

A Haunting

A Short Story by John W. Allie

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This last Halloween I was riding to work with Myra, and she's into all that supernatural stuff. She has a pyramid hanging from the rearview mirror and keeps a Quartz crystal in the glove compartment so that she can use it to focus her karmic energies in the event of an accident. Or something like that. There was a ghosthunter on the radio. Myra turned up the volume.

"I love these glimpses into the spirit realm," she bubbled, drumming her fingers on the steering wheel to a nonexistent beat.

"Ghosts are an energy flow," the ghosthunter said. "Their vibrations diverge from the normal vibrations of the physical world."

"What on earth is an 'energy flow'?" I asked.

"Shh!" Myra scolded. "Just listen."

"Water is an energy flow, too," the radio said. "That's why spirits are often attracted to water. They can interact with it."

"Water is not an energy flow," I said. "It's a compound."

"Don't be so gullible," Myra snapped. "Science doesn't know everything."

The ghosthunter had moved on, slightly. "Spirits are basically low-level vibratory fluctuations in the subcontinuum of the physical plane."

"Wait," I said, confused. "What happened to 'energy flow'?"

"Obviously," Myra said, "They're low-level vibratory fluctuations in the subcontinuum of the physical plane which then manifest themselves in the material continuum of the physical plane in the form of an energy flow."

I decided not to debate the point. "But who believes in ghosts?" I asked.

"Why not believe in them?" Myra asked jovially. "What do you think happens when we die?"

"Maybe we just die," I muttered sullenly.

"Don't be ridiculous. Anyway, think of all the people who have died. I find it hard to believe that they've all just disappeared."

Later on I thought about what Myra had said. Out of curiosity I came up with a ballpark figure of how many dead people there must be. It was very large—large enough to make me nervous. Myra was right. How could that many people simply disappear? They must still be around, somewhere.

I began to feel slightly less assured than I had in the morning. Dead people danced at the edges of my brain. Millions of them, legions beyond compare. Where could they have gone? I glanced nervously around my little office. There were too many of them. Surely there were more of them than there were places for them to hide. This left but one possibility: they must be invisible, ergo, they could be anywhere. And by the numbers, they were probably everywhere.

I tried to concentrate on my work, but I was shaking. There was no telling how many of them might be hiding in the keyboard.

Come nightfall I sat nervously by the door as the trick-or-treaters came. Some were dressed as ghosts. I thought this was in bad taste but did not say so. They're just kids, they haven't learned yet. Heck, some of them were dressed as serial killers. Thankfully the majority were dressed as characters designed by huge media conglomerates.

Soon, however, the doorbell stopped ringing. I paced nervously in front of the door, praying that more would show up. Just a few more. Any would be welcome. Just a little more human contact.

No more came. The house was dark and I was alone. I shivered. I thought I saw some sort of blue cloud behind me. I almost yelped. I whirled around but nothing was there. So many people have died, passed on to that subcontinuum to haunt the living. I suddenly thought of all the murderers who've been given the death

sentence. I wondered if some of them could be there with me, in that very room. I nearly screamed. The wallpaper crawled with ghosts. They were energy flows—could they be in the power outlets? I barricaded myself in the linen closet, watching in horror as thin white spirits seemed to rise from the towels. Tears ran down my cheeks. Oh, low-level vibratory fluctuations in the subcontinuum of the physical plane which manifest yourselves in the material continuum of the physical plane in the form of an energy flow, why must you trouble us mortals?