang of slamming them, “This is so unfair! I didn't even do anything this time! I was just trying to help! And now I'm a baby! It was bad enough the first time!” she clambers onto the chair by her dresser, turning the air several interesting shades of blue, staring into the mirror, or at least the bottom half of it. “I do not have freckles!” she peers closer, standing on the chair and leaning forward, “Do I? Nope, no freckles. And as for these...” she grabs the pigtails, yanking the grips, and several long hairs, out, “Owww!” her now unbound hair tumbles over her shoulders as she glares down at the dress. “And if I had anything decent to wear, you'd be off too!” she slumps back in the chair, pouting, arms folded across her chest, crinkling the pink fabric, “So unfair. And if I see that ghost again, I'll, I'll, how do you threaten a ghost anyway?” she sighs, leaning on the dresser, “Maybe this lifestyle isn't so great after all. Oh, no! What if they keep me like this? I can't go through school again! Once was more than enough! Oh, get a grip. They won't make you go through school again. It'll be a week, a couple at most. Won't it?” she catches a flash of red in the mirror and whips her head around, only to see her bedroom, her stuffed tiger on the unmade bed. She looks back at the mirror and the red reappears, now clearly an arm rising up from the centre of her bed. She looks around, and again the room is empty.

Back in the mirror, another arm emerges, followed by a crown of flaming orange hair, the shelves of stuffed toys shaded in crimson clearly visible through them. As Dell watches, spellbound, in the mirror a head emerges from the centre of her bed. Gradually a slim figure emerges, her body contained by a tight red one-piece, her arms and legs wrapped in long scarlet gloves. She shakes herself, shuddering as her foot finally pulls free, the covers falling through her waist. Her lips move, but no sound emerges. Dell turns slowly towards the bed, O Fortuna pounding away in her head, although she doesn't know that's what it's called, and looks over at a completely empty room. No ghostly women in red, no sign anyone other than her was ever in the bed, nothing.

She turns back to the mirror, “Ok, just because you've been turned into a baby, doesn't mean you have to be one. There's nothing there. There's no such thing as...” the ghost stands in the mirror, directly behind her, the hands waving manically in their blood red gloves, close enough that she should be able to feel it, that it could touch her. She whirls, a scream welling inside her, and the room remains empty. Dell tries to take a deep breath, ignoring the hammering of her heart. Her breathing comes in shallow, rapid gasps, fighting its way into her lungs past the scream. She hears a faint scratching against the mirror behind her. Sweat trickles down the back of her neck. Very slowly, almost against her will, she starts to turn towards the mirror. Her lipstick clatters onto the vanity table, 'HELP ME' scrawled across the mirror in smeared streaks of crimson. “Ok, this is getting freaky now. Jaks, if this is your idea of a joke, you really need help.” She does a good job keeping the tremor out of her voice, only a slight quaver creeping through. A squeaking comes from the mirror. Dell turns, to see her lipstick floating in the air, a hand visible in the mirror holding it up. The former words are smeared out across the glass, ‘Not J’ in red below it, the lipstick starting to write an ‘a’. Dell slaps at it, sending it flying across the room. “Leave me alone!!”

The room is quiet. Dell stares into the mirror, trying to see any sign of the ghost, hoping not to. She spots a flash of red, the ghost seeming to dissolve into blood-red smoke, spiralling down and vanishing completely. Dell breathes a sigh of relief, turning away from the mirror. She turns faster at a muffled thump from behind her bed. “W-who's there?” she asks, but gets no response. Swallowing hard, she edges towards the bed, lifting up her bedside lamp, holding it up with both hands.

She rounds the bed, the lamp raised, ready to strike. The plushy doll stares up at her with big blue eyes, its blonde hair tied into twin tails, a plastic ring hanging out of its back, the red dress sewn into its body. Dell almost drops the lamp, her arms trembling. She puts the lamp down, stooping to pick up the doll, the plush feeling warm in her hands, "You frightened me. What made you fall off like that?" she looks quickly in the mirror, but there's no sign of the ghost. "Well, what do you have to say for yourself?" she smiles, pulling on the ring, the chord pulling out of the body.

"Help me! Please! It's me..." The doll falls to the floor with a soft thump as Dell jumps back, reaching for the lamp, her hands trembling.

"Who, w-what are you?" the doll remains silent and still, innocent blue eyes fixed on Dell, arms hanging listlessly at her sides. Slowly Dell reaches out for the doll, half-expecting it to jump at her, only it doesn't. She pulls the cord, her hands trembling.

"I'm Anne! You remem..."

"Anne? What are you doing here? Why can't I see you? How...?" the doll regards her silently, "Oh, right." She pulls on the cords.

"Fishsticks! This is rea..." and again, "Why can't I get more..." and again, "than five syllables..." and again, "out at once?!"

"But, how, where, why, why'd you try and scare me like that?! That wasn't nice." She scowls at the doll for several seconds before she remembers to pull the cord.

"Scared you? What do...you mean? What did I...do to scare you?"

"All that silent stuff. And just appearing in the mirror. I didn't know who or what you were and..." she stops.

"Silent? What do you...mean silent? I was...screaming and you did...n't do anything. ... You kept looking at...me and going back...to the mirror and...staring into it. ... You didn't do any...thing until I got...hold of your lipstick."

"I couldn't see you. You only appeared in the mirror. How did you do that?"

"I didn't do any...thing. You really cou...ldn't see me?"

"Not a thing, except in the mirror. And with all the red, well, ghost, red, what would you think?"

"I suppose so. Hey...when did you get lit...tle?"

"I'm being punished because someone decided to have fun with Jaks' dress."

"Oh, right, well, I..."

"There'd better be a 'sorry' coming in there soon."

"Alright, alright, I'm...sorry. So they still...don't believe I'm real?"

"Still working on it, but as you're invisible and can only speak through a doll, that'll be a tough sell."

"But you still think he'...ll bring me back, right?"

"If we can persuade him you exist, yeah. Boss has a noble streak hiding under the playfulness. Chance to rescue a damsel in distress? He won't pass that up. Especially if he gets to collect another pretty face."

"Collect? Collect? What...am I? A limi...ted edition or...something?"

"Well, right now, yeah. One of a kind collectible"

"Funny little girl." The voice pouts.

"Hey, do you want help? I can just put you back on the shelf, you know."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"What'll you do? You can't move, you can't talk without me pulling your string for you, so..."

"But I need to get...back. You have no id...ea what it's like. Es...pecially when...I might have a real...chance to be real ag...ain. You can't do that...to me. I won't let...you."

"What'll you do?"

“This. Pucker up.” Red smoke boils off of the doll, swirling around Dell, streaming through her nose and mouth, rolling down her throat. She blinks, staring with bright green eyes into the mirror. A sly smile curls across her lips. “Well, isn’t this interesting?”

---



This work by [Paul Watson](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivative Works 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <mailto:magicbookshelf@blueyonder.co.uk>.