

The Ghost Within Me



Deena Gomersall



A "Her TV" Novel



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The Ghost Within Me

By Deena Gomersall

Chapter 1

Tony looked around the flat that he was renting; it was hard to see anything at first as the electricity supply was metered and he had neither coins nor tokens to feed it. It looked like the previous occupant had put old sheets of newspaper up on all of the windows. It was dark inside.

The home smelt musty and of dust, almost like it hadn't been lived in in some time. Tony sighed.

Still, he had to count himself fortunate that he had gotten somewhere on short notice, and he did need somewhere, fast. It wasn't just the fact that the local gang who operated around the area where he had previously lived were after him, or that he owed the last landlord six weeks' rent, but also that his girlfriend, Jenny, had told him a month ago that she was pregnant.

He didn't want to be tied down with a young squawking baby and, although he really liked Jenny, he was not ready for being tied down with a girl... or

forced into marriage like her parents were insisting the couple do. He needed to escape from that shit.

At thirty-two years of age, he felt he still had a lot of living left in him. He had a decent job... yes, he could have paid the six weeks' rent and lots of other outstanding bills, easily, but he was just lazy when it came to things like that. Although a little overweight, he had good health, good looks. The world could still be his oyster.

He had been lucky to find an ad in his local newspaper for the fully furnished home in a four-apartment maisonette block and he had gone to look over it straight from work on Friday. The area was in a decent location and from the outside of the maisonette, it looked pretty well kept. It was really just this one, a-while-since-lived-in, ground floor flat that needed a good clean-up and fresh air.

Tony pulled the newspapers off the windows and looked around. The whole place, which was comprised of a bedroom, bathroom, toilet, kitchen area and lounge, was nicely decorated but the passing of Time had left a smell, a coating of dust and the trailing webs of Harvestmen along the walls.

Once Tony could look around better, he saw that the lounge had a fully-fitted carpet, a hearth rug in front of an electric fire, a set of cupboards, a two-piece settee, a dining table with two chairs. A stand with a fairly old television set rested upon it.

The kitchen had a sink, washing machine, a fridge, work tops and three wall-mounted cupboards.

Looking into the bedroom, there was a double bed, a double wardrobe, set of drawers with a large wooden framed mirror mounted on top of one, an armchair and a small bookcase.

The bathroom was quite small but had a tub surrounded by plastic shower curtains and a wall shower, a sink and a rack for shower gel, shampoo, etc.

Overall, Tony thought, once cleaned up, the place could be quite pleasant to live in. He needed to go down to a local store and buy some cleaning products such as dusters, air freshener and some curtains to cover the windows; all of this before he could even consider bringing any girls home.

He was now out of the way of the gang, his pregnant girlfriend and her parents. As a bonus, his own family; Mom, Dad and two younger sisters, would not know where to find him. He'd had a major dispute with his Dad a couple of years back which had ended in a fight. Tony had bettered his father and left him on the floor with cuts and bruises and a black eye. His Mom, whilst attending her husband, called him a disgrace to the family and told him that she was ashamed of him. His two siblings were left crying and they now had a low opinion of him.

Nobody had wanted to take his side, nobody wanted to know who had started the fight or who was right or wrong. Just because it was his Dad who was left bloodied and beaten, they had all turned against him. His mother's words had cut him deeply and Tony had walked out vowing to have nothing more to do with any of them again. Maybe one day his Mom would learn he had been defending her honour after finding out his Dad had been cheating on her for over a year.

The following day Tony stood back and viewed his progress. Most of the dust and grime had been washed away, the trails of web had been removed, the carpeting had been vacuumed and he had started painting some of the window frames and doors. The place was starting to look habitable and he let his mind wander to a possible time when he may be bringing the odd girl home.

And just in case of that eventuality he had spent money on new bedding, a duvet cover and pillows in the bedroom and he had had dusted down the two

cupboards and wiped the smears and grease from the mirror.

Tony had discovered several things during his house cleaning. Not all of the cupboard drawers were empty, nor was the double wardrobe which had clothing hanging inside... female clothing. So, the previous occupant had obviously been a woman, though why she had left so many of her clothes was a bit of a mystery.

'Female occupant' was confirmed when he found paperwork in one of the drawers of the cupboard, the one without the mirror. Jodie was the name of the previous tenant, Jodie Elliott. It seemed Jodie had been a student as she had a number of college books stored away. The cupboard with the mirror had tops and ladies smalls folded neatly away. Why had this Jodie left so many things behind when she had moved out? Tony decided to try and find out the following day and, maybe, return her things to her.

That night Tony rolled into bed exhausted from his hard day of cleaning and painting. He felt he would fall asleep easily but through the night he stirred, feeling cold. He had to pull the duvet more snugly around him, believing the temperature had dropped quite dramatically outside.

"Good morning, is that Mr Samuels?" Tony greeted the next day as the call he had made on his cell phone was answered.

"Good morning, this is he. What can I do for ya?"

"Right, err, good morning. This is Tony Bartram, I have just moved into the flat on Cowper Street. Number 212c."

"Ah, yes, Mr Bartram. How ya doing today? Is the place to your liking?"

“It is. I’m ringing mostly because I’ve found a number of things here belonging to some past resident... a young lady? I mean, is she likely to come back for them at some point? Can I find where she moved to and see if she still wants them or should I just dump them?”

“212c... yeah, the young lady who had that place. Miss Elliott, if memory serves me...”

“Yeah, that’s her name...”

“Well, Miss Elliott just left all of a sudden, the place has been empty some eight or ten months. She owed a lot of back rent so I reckon she just fled, she never gave no forwarding address of course. I let out them flats fully furnished, as I’m sure you appreciate. I looked around the premises for damages at the time I was putting the place back up for rent but I never checked cupboard space. You kind of just presume that people would take their belongings with them. After I heard nothing from Miss Elliott after six months, I had to presume she weren’t coming back... and I was losin’ money on the place.”

A slight smile had cut across Tony’s face as the landlord spoke. It seemed this Jodie Elliott was a little bit like himself in not paying rent on time... only she had let it lapse too long so she couldn’t find the money. It seemed, though, that she would not be back for her things and he had two cases of his own stuff to unpack and find lodgings for.

Early evening Tony left the flat to go and meet his close friend, Chris. The pair had grown up together and were besties. Tony gave Chris all the low down of his new place and of what he had found belonging to the previous tenant.

“You’ll have to come over some time mate; I’ll get some beers in and maybe we can play a computer game or cards.”

“And you, my friend, need to clear those drawers and cupboards out. If you get to taking a girl back and she sees women’s stuff there, she is either going

to think you are already with someone and cheating on her or that you are a closet trannie.” Chris laughed at his own suggestion.

“I take your point, Mate, I certainly don’t want to give the false impression of the last one,” Tony laughed.

It was heading towards ten o’ clock when Tony arrived back home. He was up early for work the following morning and so he was not far off ready for turning in for the night. He put the kettle on for a hot drink first.

It was whilst he was going to hang up his coat by the front door that Tony thought he saw some kind of mist pass by the open door leading into the front room. He didn’t smoke so it wasn’t like there was some residue coming off a cigarette, nor had he lit a fire anywhere. Concerned, he checked around anyway.

Satisfied he was not going to burn to death as he slept, Tony took his hot drink to bed with him and stripped down to his underwear. He always slept in his boxers. He stopped by the big mirror and looked at his reflection, stroking his chin. He didn’t have an overly heavy beard growth and sometimes he would miss a morning’s shave as he really did not like shaving but he decided there was enough stubble on his chin to warrant a shave when he got up the following morning.

Tony suddenly jumped back from the mirror, his heart pounding. He could have sworn he had just caught the glimpse of a face-like image just behind him. “Fucking hell!” he cursed, placing his hand to his heart as he tentatively looked around behind him. There was nothing there.

It took a few minutes before he could motivate himself to move and slinked his way to his bed and under the sheets, assuring himself that it was his imagination playing tricks on him that he had caught something in the reflection. Yeah, that would have been it.

During the night as he slept, without stirring, Tony pulled the sheets more tightly around himself as the temperature dropped. His teeth chattered a little.

“Are you feeling okay this morning, Tony?” Brett, Tony’s boss, asked, the following morning.

“Yea, Yeah... I’m just feeling a bit tired this morning, Brett, I didn’t sleep too well last night, or the night before, to be honest,” Tony answered.

“Any reason for that?” Brett inquired.

“Just cold, I guess. That new place I’ve just moved into, the temperature just seems to drop sharply during the night.”

“And have you asked the landlord as to the reason for a temperature drop?”

“Well not exactly, I did phone him because there was a whole bunch of the previous tenant’s stuff left in the place, clothes and the like. He told me just to bin it all. But I don’t like the idea of doing so in case she ever comes back for it.”

“She? So the previous tenant was some dame? Well, if the place has been passed on to you to rent, you are legally in your rights.”

“Yes, she was a nineteen-year-old student; she may just have gone back to her parents during a gap year or something,” Tony suggested.

“So she should have taken her crap away with her or at least let the landlord know how long she would be away. I’m guessing if he has rented it out to you that she isn’t maintaining payments. I’m with him, get rid of the stuff, Tony,” Brett advised, “Oh and listen... if you need any days off, just let me know and take them. You’re not a lot of use to me falling asleep

on the job,” he added, with a half-smile, patting Tony on the shoulder.

That evening Tony was sitting in his new apartment and, after having eating an evening meal, he was drowsing a little whilst watching the television. Behind him was a small flight of stairs that let up to the bathroom and bedroom. He was stirred when he thought he heard something tumble down the eight steps.

Looking around, Tony was shocked to see what seemed like a moving semi-transparent cloud of smoke descending from the topmost step downwards. As he became more awake, it looked like it had almost the form of a person.

Tony’s heart rate began to quicken and his eyes bulged as the thing became larger and drew nearer, the form becoming more prominent as the temperature in the room quickly dropped.

A face began to form at the top of the apparition which itself had formed into the shape of a head.

“FUCK! Fuck...Fuck!” Tony swore as he suddenly launched himself from where he was sitting and made for the door of his apartment, darting outside and not stopping until he was out and onto the sidewalk, outside the building.

His heart was hammering in his chest. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. “Chris, I need to see you. Can you get over here? Meet at Max’s bar?”

“I’m out with Suzie, man. What’s the problem? It sounds like you got the Mafia out after your arse,” Chris replied.

“Seriously, I need to see you. I can’t go back in there.”

“Are you in danger? Okay, okay, man. I’ll just tell Suzie something important has come up and drop

her off on the way over to you,” Chris assured whilst looking totally baffled. Chris abided by the unwritten code of ‘Bros before hoes.’

Chris sat staring at his friend in amusement in Max’s bar. “This is a wind up, right? I’ve dropped off a scorching hot babe and nearly broken my car getting over here... and you are telling me you thought you saw a fucking ghost in your apartment?”

“I’m telling you, I saw what I saw. This thing... this *shape* was coming right towards me. That’s when I got the hell out of there,” Tony assured.

“And you say you had been watching TV and fallen asleep? You don’t think that maybe you had been watching something scary when you dropped off and your mind was maybe playing tricks on you when you were still half-asleep?”

“No, man. I was woken by this sound...”

“What sound?”

“I don’t know, I can’t describe it, a weird sound. And the cold... a cold in the room that I have felt for the last few nights,” Tony tried explaining, but Chris wasn’t having any of it.

“Maybe you ought to get the air conditioning checked out, Buddy. Perhaps that accounts for the noise you heard. But I really don’t believe in ghosts. Tell you what, finish your drink and I’ll go over there with you now. If there is such a thing, I wanna see it for myself,” Chris offered.

The apartment was just as Tony had left it when he had scooted out. There was nothing on the short set of steps and nothing to explain any noise. The two friends had picked up a six pack on the way over and Chris settled down, prepared to wait a couple of hours.

By the time it was ten past twelve nothing had happened but with Tony still showing signs of nervousness, Chris made an offer. "Okay, look, I have nothing much on first thing tomorrow. Give me a couple of blankets or a duvet and I'll bed down on the sofa for the night. Twenty dollars says nothing will happen. We got a bet?"

Tony was all for putting up twenty dollars with his friend. It would be worth it just for the company.

Chris was first up the following morning from his cell phone alarm; he was a bit stiff from his sleep on the two-seater but otherwise had slept soundly all through the night. It had taken Tony over an hour before sleep overtook him and he was snoring lightly as Chris shook him lightly by the shoulder.

"Hey Buddy, I gotta get going. Just so you know, I wasn't woken by any spooky ghosts, didn't get cold. In fact, that duvet is better than the one I use at home."

Tony flickered his eyes a few times, trying to bring them back into focus. "Uh, right. Grab yourself some cereal before you go if you like," he offered.

"No, really Mate, I gotta fly. I have an important meeting later today," Chris apologised.

"Okay, well, thanks for stopping over. I appreciate it."

"Oh, and Tony, that twenty bucks, pay me Friday at our squash night," Chris then added with a triumphant smile and a wink.

Tony had to admit to himself that he felt he'd had a much better night's sleep than he'd had the previous two nights. As Chris left the apartment, he got up and made for the toilet to do his business and start getting ready for his day.

At work Tony started wondering if it really had all been just his imagination. There was no such thing as ghosts, was there? It all came down to being in a strange new dwelling and just a matter of getting used to it.

It was late Tuesday evening and Tony was settled down again watching TV with a can of beer in his hand when there was a distinct drop in temperature once more. Tony's heart started to pound erratically. His senses were suddenly much keener as he strained to hear and his eyes almost bulged as he scanned every nook of the room.

Then there it was again... the floating white mist.

Tony's instincts were again to spring out of the chair and get out of the house as fast as he could.

"No. Don't leave."

A voice... a female sounding voice, unlike any voice he had ever heard before. It sounded almost distant, it sounded like it was not coming from a body, not coming through a voice box... faint... in the air... from no particular direction but as if in the whole room. It had the effect of staying him, almost as though he was frozen.

"Who are you?" Tony finally whimpered in a shaky voice.

"Don't be frightened. I'm going to try and let you see me."

Tony's heart was pounding so much that he felt weak from it. The misty cloud that had been like a large amount of vapour from an e-cigarette suddenly started to glow as it formed into shape. There was a translucency about it whilst the outlines were luminous, showing the shape of what seemed like a young female. He could make out the form of breasts and as

he looked on, there seemed to be a face forming in the mist, shrouded in long curling hair.

“I am not strong enough yet,” the voice sounded again only this time seeming even more distant.

Nervous as hell, Tony still managed to speak. “Who... who are you?”

He never received a reply. The form started to lose its shape and the misty cloud began to fade away. Tony knew, without doubt, that had not been his imagination.

“Tony...Tony!”

Tony groaned as he opened his eyes.

“Come on, wake up. I can’t have you falling asleep on the job. I need you to finish putting our proposals to that new client together,” Brett’s voice boomed with a hint of annoyance.

“Oh, sorry, Brett... I didn’t sleep too good last night,” Tony apologised as his heavy eyes began to focus on first his boss, then at the VDU and the work he had been doing.

Brett’s expression didn’t change as he listened to his employee. “Then you need to find some way to sort yourself out. Maybe you aren’t sleeping too well through guilt of leaving that young girl carrying your child without support,” he suggested with an edge to his words. Brett was clearly not in support of Tony’s recent actions.

As Tony drove home from work that night, he had no satisfaction of having done a good day’s work. In fact he knew he would have to read through every

document he had created that day, looking for errors, before he could safely send them out to the clients.

He was driving in the direction of his new home but feeling reluctant to actually go there. He picked up his phone and quickly dialled Chris's number.

"Hey! Tony... how's it going, Fella? You encountered anymore spooky spirits?" his friend chuckled as he picked up.

"Actually Chris, I have. This form... the form of a young looking woman, materialised last night... and spoke to me."

"Spoke to you?" Are you taking some kind of substance that I don't know about?" Chris asked, sounding sceptical and with amusement in his voice.

"No, I'm not. Come over tonight and see for yourself. This... this *spirit* is trying to communicate with me."

The sigh from Chris was audible. "Oh, man! Really? I've got tickets for the movies for Suzie and me tonight," he grumbled.

"How about coming over after the show? This is big, Chris. I need you to witness it too so that I know I'm not losing my mind. Please."

"I've got work tomorrow and I'm not sleeping on that damn sofa all night again, damn it. I was stiff all day," Chris told his friend adamantly.

It was twenty past twelve when Chris left Tony's apartment. He had cancelled with his girlfriend... much to her annoyance. Nothing at all had happened since he had arrived at 8.00pm. "This really is the last time I'm coming here doing crazy ghost hunting, Tony," Chris protested.

“I’m sorry you’ve had a wasted journey but thanks for giving up your evening I’m not going mad, though. I swear I’m not,” Tony apologised.

“Maybe you are and maybe not. If you want to believe what you have seen, then fair enough. Maybe this spooky female wants you to herself but even if she starts showing up every evening, I’ve lost interest. I’ll see you down at the leisure centre on Friday. Bring the twenty and the beers are on you afterwards, too.”

Tony could tell that Chris was mega-pissed with him and just nodded in the affirmative for Friday as he watched Chris get into his car, start the engine, then drive down the dark street. He watched the empty road for a few minutes, then turned back inside. He felt bad for wasting his friend’s time and as it was now half-past twelve, he decided to go and get into bed.

No sooner had he gone into the bedroom than he felt the air start to chill. Then he jumped with fright as he saw the reflection of a stooped figure in the mirror. The figure seemed to be clothed, had its head bowed and long dark hair fell down over the head.

“What do you want with me?” Tony asked in a tense voice.

The figure remained with head bowed. Then he heard the voice again. It didn’t seem to connect with the body that he could see in the mirror. Again it was just airborne.

“I’m getting stronger.” The words were less faint this time but still filled the room.

“Uh! What? Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m called Jodie. I, like, seem to get stronger from your energy. Before you came here, I couldn’t even materialise. This is like so wicked.” There then came what sounded like a light laugh.

Tony felt his face becoming colder and colder from the blood departing from it as he heard the words. Jodie. “Oh, my God! Jodie?”

As he began to realize that Jodie was the name of the young girl who had lived in the building before he arrived, the figure reflected in the mirror slowly started to fade away.

“Jodie? That’s why the girl never came back for her things. She’s... she’s dead!” he muttered almost silently to himself.

Chapter Two

“Yes, Brett... I know we have a deadline to meet. Yes, I know that too but I’m no use coming into the office today. I’m ill. That’s what was wrong with me yesterday. Yes, I’ll come in just as soon as I can, I promise.”

Tony put down his phone after his call to his boss. It was almost true, he would be no use in the office as he had hardly slept again... but he was far from sleepy. He wanted to take the day off to research to try and find out what had happened to the girl... Jodie.

He needed to trace her parents or contact the coroner’s office. Find out just when she died and how. He seemingly had the ghost of a nineteen-year-old girl, haunting him... and he needed to know why, for his own sanity.

Although he had the girl’s name and age as well as her last known address, the coroner had nothing on file, even on the national database. He had tried eighty-four Elliotts from the local telephone registry. None had a daughter named Jodie, none had recent bereavement. It was becoming a bizarre mystery.

He decided to try the police department to see if they had any records of foul play or her murder, or any criminal records on her. At last he had something. The police had arrested Jodie for soliciting a

couple of times, the last being ten months ago; her given address was where he was now, 212c Cowper Street.

Not getting anywhere further, Tony returned to the apartment and decided to look through her personal belongings. He hated doing so as it made him feel like a snoop, but he was looking for a parent's address, a diary... anything that would give him a lead. There was nothing.

That evening Tony sat on his sofa, television off. With nervous apprehension he waited to see if the ghost of the girl would reappear again. She did.

Although still frightened, Tony was a little more ready and more accepting that his home harboured a ghost... and he wanted to know what he could do to get rid of it.

The form he saw this time was even stronger and he could make out the details of her face. For the first time he could see that she seemed very attractive.

"What is it that you want from me?" Tony asked quietly, "How did you die? Do you need closure?"

Again the voice that replied was disembodied but this time it seemed to be more around the form that he could see before him.

"I don't know... this is, like, all strange to me. I have been here for what has seemed an eternity... just drifting. Then you came and I felt, like, totally differently. I have been told I can become stronger from the energy of the living... and it's true."

"Other spirits?" Tony questioned nervously. "There are other spirits here?"

"Spirits are everywhere... you, like, cannot see them. I have been concentrating on you so that you may see me. It doesn't last long."

Fearing that she may disappear before he had some answers, Tony asked quickly, "Where are you buried? Do your parents know you are dead? Your death doesn't appear to be registered."

"I am fading. May I touch you?"

Tony gulped in horror. "What? Touch me?" That was not something he liked the idea of, but he inquired further, "Does that help?"

"I am told I can get more energy from actual contact." Jodie told him as Tony started to see her becoming more transparent. The last thing in the world he fancied was being touched by a ghost. "If you must... I suppose."

The bluish form of an arm reached over from the image and Tony felt his arm go cold and all the hairs on his hand and arm bristled up. Sure enough, though, the image of the girl became more visual again.

"Wow, that really is so awesome, I can feel your heat warming me. I can feel your energy source," the ghost replied, sounding thrilled.

"So... what happened to you? You are obviously dead. How?"

The faint features of the girl's face suddenly looked sullen at the mention that she was dead. "Outside.... Darkness... I was never found."

"What... you mean your body is still out there somewhere? Were you killed? Accident? Murder?"

"It seems so long ago; hard to remember. It was an accident I guess. I am still there... its cold... so cold. I can show you. I can take you."

Tony was far from sure he wanted to be taken to a dead body, especially one that would be rotting away after many months. But the poor girl needed a proper

burial, her spirit would be set free... and she could leave the apartment.

“Let’s go,” she said enthusiastically and Tony watched as the spirit disappeared through the outside door. Still reluctant, Tony opened the door and could see the ghostly image shimmering out on the street, waiting for him. She moved off after he had closed the door behind him.

It was two blocks down when something bizarre happened. Tony could still see her, sort of floating off in front but there were two people approaching, a middle-aged man and woman. They walked straight through the image of Jodie, not seeming to see her. What was this? Was it because only he could see her or was she not there at all? Was he just imagining things? Going crazy? Maybe he did need to see a doctor. Maybe he should just give up the apartment and find somewhere else.

The image stopped, turned and looked at him, waiting for him to catch up. He was approaching but the ghost was getting harder to see. She was disappearing... fading away. Then she was gone.

Tony looked up the now quiet and empty road. There was nothing there. Had there ever been? Now he really was questioning himself again. There was nothing more to do than turn around and head back to the apartment.

There was no appearance of the young female ghost for the rest of that evening, making Tony believe he really may have some strange mental problem that needed looking at. Nevertheless he stayed awake until twelve to see if she would reappear before falling into a much needed, sound sleep.

The sleep helped Tony get back on track and, on returning to work the following day, he performed much better. His boss had been keeping an eye on him and seemed content with his work. After his day was over, Tony jumped into his car and headed for the sports centre where he was due to meet Chris for their usual game of squash.

Chris wasn't his normal chirpy self when the two met in the café which was inside the sports centre.

"You okay?" Tony asked as he took a seat opposite his friend.

"I'm coping, I guess," Chris replied, "Suzie and I have broken up," he added morosely.

"Oh gee, Chris, I'm really sorry to hear that," Tony offered and then had a dreadful thought. "Is it my fault... calling on you when you had plans with her?"

"I'm not going to lie to you man, that didn't help but there were a few other issues. She was a little too controlling; she was wanting all of my spare time just spent with her... smothering me, I guess."

Chris took pause as his mind seemed to wander. "I really thought she was the one, Tony, the girl I would marry; settle down with, we'd have kids together. I know she was controlling, but I love her."

Tony reached across the table and put his hand on Chris's. "So is that it? Or is there any way you guys can get back together?"

Chris just shrugged his broad shoulders. "Anyway, man... what's happening with that spook of yours?" he asked, attempting to change the subject.

"Oh, nothing... not seen anything since," Chris lied, "I guess you were right, just seeing things. I'm putting it down to sleep deprivation. That place sure is cold at night, keeping me from properly falling asleep. Then my mind starts playing tricks."

"That sucks, man You said you'd had a word with the landlord. Is he going to get things fixed? You can't go on losing sleep like that."

"Yeah, he's going to fix things. Anyway, come on, Fella; let's see about me whooping your ass on the squash court," Tony added with a smile.

“Oh, you mean like you’ve failed to do for the last dozen times I’ve played you?” Chris responded as he rose from his seat, a little bit chirpier.

Tony wiped the sweat from his brow with a towel as he and Chris re-entered the changing room after their game. “How many times on the trot is that now?” he asked in exasperation.

“Dunno mate... about fourteen, maybe fifteen,” Chris replied with a smile.

“Why? How? I always used to beat you.”

“Well maybe you need to shed a few pounds. You have been piling them on for the past couple of months,” Chris suggested as he looked at the slight overhang of Tony’s belly over his sweatpants.

“Really? Does it show that much? I guess I have let myself go a bit recently. It’s because of this new project we are on at work. I just don’t have the time to go down to the gym after work like I used to.”

“You stopped going to the gym long before you started that project, Fella,” Chris told his friend, “All that microwave junk food you’ve been consuming since you ran away from Jan doesn’t help, either,” he added.

“I just don’t have the time to cook and moving out from my previous place and finding that apartment hasn’t helped,” Tony offered in his own defence.

Chris was right, though, Tony had let himself go recently and where he used to have a well toned, muscular frame and a six pack belly like his friend, he was now more rounded and chubbier.

“Well, I’m going to go to that new sushi restaurant from here, Buddy. Care to join me and get some healthy food for once?” Chris asked.

“No... I got something in, and I could do with relaxing a little,” Chris replied.

“Something in...? More microwaveable junk?” Chris asked with a wry smile.

“This one’s not so bad... the calories are low, it says on the box,” Tony offered, confirming Chris was right.

Tony really did want to go home and just relax as the game had bushed him... not that he would admit that to Chris. He also just wondered if he may see that ghost again... if she did really exist. If not, he thought he may just need to go see a shrink.

It was twenty-past-ten by the wall clock when Tony felt the temperature drop. His heart started to beat faster.

Suddenly there was the misty vapour which began to form into human shape, not quite as clear as it had been the previous time. Jodie was back; again her voice carried in the air.

“I’m sorry. I did not have enough energy from you to keep me visual,” she apologised.

“Then I am sorry that I cannot help you,” Tony replied and meaning it.

“You still maybe can. I’ve been, like, talking to someone along with other spirits who have been around a long time and know some things,” Jodie said a little more enthusiastically.

Tony found it hard to take in and accept that there were all these spirits apparently just floating around and communicating with each other. It was hard enough just accepting that there really were such things as ghosts. He had usually been sceptical about such things.

“So what do these... these spirits tell you?”

“Well, it’s really neat. Like I said to you, I can get stronger just from your wasted energy. Mrs. Marchant told me that.” She stopped, unsure how the man would accept her suggestion and then went for it. “I could lay by you during your sleep and that way I could really strengthen myself.”

“What! Like ...sleep with me?” Tony asked for verification, shuddering slightly at the thought of sleeping with a ghost.

“Kind of. You wouldn’t really know I was there. Do you know that some spirits can actually go into people’s bodies? They do it for comfort and warmth. Many living people have documented such experiences. I’m not proposing that. I don’t even think I can because I’m fairly young as the spirit world goes, but I’m just talking of, like, lying besides you and shit.”

“And shit?”

“Oh nothing, it’s just, like, the way I speak.” Jodie smiled.

“Oh, okay. Uhm, I don’t know, I’m not sure I would be comfortable.”

“Aw com’on, Babes. You are the first person I have been able to, like, totally communicate with, the only person that can help me,” she pleaded.

Tony was having a hard time taking in a ghost that talked so street. In his mind, if ghosts existed at all, they would be centuries old and, if they talked, it would be old-fashioned and refined. But it served to remind him that Jodie was just a young girl, her life tragically ended. He would feel terrible for letting her down when he could have helped her, if he refused.

“Well, I suppose so but... it is rather spooky, you know. If you are going to do it. then will you do it after I’ve fallen asleep?” he asked tersely.

“What? You are giving me permission? That is so awesome. Yeah, of course I will wait till you are asleep, Babes. Thank you, thank you so much.” With that, her vision began to fade.

In spite of her promise Tony found it hard to drop off that night. It was like he was almost awaiting something to happen... to feel her presence. When sleep finally did take him, his subconscious became aware of his back feeling cold, almost like someone who had been warm and snug under a duvet suddenly feeling the chill night air if he had turned out of it and exposed his body.

Tony awoke the following morning aware of having had that feeling but he at least knew he had slept reasonably well and hadn't come to any harm. He had expected to have felt Jodie's presence at some point, especially as it was a Saturday, he wasn't working and he was home for most of the day.

Come the evening, the ghost still did not appear. He had kind of gotten used to her now and wasn't as disturbed as he had been at first. In fact he was now hooked on finding out what had happened to her. He was intrigued to learn more, he felt he needed to help her. But she never came.

That night, during his sleep, once again, Tony stirred, feeling the chill against his back. He subconsciously pulled the duvet more around him, trying to keep warm as Jodie once more lay by his rear... taking in his energy.

As with the previous morning, although Tony had not seen or spoken to the ghost, he was vaguely aware that she had come and slept by him again. It was not something that he was wanting to become an habit.

He had plenty of things to do, it being a Sunday, including visiting the local mall and buying in food and household goods for the coming week. He hadn't

seen Jodie since Friday night and he wondered if she was content now with just merely gaining power from his energy rather than haunting him.

He had returned home in the early evening and was preparing a meal on top of the cooker. Yes, not fast junk food but actually preparing a meal for himself. He turned to get some turmeric from the cupboard and stopped with a start.

“Hi, Babes. What do you think?”

The ghost of Jodie was right in front of him, almost looking solid if it wasn't for her transparency. Her face was perfectly detailed now and he was struck by how beautiful she looked.

Jodie had large expressive eyes and high prominent cheekbones which added to her beauty, a somewhat wide mouth but perfectly formed lips, long flowing chestnut hair which fell softly over her delicate shoulders. Her breasts, which Tony judged to be C or D-sized were full, round and stood out from her otherwise narrow frame. With wide hips, flat tummy and long shapely legs, she could have been a model.

“You, you scared the life out of me,” he complained, realising that he had hardly felt a temperature drop, though whether that was because of the heat from the oven or not he couldn't be sure.

“Oh, bummers. Sorry Babes, I sometimes forget that I have no footfall,” she apologised. “Hey, like, look at me! Two nights by you and I feel so... alive! Uh, I guess that's not quite right though, is it?” Her smile faded slightly.

This was the weirdest thing; Jodie was nothing like how he would ever imagine any ghost to be. If it wasn't for the slight glowing and translucent image, he would think he was just talking to some street smart girl in her late teens.

“Err... yeah. You look... amazing!” Tony couldn't find any fitting words to describe what he was seeing and telling a spirit form they looked amazing just

seemed wrong. He couldn't take his eyes from her naked feminine form, especially her full, rounded breasts.

"Hey! Get you eyeing me up, Babes," Jodie laughed, making Tony's cheeks burn red. "I should cover myself, I guess."

Suddenly she appeared to be wearing a long, loose-fitting white dress.

"How... how did you do that?" Tony asked in astonishment.

"I just have to imagine wearing something and shit. I'm not sure how it works. All ghosts do it. You've never seen photographs of naked ghosts, have you? I mean, like, our image is of us after we have passed on, our spirit form, but obs the clothes we wore didn't die with us. Anyway, we can go; I can show you where my body is," the ghost said enthusiastically.

"Well, I was just preparing my evening meal."

"That can wait, Babes. I need to take you while I am, like, so energised."

Whether he liked it or not, Tony found himself quickly pulling a coat on and following the ghost into the chill November air. As before, Jodie seemed very keen and she was making progress in front of him.

There were more people on the streets than last time and Tony could see clearly the luminous figure of Jodie approaching them. He was amazed once again that they weren't freaking out at seeing a ghost approaching them but it was also evident they could not see her.

However, as she passed by, this time there was a different reaction. Their body language clearly showed they felt or sensed something.

One man stopped and looked back behind him, another pulled his overcoat more tightly. A man and a woman stopped and looked at each other questioningly and said something. A dog, loose on the road, whined loudly and ran quickly across the road.

Eventually Jodie led Tony to a derelict area and a plot of brown field land overgrown with weeds and shrubs. She stopped and looked back to ensure he was still following. She walked on towards a ruined building, also well overgrown, then stopped.

“I’m here,” she said, her face more solemn than he had previously seen it.

Tony caught up and looked to where she stood. In front of her was an unlidded shaft, maybe leading down to sewers or the like. Walking to the edge, Tony peered in; it was dark and looked very deep. He could see nothing down there.

“So... your body is... down there?” he asked as he felt a cold chill coming over him and a decidedly uneasy feeling. Jodie just nodded.

“So, what happened? Did you fall down there? This thing is lethal, it should have a cover over it. Anybody could fall in.”

“I don’t know. My memory is cloudy.”

Jodie seemed like she was slowly trying to recall the events. “A lot of glue sniffers and drug users used to hang out around here. I used to have a spliff with them. I was with a boy, trying to get away from him; he was pursuing me and shit, off his head on crack. He, like, tried grabbing me and I fell forward and then down... down there. I’d hit my head on the edge, my body was, like, broken from the fall. I put my back against the side hoping for the ambulance to come but slowly things became dark to me.”

Tony shivered involuntarily at her tale. “We need to ring the authorities, get them to get you out. They could then give you a proper burial and you could be

free... go to Heaven or whatever,” Tony offered even though he had no belief in God or heaven.

“No... not yet, I’m not ready for moving on but I would beg you to do me one big massive favour, Babes. Please, I beg.”

Tony was not sure he liked what may be coming.

“Go on. What is it?” he asked, berating himself inside for even asking.

“Go down. Find me. I have a necklace around my neck that is very dear to me. It was given to me by my Nana.”

Tony was horrified by the request and felt himself go cold as the blood ran from his body. “What! You are joking! You want me to go down a shaft with an unknown depth, and find a rotting corpse... no disrespect, and remove a necklace from it?”

“Please, Mister. It would help me rest easier. I hate the thought of it being down there, hidden for eternity. It was expensive and my Nana died several months after giving me that so it has, like, great sentimental value,” she said with an appealing look.

“Look, I hate to be cold but you are both dead. If I got it for you, it’s not like you could never wear it. Now that you are both in the same place, can’t you even see your grandmother again?”

“She’s not here like I am, trapped in purgatory. I know I cannot wear it... I just don’t want it down there.”

“But I could hurt myself. That could be like a fifty-foot drop, I may even get down and not be able to get back up,” Tony protested.

“It’s, like, about twenty feet and, there is another way down. It’s just across there, a round hole that does have a lid. It has a ladder built within to climb

down... maybe for when servicemen would go down. I don't know, I'm not good with those things."

"And how do you know about this other hole? Or about a ladder being inside?" Tony asked.

Jodie looked at him and smiled, drifting towards the large square opening and then just descending down inside and coming back up shortly afterwards. "It's a bit wet and grotty down there, but, like, perfectly safe, I'd think. I can go down with you and show you where I am."

"Wouldn't that bother you, seeing yourself down there?" Tony asked.

"It, like, used to upset me a lot but I've gotten used to seeing myself just laying there, slowly rotting away. I visit myself fairly often when I don't have much else to do."

Tony really did not want to go down some dark smelly shaft and find some rotting corpse, let alone mess with it by removing some necklace. Jodie was looking at him appealingly. "Well, I'm not going to go down right now. I want better light to start with... and a flashlight. I really don't know what use the necklace is to you," he snapped slightly.

Tony's day at work on Monday was not going particularly well; he couldn't keep his mind off what he had been asked to do and his brain conjured up all kinds of images. More than once Brett had to have a word with his formerly highly reliable employee.

Being November it was already gloomy by the time that he finished for the day at five o'clock. He drove straight over to the site that Jodie had shown him. He hadn't arranged to meet her but he saw her. She was faint again and looked like she was sitting on a large concrete slab.

“You came. I wasn’t sure that you would.” she said, rising eerily and coming towards him.

“Nor was I,” Tony replied gruffly as he placed a bag onto the ground and took out a pair of boots and a coverall plus a large flashlight. “If I’m going to do this, let’s get it done before I change my mind.”

His first thought was that if he went down and did this one gesture, he may get rid of the young spirit for good so that he could get his life back into some kind of normality. The other idea was that if he refused her, she may haunt him for the rest of his life out of spite.

Once he was appropriately dressed, Tony eased up the heavy manhole cover of the round shaft and shone his light inside. He could make out the narrow and rusting ladder that disappeared into the hidden, dark depths that Jodie had mentioned.

“Remind me again why I am doing this?” he asked himself in a whisper.

“Because you are, like, a totally decent man and my hero,” Jodie answered.

Tony clambered into the hole and began scaling down the ladder. It wasn’t as deep as it seemed and soon he heard his boot splash into a trickle of water at the base. Inside was actually cleaner than he expected. He turned his light to illuminate a bricked tunnel and nearly jumped out of his skin as he saw Jodie down there.

“Man, you really have to stop doing that,” he protested.

Jodie led the way as a couple of rats scampered away and after a short while, stopped. The flashlight’s beam went through and beyond her and he could clearly see what looked like a badly decayed body, more bone than flesh, with rotted bits of clothing around it. The skull was almost totally exposed but a few stubborn pieces of flesh still held strands of dirty chestnut hair.

It was as if he had been put inside some horror movie; he really didn't want to go much further towards the corpse. He found his feet slowly shuffling towards where Jodie floated, as if trying to refuse to continue, willpower alone sending them forward bit by bit.

Building up all the courage he could muster, Tony slowly lowered himself to sit on his haunches. There was the remains of some kind of leather jacket that he had to lift out of the way before exposing the silver necklace and pendant that had partially disappeared into a cavity of the chest.

He grimaced as he reached around the neck of the corpse and then fell back, his seat landing in the trickle of water that ran down the sewer as the skull suddenly detached from the neck and rolled off. "Uuhha...Oh my God!" he shrieked, terror now gripping him like some vice, his heart pounding in his chest.

"Don't worry, like, I didn't feel a thing, Babes." Jodie tried joking but it was lost on the horrified man. "At least you won't have to unclasp it now."

It was true, he didn't but he still had to put his fingers into the decayed body in order to lift it up. Once he had, he clasped it tightly in his hand, then thrust it into the pocket of the coverall. "Now, for fuck's sake, let's get out of here," he pleaded, his body tensed in horror.

Tony was still feeling traumatised by what he had done a few hours earlier. He expected it would give him nightmares which would deprive him of sleep, which would lead to another bad day at the office. If this went on for much longer, he would be out of a job, he thought.

Upon returning home he had gone straight to the shower for a long, hot soak and scrub. Then he just pulled on his bathrobe and pushed his feet into slip-



pers, collapsed into his sofa and went over and over the events of earlier, reliving the gruesome horror.

That body should be removed but for some reason Jodie had asked him not to. Had it been him he would have begged for someone to report his body and give him a proper burial many times before asking for the return of a stupid necklace. He glanced over to the mantel over the fireplace where he had placed it, now washed. He looked at it and shuddered afresh at the thought of how he had retrieved it.

Then he felt the chill behind him and turned to see Jodie had appeared again, even more faint than she had been out on the dereliction site.

“I’ve come to thank you for what you did today; I know it must have been, like, totally gross. You are the kindest person I think I have ever known. It’s a shame I didn’t know you when I had life.”

One of the most beautiful girls he had ever set eyes on, a girl with a voluptuous body, was telling him, basically, she would have been with him had she known him before her death. It had a bizarre effect on him; he felt himself becoming aroused at the thought of being with this beautiful, feminine, sexy young girl called Jodie.

This was crazy! He had to shake that ridiculous notion right out of his head. How the hell could he get turned-on by a ghost?

“You are a good looking guy. We could have had a lot of fun together,” she continued, “And I simply love your tattoos. I was planning on getting some myself... before I died.” She was referring to the large tattoos that Tony had which nearly covered each of his forearms.

To his amazement he saw her ghostly arm stretch down towards his groin. His dressing robe had parted slightly, exposing his now semi-hard erection. Jodie’s slim fingers reached for it. His eyes almost popped out of their sockets as he watched the semi-transparent bluish hand stop over his cock and

the fingers seemingly fold around his member... but there was no grip, he felt nothing. Neither did Jodie, who seemed dismayed.

“Aw, damn! Fuck this shit!” she complained, “I wanted to thank you... I wanted to give you a hand job... why the fuck do I have to be dead? It’s so frustrating.”

It was the first time he had seen such strong emotions from her. There was one thing about this young ghost; she seemingly had no sexual inhibitions, she had a very strong sexual appetite.

“It’s okay... you have at least made your intention clear, showing me that you really do appreciate what I did for you. Thank you for that.” Tony said trying to calm her.

Jodie’s ghostly mouth formed into a pout. “I’m glad you do, but, you don’t understand how maddening it is not to be able to do the sort of things like I just used to take for granted... not being able to touch, not being able to feel.... RRrrh!”

Tony smiled. A young female, teenage ghost with a tantrum... who would ever have thought it?

“What you smiling at?” she asked, with a frown forming.

“I’m smiling at you,” Tony giggled, “You are so adorable when you are sulking.”

Jodie suddenly smiled. “What? You think so? Adorable; eh? You know, I bet you and I could have gotten on really swell before my death... like soul mates, best buddies.”

‘Lovers?’ Tony thought to himself, then abolished the thought.

“You can’t blame me for getting all vexed though. I was, like, so full of life, I lived it to the full, I loved life... I loved sex. Now it’s all just totally dull.”

“What was your life like? I know you were a student but I was surprised to find you used to sell yourself for money.” Tony asked her, without thought or intent of making her uncomfortable.

“How do you know those things about me?” she asked, the smile disappearing from her face.

“Well, I found information and letters in one of your bags about you being at college. I was trying to find out where you were before I found out from you yourself that you had died. I had even gone to the police to see if they had any information about you or your family,” Tony owned up.

“I don’t have family... my parents mean nothing to me,” Jodie replied sharply.

“Well there’s one thing we’ve got in common,” Tony said, raising his hand for a high five before realizing the futility of such a thing.

“You too, huh? But I bet you weren’t repeatedly raped by your father when you were young and battered by your mother for, like, daring to complain about it,” she informed him with hurt and loathing in her words. “I was put up for care... given to foster parents. The only care they had for me was the money they got off the state for looking after me... me and four other kids... so I ran away from them. They barely fed us and our clothes were all from Goodwill.

Tony’s expression turned to one of pity as he heard Jodie’s tale, his heart going out to her. “Oh, my word, I am so sorry...”

“So I had to learn to live it rough. I managed to get, like, a place in college but the only way to pay for my tuition fees, without any parental support, was to sell myself. Ob’s I didn’t make it... had to drop out. Instead, the money I made from laying on my back or giving head went to this apartment, drugs and shit... just to keep my mind from blowing. The only thing of any value to me in my shitty life is the necklace you managed to get back for me.”

Can ghosts cry? It looked like Jodie desperately wanted to. Tony put out his arms to embrace her before again realising.

“And when I feel like I could really do with a hug, like right now, I can’t even do that... because I’m fucking dead!” Jodie sobbed in despair and Tony watched as she disappeared before him.

Tony was left feeling sullen, feeling so much pity for the now extinct life of the fallen beauty who, perhaps, under different circumstances, could have created a much better existence for herself.

He remained feeling sad and forlorn the rest of the evening. He had a good heart; okay he hadn’t done the right and proper thing for his pregnant girlfriend and he hadn’t made any attempt to build bridges with his family, but he was the kind of guy, if someone was in real trouble and needed help, he would come to the fore. Only, there was nothing to be done for Jodie, save getting her precious necklace back. If only he could do more.

He knew he would be going some way to doing something if he was to get the cops or whoever to exhume her body; it was so tragic that it was just laying to rot down that stinking dirty shaft, but, for whatever reason, she was okay with it staying there.

He had taken himself to bed at nearly one o’clock, depressed, when Jodie returned, not much better than she had looked the first time he had seen her; misty and faded. His voice was soft in the air again.

“I’m sorry... I just got upset. I’m feeling quite weak again; could I lie beside you again tonight?” she asked, almost apologetically. Tony sighed, he felt like crying himself for her anguish.

“Yeah, of course you can,” he offered.

“Hey! Like, I’ve just realised, I don’t even know your name,” she suddenly asked, more brightly.

“It’s Tony, Tony Bartram,” Tony said, smiling.

“Hiya, Tony Bartram. I’m Jodie Elliott. Pleased to meet ya, my new bestest mate.”

Tony smiled again. “I know.” Then he closed his eyes, he was exhausted.

Chapter Three

Tony awoke the following morning knowing he’d had bad dreams all night about being in the shaft. In one of them, the decaying dead body of Jodie had suddenly come to life, ghostly eyes appearing in the deep set sockets of the skull, the body had risen to attack him but her hands just went through him. That had been just a bad dream and it made him question. Had the whole thing been one gigantic dream? he wondered as he began to properly awaken.

The question was quickly answered as he recoiled in shock, seeing Jodie by his bed, looking down at him. He had never seen the ghost early in the day; he thought ghosts only ever came out at night.

“Wh... What... are you doing here... I mean, now?” he asked, shaken.

“I wanted to tell you about last night,” Jodie began replying with enthusiasm.

“What about last night?”

“I slept by your side, remember?”

Tony just nodded, not understanding the relevance. She had already done that twice before.

“You turned in your sleep... turned onto where I lay. I kind of went partly into you, into your body,” she enthused.

Tony looked at the ghost in confusion. "I don't totally follow what you mean."

"Like, remember I told you some ghosts will go into people's bodies seeking comfort? I mean, like, I've drifted through living people before but I didn't think I could go into a body." Seeing the look on Tony's horrified face, Jodie quickly tried to reassure him. "I didn't go the whole way into you, Babes, just partly... and it wasn't intentional. You rolled onto me."

"So what happened? What was it like and why do you look so excited about it?" Tony just had to ask.

"Because it was like totally amazeballs... I felt life, through you... I felt warmth... I could feel your heart pounding, I could feel your blood running through your veins... you, like, have no idea how brilliant you feel when you have been dead for like ten months, when you no longer have a mortal body. I just wanted to share that with you... seeing as we are besties."

Tony looked at the ghostly image before him. Her features were so much clearer now, even if they were a semi-transparent blue. She had a big happy smile on her face. She looked happy. She looked beautiful.

"Look, hey. I don't want to spoil your moment but I need to get up and ready for work. My boss is already pissed off with my work rate recently." Tony apologised.

Jodie smiled and began to fade. "Ok. See you later, Babes... have a good day," she told him, blowing a kiss.

Tony's mood was not great by time he arrived home. He'd had so much going on inside of his head over the last six days that he'd barely been able to concentrate on his job. Brett had told him he had to take the rest of the week off and sort himself out. He had brought in Chad to finish the work that Tony had started.

Chad! Chad was one of the types who would do anything to propel himself up the corporate ladder. He had been a failed junior lawyer and yet Brett was placing him in HIS job! Brett had also, albeit reluctantly, given Tony a written warning stating that he had to get back on track, or face the consequences.

Unlocking his door, Tony made his way into his home and hung his suit jacket up on the wall before going into the kitchen in order to put on the kettle and treat himself to a well-needed cup of coffee. It was once again with some surprise that he saw the vision of his resident ghost hovering about.

“Jodie! Is there a time when you don’t appear?” he snapped as he recovered from his surprise.

“Well, surprisingly enough, like, I’m always around because I don’t sleep. Ghosts have no need to sleep. Oh, and guess what? I’m a fucking ghost!” Jodie countered.

Tony had begun to realise that being dead and being a spirit was not Jodie’s ideal scenario. It was a situation she was not at all happy about and so he didn’t pursue that topic further.

“Sorry for vexing, you seem like you have had a crabby day,” Jodie then inquired.

“What makes you think that?”

“I can sense your aura. Wanna tell me about it, Babes?”

Tony was still trying to get his head around how Jodie spoke to him. She just didn’t conform to any previous conception of how he believed a ghost should act, or talk.

“Been laid off work, got a written warning, a total asshole has been put on the project I was working on until I ‘get my shit together’.” How is that for you?” Tony moaned.

“Oh, Babes! I’d give you a big hug... but you know I can’t. Oh, that’s the thing I have been waiting to tell you. You like know how I said I had disappeared into you... an itsy bitsy bit, this morning? Well, how would you feel if I went all the way into you, like, just briefly, you know.”

“What!” Tony gasped. Not liking the idea of having a ghost inside of him.

“Okay, I can tell it’s like freaking you out a bit but just hear me out, k? Apparently, by my getting energy from your body, it kind of makes us more connected with each other... so I can pick up your feelings more. Anyway, I’m getting ahead of myself. Like, it totes won’t hurt you in the least but I would be able to like feel a body with life again... a beating heart... a warm body... just for the once. You have no idea how much ghosts yearn for such a thing,” she said emphatically.

“You’re dead, right? The thought does freak me out. Why have you suddenly got this idea in your... uh, head?”

“Yeah, so like I’ve been talking to Mrs. Marchant again and shit. This morning I only went like a bit into you because ghosts need to be invited to do some stuff... kind of unwritten laws of the spirit world... so I couldn’t have gone in into you but by you allowing me, I can go right into you. Like a stranger coming to your door needs inviting in to come into your house before he legally can. Does that make sense?”

Tony furrowed his eyebrows in confusion, but then replied, “Yes, kind of. I guess”

“So..?”

“So, what?”

“So, would you invite me in? It would be so radical if you did... even for the briefest of moments.”

“No, I’m sorry. I understand all that you have said; I really do but just try thinking if it was you allowing me into you. It just seems so wrong on so many levels,” Tony told her firmly.

“I would so totes do it for you, Babe. For my bestie, knowing it meant sooo much to you,” Jodie told him.

Tony was adamant that he did not want to entertain such an idea; it freaked him out just thinking about it. Jodie was persistent though and she was relentless the rest of the evening, nagging him, begging him. Bit by bit she was fading and Tony just hoped she would fade right away. He didn’t need all of this spooky shit.

“Tony, okay I guess you are not going to move on that one like massive favour for me but can I at least ask you to do me just one favour and let me sleep by you again tonight so that I can re-energise?” Jodie asked forlornly as Tony tried eating his supper while watching the ballgame later that evening.

“How the fuck do you mean *one favour*? I climbed down a fucking shaft for you, searched a decomposing corpse for a necklace for you... and this sleeping by me. I mean, are you hoping for this to be a nightly occurrence?” he asked irritably.

“Oh, right. I’m, like, really sorry. I thought you and I had made a connection, made friends. I really do appreciate you getting my necklace but I guess the living just don’t want to have like anything to do with the dead. I won’t bother you no more, Babes,” She responded almost sobbing, if ghosts could sob. With that, Jodie’s form began to disappear in front of him.

“No Jodie... wait!” Tony called out but it was too late. He heard and felt nothing from her the rest of the night.

Being off work the following day, Tony had little to do to occupy himself. He went out for a jog which did-

n't last too long as he had let himself get too out of shape. He had thought about looking more through some of Jodie's personal stuff to try and learn more about her but then knocked the idea on the head as he didn't want to get any more involved.

The evening came and went. It was ridiculous... he was missing her, missing her presence. Maybe they really had formed some kind of spiritual connection. His mind went back to all that Jodie had revealed about herself, her miserable existence. Life had been crap for her and ended way too soon and tragically. As Tony recalled her words telling him about her life, he wiped a tear that trickled from an eye.

He had fallen asleep just before three o'clock when he shuddered and pulled the duvet up against the drop in temperature. His subconscious sprang to life; that could mean only one thing. In the dark of his bedroom his whispered voice seemed to echo loudly. "Jodie."

There was eerie silence, so much so he felt he could even hear the beat of his own heart. "Jodie...?" he tried again.

"Yes. I am here," came the voice of the late teen girl, but sounding in the air again and sounding upset.

"So you didn't leave, huh?" he asked; feeling secretly pleased that she hadn't.

"I said I wouldn't bother you anymore, Tony, not that I was leaving. I have nowhere else to go... this was my home. This is where I reside in my spirit state."

"I can feel the chill of the air but I don't sense you behind me."

"No, like I promised, I won't bother you no more. You won't see me and I won't take the liberty of energising myself against you when you don't want me."

“I didn’t say I didn’t want you. Just... you know... that! It’s freakish.”

“Then can I at least warm against you?” Jodie asked.

“Yes,” Tony replied and turned to his side to go back to sleep, a smile on his lips knowing that he hadn’t permanently lost his ghostly friend.

Tony awoke on Thursday morning feeling he’d maybe had the best sleep he’d had for over a week. There was no signs of the ghost anywhere but now he knew she could appear day or night and she had said she ‘lived’ in the house and never slept.

If she was about, he would rather know she was there rather than just feel like he was being constantly watched.

“Jodie?” he called out.

Soon her image began to materialise. “Good morning, Babes. You slept well.” It was a statement rather than a question.

“Yes, I did, I guess.”

Tony trundled to his kitchen to put the kettle on. “I guess if you haunt this place, it means you are always going to be a permanent fixture. You will always be about, seeing what I am doing, kind of living with me,” he began.

“Does that trouble you? I can’t help it, I really do not know just where else to go, but you know I am not locked here, I can go out,” Jodie replied apologetically.

“No, it’s not that. I’m trying to come to terms with the reality. You would always be a part of my life unless I moved out... found somewhere else to live.”

Jodie's expression changed. "Oh no, please don't do that. I like you; you are good hearted. Who knows who I would get next. I think we have made a bond."

Tony had to think carefully how to word what he wanted to say next. "Don't get me wrong. I am honestly not trying to get rid of you but if you really did want your freedom from here... somewhere else to go that may be more right for you, more suited for a spirit then I honestly believe getting the authorities to exhume your body out of that shaft would be the way forward. Give you a proper burial, or cremation, so that you can rest in peace."

"No, I don't want that."

"But why? I don't get it. That is you down there, rotting and cold... your flesh being fed upon by all manner of creatures," Tony shivered involuntarily.

"That was the body that I lived in. Yes, I wish I could still live in it, but, like, its dead now. Why do I want it to stay there? I have told you about my history. If you reported it, then the police would be involved and they would look for the reason of death... foul play and whatever. They would then look for my next of kin My death would get back to my parents and foster parents and I don't want to give them the satisfaction of knowing I am dead. Screw them. Let them go on for the rest of their miserable lives wondering about me. Did I ever make something of myself? Did I fail? They will never know."

Tony could feel the deep-seated resentment that Jodie had. He remembered afresh all of the hurt she harboured in her young body. "Okay, I get it. I won't bring it up again. So what do you think you would get out of being inside me?" he then asked unexpectedly.

"I don't know... just to, like, feel a living body again. I can't explain it to you, you wouldn't understand unless you experienced not having a body, not being able to touch things... feel things... smell things."

"And if you did enter me, you say it wouldn't hurt?"

“Why? Are you going to let me enter you?” Jodie then exclaimed excitedly, eyes wide in astonishment.”

“Maybe... I don't know... I was considering it.”

“Why the change of mind?” Jodie then asked.

“Because I feel sorry for you, losing your life at such a young age, after all the trauma you suffered growing up.”

“Wow! Tony Bartlett. You are, like, incredible. I'd kiss you if I could.”

“It's not Tony Bartlett, its Tony Bartram,” Tony corrected.

“Your proper name doesn't really matter, Babes. It doesn't stop you being like totally awesome. So, when can I try it?”

Tony hadn't been ready straight away for such an ordeal. He'd wanted to build up his confidence. The truth was, even Jodie felt nervous about going into someone's body. What if she got in and couldn't get out?

It was early evening when they decided to attempt it.

“Okay... I think I just walk to your body and, like, step in. A bit like Whoopi Goldberg did with Patrick Swayze in Ghost,” Jodie tried explaining. “Are you ready?”

Tony closed his eyes tight and nodded before clenching his teeth and compressing his body as if ready for a huge impact. When it happened it wasn't without any feeling it was like a tingling sensation throughout his body followed by a sense of something being absorbed into him... making space for it-



self. The image of Whoopi Goldberg came to his mind. The feeling was totally weird. It was, as best he could describe it, like falling into a thick bed of ultra-soft pillows and sinking into them as she entered.

It occurred to him that he had sensed that tingling absorbing feeling from somewhere before but he had no idea as from where. Then it came to him; it was in his subconscious while he was sleeping, the time that Jodie said he had rolled and she had gone part-way into him.

“Oh Wow! Oh my God, this feels so fucking unreal.”

Suddenly Tony could hear Jodie’s voice but not through his ears. It was as if the voice was in his head a little like as if he was thinking using her voice...but not doing.

“Are... are you...in me?” he asked in a shaky nervous voice.

“Yeah, I can feel your heart beating. I can feel your blood pumping through your body. The warmth, the warmth is amazeballs.”

Tony tried to sense her. He had this sensation, the kind that you get when you have a nasty shock; when all the hairs on your body stand on end. All your nerve endings bristle like when you get goose bumps.

“Hold on. I want to try something, something that Mrs. Marchant told me about.” he heard Jodie saying. “Oh Wow! It works! I can see, I can see through your vision. This is so unreal.”

Tony wasn’t sure how long this experiment was meant to last. He would be happy for it to end immediately but he didn’t like telling the ghost to leave after such a short period of time even though he felt uncomfortable and didn’t know what to do with himself.

“Oh, like, fucking Wow!”

“Now what?” Tony asked.

“I can feel your Willy.”

“You can *what*? How do you mean you can feel my w... my penis?”

“I can feel it, like if it was hanging down between my own legs. That is like the coolest thing ever, Hey! Will you masturbate for me? I wanna know what it feels like to shoot your load.”

“No, I will not.” Tony replied indignantly, “I think it may be best if you depart from me now,” he almost demanded.

“Oh! What? You are so, like, no fun at all.” Suddenly Tony felt that same pushing sensation and he was suddenly aware of feeling ‘emptier’ with Jodie’s spirit standing opposite him.

Tony was hoping just to put the entire experience behind him but, after pouting for a period, the young ghost began talking endlessly about how it felt for her.

“That was so wicked; you just have to let me have the experience again,” she enthused. I promise I won’t make any lewd suggestions next time.” She emphasised the ‘lewd’ with hand gestures.

“No, I don’t think we should. I don’t want this becoming a regular thing. I actually don’t feel okay about having the ghost of a dead girl inside of me,” Tony told her flatly.

“You rotten meanie. Some gent you are. It doesn’t harm or hurt you in any way but for me it is like a breath of fresh air after months of living holed up in a putrid stinking pit. It’s like giving me a brief spark of life again. But, oh, you would rather feel comfortable than give me that occasional opportunity, leave me dead, cold and bodiless. Well, thanks, Buster.” With that, Jodie faded away again.

Tony wanted to make a gesture to stop her, say something to comfort her, but he was fighting against that and his innermost feelings in not wanting to end up going through that experience time and again. Why did she have to be so touchy when things didn't go her way? "Aw! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!" he cursed. He felt bad, real bad about denying her but he had warning bells ringing telling him this could all go too far.

On Monday Tony was back at work; there had been no sign or feel of Jodie since Thursday. He still felt bad about his rejection to her as he went to work that day. Once again, as events played on his mind, his concentration was not on his job, his work was sloppy and he was making errors. He was already on a warning and Brett was growing increasingly frustrated as he called his employee into the office.

"What on earth is happening with you Tony? Hell, man, you are my leading employee, my shining star but for the past two weeks you have just not been with it? Have you got a problem at home? Family problems? Has that girl you put up the fucking duff tracked you down and is looking for maintenance? Current girlfriend problems? Throw me a frikkin' bone here, Tony." Brett challenged.

"No Brett, it's none of that."

"Then what the hell is it? I've tried to play ball with you. I've offered you time off but I got a damn business to run here, targets to meet, clients to satisfy. I can't have you keep coming to work like this. Chad stepped in and did well in your absence but he's not you, he's not as good as you are."

Tony looked his boss square in the face. "You want the truth, Brett? You wouldn't believe the truth."

"Try me... I'm ready to listen to anything that may get you back on board with the frikkin' programme."

"Alright...I'm being haunted."

“You’re *what?*” Brett asked unbelievably.

“I’m being haunted. My new place is haunted by the ghost of a teenaged girl,” Tony replied, laying his cards out on the table.

“Haunted? Get the fuck out of here. Haunted?”

“See, I said you wouldn’t believe me.” Tony went on to try and replay the events of the past thirteen days, leaving out certain parts such as Jodie entering him. All along Brett held a sceptical look on his face.

“I gotta tell you, Tony, I’m beginning to think you are on some kind of substance, hallucinating, or just having a shitload of bad dreams. But, let’s go with that you are being haunted. Then get a frikkin’ priest in, exorcist or whatever they are or move out, find somewhere else. Whatever you choose to do, I need you to get your mind back on what I am paying you the big bucks for, understand? Go on, kid; get back to your desk.

As Tony left the office he heard Brett scoff, “Haunted? Whatever next?”

Tony was on a downer when he parked his car in the leisure centre after work on Friday night. It was over a week since he had last seen Jodie and he knew she must have been really upset with him to be keeping out of his way all this time. But why? It was his body for Pete’s sake, he should be entitled to say whether he wanted a ghost inside his body or not... and she should just accept his decision. He had already done so much for her.

He then thought about her parting words eight days ago. He was her one salvation in being back in touch with a living body. It had meant so much to her. He recalled, for the hundredth time that week, how thrilled she had sounded. He had brought joy to someone who had tragically lost her life... and then dumped her.

But he was concerned about his job too, concerned about his state of mind even if he was still feeling shitty about rejecting Jodie as he did.

“Hey sport, what’s happening man? I haven’t heard from you all week?” his friend asked as they fist bumped upon meeting

“Yeah, real sorry, Chris, man... I meant to answer your texts and I apologise for not coming last Friday but I’ve just had a heap of stuff on my mind,” Tony tried to explain.

“You haven’t been having problems with the local ghost population again, have you?” Chris grinned.

“Get off of my case, man. You don’t believe in that shit any more than my boss at work does so stop teasing me with it.”

“Whoa, buddy! I was just joking. Geez.” Chris realised that there was definitely something troubling his friend and that he had touched a very sensitive nerve but he felt now was not the time to try and find out just what it was. Instead, he suggested they go straight to the court so that Tony could take out his frustrations there.

Chris had become used to beating his friend over recent times but on this occasion it was like a walk in the park. He decided they should call their squash game quits after just fifteen minutes of playing.

“Come on Buddy, let’s go to a bar and get some cold beers, my treat. I promise you I won’t say nothing about ghosts or ask about what is eating you up,” Chris proposed. “You obviously don’t have your mind on the game.”

Chris hardly had any sweat to towel off when they got to the changing rooms. Tony had remained mostly quiet but consented to going for the beers.

Friday evening in Tony's house was horribly quiet as had become usual; he could neither see nor sense his young ghost around. She was obviously very upset with him but she was asking a lot... wasn't she? Tony began questioning himself. Was he really being harsh? She was correct, it felt weird when she entered him but it didn't harm him physically, it wasn't going to cause any lasting damage. Maybe he really was being selfish?

"Jodie, Jodie, materialise and let's talk. I know you must be about," he called. There was nothing.

"Jodie. Look, I'm sorry. If it means so much to you, I'll let you use my body again, Okay?" There was still no response. She really had gotten upset. Eventually he took himself up to bed. He hoped to once again feel the now familiar cold on his back as she lay by him but by the time he got up the following day, he wasn't aware of her having laid by him.

The weekend was the same, no sign, no feeling of the spirit that had haunted his house. Several times he tried calling and shouting again, still no response. It was ridiculous... she was a ghost... he had known her only for a relatively short time but he had an empty feeling without her being there. He felt sad, he missed her. It was almost like he had broken up with a long-time girlfriend. He missed her charisma, her youthful personality.

On Sunday, Tony phoned Chris. He had to talk to someone so who better than his best friend? Tony was feeling sad and depressed. He needed some reassurance, someone to tell him he hadn't been horrible to a dead girl by refusing her a taste of life. Of course, that meant he had to confess to Chris.

"Hey! What can I do for you, Buddy?" Chris asked as he answered the call.

"Uh, yeah, man, I, Uhm... believe me or not, I do still have a ghost," Tony began.

He told Chris about all the contact he'd had with her and how she had now abandoned him. He said how sad he was feeling and how he missed her. Whether Chris believed his friend or not, he could at least relate. He knew how he himself was missing Susie but they had been together a long time... and she was real.

Chris thought that his friend either had a mental illness, he was the greatest fiction teller of all time or, could there be some element of truth in what he was saying ...as unbelievable as it was.

"I've got something on right now. But meet me after work tomorrow and we'll have a talk... a serious talk," Chris suggested, hoping he could work out whether his friend needed some kind of psychiatric help or was he really telling the truth.

As he hung up the call, Chris turned to the new girl he was seeing. "Sorry Mazy, but I'm gonna have to call tomorrow night off, something has just come up."

Chapter Four

On Monday morning Brett opened his office door and looked at where Tony was sitting moping whilst working on his computer. It was obvious his mind was elsewhere once again. He shook his head despondently and went back into his own office.

Tony was having another bad day at work and he knew his job was on the line. He had to try and sort himself out. Maybe it was for the best that his ghost had now seemingly disappeared. He knew he needed to try and erase her completely out of his mind and get his life back on track. Eventually he would get over her, forget her.

In the bar, after his ordeal at work was over, Tony sat and stared at his friend, trying to gauge his reaction. Did Chris believe what he was saying now? If he did, what were his thoughts on it?

“Well...?” Tony had to push.

“I dunno, man. The whole thing just sounds incredible. Like the most far fetched story I have ever heard. You look like you believe it yourself... which is worrying, because that means you really do need to go see a shrink. This is just crazy shit, Tony, man.

“And, what bothers me is, if there really is a ghost called Jodie that is haunting you, then, from the way you talk about her, the way you say you miss her... it’s almost like you are falling for her. Falling in love with a goddamn ghost! You know yourself, man, that can’t happen... right? How the hell can you be with a ghost, something that is little more than an image, has no body... that’s not solid.”

“Don’t be stupid, of course I’m not falling for her but I do care for her, I feel sorry for her and I want to help her and... yes. I miss her being around.” Tony responded, feeling embarrassed by the suggestion that he could fall in love with a ghost. And yet he knew, if Jodie was real... if she was material, he *would* fall for her. So maybe Chris was right... maybe he was falling for her. But, like Chris had said, how can you love a ghost, something without any substance?

“So what do you intend to do? What is your course of action from here, man?” Chris asked.

“What can I do? She has told me she lives in the flat, that there is nowhere else for her to go... but I can’t sense her anymore. I call for her every day so that we can talk...”

As his friend continued, Chris just sat and listened, having his own private thoughts in his head. Chris was talking as if he could just sit down and talk to a ghost like he would talk to another person. His friend really was losing his mind... maybe brought on by the problems with the gang that had been after him for ratting them to the police, maybe feeling guilt at leaving Jenny to cope with a baby on her own. Maybe deep down he was really missing his family,

together with suddenly living on his own. It must be getting to him, he couldn't cope.

"Listen, Tony, I'm not saying your ghost isn't real but, real or not, you need to see a therapist for your own salvation. A good one can find the root cause and help you."

"Can't help Jodie though, can he... or she?"

"Jodie?"

"That's her name... or was. She just wanted to touch reality again, feel the life that had been stolen from her and I let her down, man. I let her down. Look, thanks for coming and talking but, I'm gonna head back home. See you Friday?"

Chris watched his friend pull on his jacket and then leave the bar for his car. He was obviously going through some depression. But, Jodie? He had even named this imaginary ghost. He had given Tony advice on what to do, he couldn't do much more.

Chris sat dejectedly on his sofa, thinking of his ghostly friend. He got up and walked to the mantel above the fireplace and lifted up the necklace, clasping it tightly in his hand before going to seat himself back down whilst holding it. For the first time since retrieving it from Jodie's corpse, he took a good look at it. It was a beautiful piece of jewellery but stained. He should take it to be cleaned professionally.

"It's nice isn't it?" Jodie's voice filled the room.

Tony gasped, his eyes opened wide. "Jodie? Is that you? Are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here." Tony saw the grey vapour start to materialise in front of him but only the faintest shape could be made out.

“Oh, thank God. I’ve missed you. I’m sorry, I am really sorry for upsetting you so much. Can you ever forgive me?”

“I forgive you. Can you also forgive me?”

Tony yearned so much to hold her and cuddle her. But Chris was right in one thing, she was a ghost and there could never be anything intimate between them.

“You are so faint. You need energising. Sleep by me tonight,” Tony offered.

“Are you sure? Thank you, I’m really cold.”

Knowing that she was back and that everything was good between them still, Tony got off to bed early that night and slept soundly. Besides him Jodie lay, slowly getting strong again.

There was no sign of Jodie when Tony woke by his alarm on Tuesday morning. Not for the first time he wondered if he had imagined the previous night. Had Jodie really returned or had he just wished it so much that it became a reality only in his dreams?

He had to try and put it out of his mind, though, as he had to get ready for work. He knew from here on in he had to up his game to save his job, starting with not being late and ensuring his mind was on his work.

It wasn’t until evening before Tony could verify that the young spirit had indeed returned and they were friends again.

Upon opening the door and walking in, there was Jodie to greet him. She appeared to be wearing jeans and a jumper to cover herself and it still amazed him how ghosts could dress themselves in clothes that simply didn’t exist.

“Hiya, honey. Did you have a good day? I would have had you a nice hot meal ready for your getting home... if that was possible, but I’m afraid it’s not. I’m just this useless dead thing,” Jodie greeted with an apology.

Tony put down his work case and slid off his jacket, smiling. “Yeah, about that, I know that you cannot do the things you used to do when you were, uh... living. I um, I realise I was being kind of selfish in regards to you, uh, you entering me. I will allow it... not too often, but I will give you the opportunity to feel again all of those things you no longer can... being able to touch... do things, smell things, through my body. And I know it wouldn’t allow you to cook a meal for me as you would need me to be here anyway to use my physical body, but what do you think?”

Jodie’s face lit up. “Really? I’ll tell you what I think, Mister. You are the kindest, sweetest man I ever met. If I had met you when I was alive, I doubt that I would be a corpse now.” As she said her words there was a moment’s look of regret on her face before she brightened up again.

“Tell you what... let me in and we can cook together,” Jodie suggested with a big happy smile.

“Well, you don’t really cook microwave meals. You just pop them in the microwave and warm stuff up.”

“Well, duh! Like I know how microwaves work, I’ve been dead for like going on eleven month, not two centuries. And you really have to stop all this fast food eating; it’s not good for you... you’re getting chubby,” Jodie chastised.

“But I’m not a very good cook,” Tony informed her.

“So, I’ll help. You buy the ingredients and I’ll tell you what needs doing.” Jodie then offered, “I may have been a loser in my life but I was a pretty decent cook.”

After his meal and a rest, Tony again allowed his young ghost to enter his body. Again he felt the electric tingling and the push as she entered.

This time Jodie was sure not to say too much and definitely not to suggest that Tony masturbate himself; although, once again, she was captivated as she felt the presence of his cock.

Twice before he had offended the young spirit and she had left, leaving him feeling empty and remorseful. This time in an attempt to avoid that again, he allowed Jodie to stay in his body for a full one and a half hours. He could sense her and it felt weird, it made him feel uncomfortable but not in a painful way.

As before, Jodie loved the feel of life again. She had been highly sexual and promiscuous when she had been a living teenaged girl, up for anything; now she was having a whole set of different thoughts inside this male body.

She could feel his masculinity and she wondered just what it would feel like making love to a girl, having a cock to put inside her. This was one experience she could obviously never do in her own life; she'd been intimate with a few girls before but now... now she had the opportunity to experience something she could never have done. But would Tony ever go for it? She doubted it unless she played on his repentance of his having hurt her feelings.

When Tony suggested that she part from his body as it got close to bed time, Jodie wanted to try asking him one other thing.

"Thank you like so much for letting me share your body and life force. In doing so, you are giving me life again, co-existing in your body. That is the greatest gift anyone could ever give me," she told him sincerely.

"It's okay. Like I said, I realised I was being a selfish twat to deny you." Tony replied equally sincerely.

“There’s one thing I would like to ask you to do for me. Don’t freak out, okay?”

Tony sat stiffly on his two-seater. He didn’t like what may be coming but before he could hear what Jodie had in her mind this time, he told himself to at least consider her proposal and definitely not to upset her again. He could always say no gently.

“Go on... what is it?”

“Well, like, I always considered myself to be a girly girl, you know. I liked feminine things and feeling feminine. I like really am grateful for you letting me feel life in your body but, you are a man. Don’t get me wrong, like, being in a man’s body is like a whole new wonderful experience but I do miss being able to feel being girly.”

Tony suddenly felt guarded of what may be coming. “So... just what can I do about that? I don’t get where you are coming from.”

“Would you dress up a bit... like, while I’m in your body?” Jodie suggested cautiously.

Tony felt his cheeks starting to burn. “Dress up? What are you suggesting?” His question was needless as he was pretty sure he already knew what she was asking.

“Just... put on a few female clothing items, maybe some makeup just so I can feel like I used to feel. I would be like so, so grateful.”

Tony had been prepared to consider any request, in reason, from Jodie in order of not offending her again, but he had not prepared or expected this from her.

Not wanting to give a direct refusal, he thought he had a good enough reason to get out of it. He knew, of course, that Jodie had cupboards full of her own clothes, so that wasn’t a good enough reason in itself.

“I’m sorry, I mean, I would have considered it, but I’m too big for your clothes. I’m six foot one and weigh two hundred and thirty-five pounds.” Tony put to her.

“Well, you could always buy some things that would fit,” Jodie then suggested; she had a serious look on her face.

There was no way that Tony wanted to waste his money on buying female clothes that would be worn just once to appease a ghost, nor did he want to wear female clothes, period! He wasn’t some crossdresser, he did not want to feel gay or emasculated, and he prided himself on being manly.

“No, I don’t think that is a good idea. Letting you use my body is one thing, Jodie, but having me put on female things? No!” Tony shuddered as he delivered his rejection.

Jodie, however, was persistent. Not only did she nag all night, trying to get him to change his mind, she took it to work with him the following day.

Tony was at his desk working when she suddenly materialised. Tony, after recovering from the initial surprise, did a quick look around to see if anyone was about. “What are you doing here?” he hissed.

“I came to see if you had any more thoughts on doing that request for me?” she replied.

“No! Now you can’t be here. I need to work. Please, go away,” Tony told her irritably.

“Calm down, Babes, there’s no point getting so vexed. Nobody can see me.”

“No, but they may see and hear me talking to thin air,” Tony scolded, keeping his voice low.

“Jeez, you are like so tragic. You said you would consider it if you had the clothes.”

“I’ve considered it. The answer is no. I’m sorry, Jodie, but I would feel foolish in women’s clothing. Now, please leave.”

Tony was getting concerned that Jodie turning up could possibly jeopardise his job again, just as he had began turning things around and Brett had gotten off of his case.

But Jodie stubbornly remained trying to talk him into doing this one thing for her.

“Alright, alright, I’ll do it for you... if you just go and let me get on with my work,” he snarled under his breath.

“Really? Like, Wow. Okay, we can go to the stores after you finish tonight.”

“Tonight! But, I don’t know my sizes or what to get or anything.”

“That’s okay, I’ll be with you. I can guide you to what you need,” Jodie said happily.

“Oh, I thought I heard you talking to a customer,” Brett suddenly asked as he came into the office.

“What? No, um... I was just reciting aloud how to address that meet we have next week,” Tony floundered as he watched Jodie give a finger wave and disappear.

Brett adjusted his specs. “Okay. Well, I’ll leave you to it,” he said with a questioning look on his face before going back to his office.

“I feel so fucking stupid right now,” Tony complained later that evening. He was wearing a pink nylon bustier and matching tanga-style panties. That was all he had been prepared to buy in the store when he saw the prices and he had bought the two



items from sales counters. Buying them had been a complete embarrassment and he had used the old excuse that he was buying as a gift for his wife.

Under Jodie's prompting he had also bought other stuff... a long curly black wig that really looked dreadful; probably because it was so cheap, but all he had been prepared to pay out for. And then there were a few makeup items. He had bought eyeliner; mascara and lipstick which, inside his body, Jodie had nagged him to buy and had guided him in the selection and then helped in their application to his face.

He had red nail enamel on both his fingers and toes, again guided by Jodie... but the real emasculating thing to him was his now hairless body.

Jodie had nagged and nagged, saying there was no way she could feel feminine with all of his dark chest, leg and arm hair. She had led him to a shelf in the store that sold 'NEET,' a depilatory cream that dissolved all the hair from his body. He had never felt so naked.

The only thing remotely masculine about him now was the big forearm tattoos that he had and which Jodie loved anyway. "I hope you are happy now," he sulked.

"Well, I may have felt more feminine if you hadn't been like so tight and splashed out a bit more on other clothing... like a dress and heels," she said from within his head. She then decided she may be overstepping the mark instead of showing her gratitude. "But thank you for doing this. It was like totally nice being able to apply makeup again, even on your big masculine face, and your body is now so soft and silky."

"Yeah, about that. I'm going to look a right toad dressed in shorts and a T-shirt when I'm playing squash on Friday, showing off my nice smooth hair-free legs. I'll be a complete laughing stock. And then, when I'm showering after the game..." Tony didn't continue; it didn't bear thinking about.

“Just tell Chris you like shaved your body in an attempt to improve your game, seeing like he always beats you and shit.”

“I suppose I could say something like that. Wait! How do you know about Chris?”

“Well, duh! You like brought him here twice trying to convince him I wasn’t just a figment of your imagination.”

“Yeah, that’s true but you also said he always beats me! How do you know he does?” Tony challenged.

If Jodie had been outside of his body he may well have seen her slightly blushing.

“W...ell, I may have tagged along, unseen, a couple of times to your squash games. I mean, it’s not like I have anything better to do, do I? Tell you what, though. Chris is well lush. Don’t you think he is a handsome hunk? And he has a great physique.”

“No, I don’t see Chris anything like that. He’s my best friend. For your information, not so long ago I had better abs and pecs than he does.”

“But then you let yourself go a bit, didn’t you, podgy poo? Don’t worry, now you have me to get you back into shape,” Jodie informed him.

Feeling slighted, Tony decided he wanted to end his feminine masquerade. “Can I take this wig off yet and get out of these garments?”

“Yes, if you insist. We do have a problem though. We forgot to pick up nail lacquer remover!”

Tony was starting to worry he may have given in to Jodie too easily. All day Thursday all she had done was talk about how good it had been for her and how

they really ought to do it again, *soon*. Fortunately she wasn't about on Thursday evening so she wasn't there to try and pester him into getting that stupid get-up on again that evening.

He was still trying to get used to the feel and touch of his clothes on his hairless body which he was conscious about all day at work underneath his shirt and pants. How had he allowed her to manipulate him into that? He'd had to go to a twenty-four-hour convenience store before he could even go to work, in order to get the lacquer off from his fingernails. He didn't even have time to clean his toenails.

Friday morning was different. She was back and even more excited for some reason.

"If you think about it, we have opened up a whole load of avenues, Babes. We could share experiences that nobody else on earth could experience," she told him as he tried eating his breakfast before work.

"How do you know some other ghost hasn't already done this into-the-body thing with some other mortal and shared whatever experiences you may have in mind?" Tony casually asked as he bit into a slice of toast.

"Well, I don't... but we can be, like, more creative than anyone else. Think about this, you could go out shopping, dancing, anything, as a girl... feeling like what life is like as the opposite sex. How totally great and unique would that be?"

"If you think for a minute I would go out of this building, dressed as a girl, to go shopping or dancing... I'm not a transvestite and I'm certainly not one of those almost convincing ones even if I were. I'd make a shit ugly broad. If you think I'm going out looking like some dude in a dress, then you must be off your head."

"Yes, I am off my head, Babes, and I can thank you for that." Jodie retorted, making Tony recall that he

had literally knocked her head from her shoulders down the pit.

“I said I was sorry about that but honestly, did you see the state of me. I looked like the most hideous drag queen ever. And that wig!”

“Well, I’ll admit you didn’t look great and you don’t like have the greatest figure, either for a woman or a man, and that wig was your fault for being so tight... but I think I can help there, with a bit of practice. Well, maybe like a lot, but if you were wondering where I was last night, I was talking to Mrs. Marchant again.”

On hearing that name, Tony groaned. “I wish your interfering ghost friends would stop giving you advice that has a direct impact on my life,” he complained.

He was surprised when Jodie burst into giggles. “Mrs. Marchant isn’t a ghost, you silly Billy, she’s a psychic medium. She lives about twenty minutes from here. She is really popular, lots of living folk visit her so that she can put them in touch with their lost loved ones. Spirits are around at hers all the time when she isn’t working.”

“What? So she is a living person? I thought she was one of your ghost friends.”

“No, she’s, like, really totes amazing and clever. She says there is a strong link between the living and spirit world and she has like lots of really cool advice for stuff that spirits can do. As you know, it was she who explained how I could absorb myself into your body, Babes. She explains powers that spirits have that we don’t even realise.”

“I’m going to hate myself for asking this, but what is it she has told you that you can do now? Tony asked cautiously.

“Okay, so... chill, ‘k?’ I mean obs I haven’t tried this yet but if, like, when I’m inside you, if I really concentrate, I can morph your features.”

“What the hell do you mean by you can morph my features?” Tom asked, totally bewildered.

“I can change the way you look. Apparently, the more I practice, the better I can be and the more I can do. But I can make you look more womanly like right away.”

Tony began freaking out. “No! No way. I don’t want to look more like a woman. I’m happy with how I look now, and the way everyone I know knows me.”

“It’s not permanent; you would spring right back to the way you look now. Aren’t you interested in knowing what you would look like as a girl?” Jodie tried to assure him.

“No, not interested, not in the least. For one thing I don’t believe such a thing could even be remotely possible. How the hell can you have the power to alter my looks just by being inside me? Only cosmetic surgery can alter the way I look. Even if you could, you have absolutely no guarantee that afterwards I would be restored to exactly how I look like now. And, once altered, you may not be able to ever restore me again,” Tony told her, genuinely concerned that if it was even slightly possible that she could do what she was saying, he may have some permanent alteration to his face.

“No, Babes. This has been tried and tested; in some very significant ways with some very well-known people for a whole bunch of reasons. Don’t try asking who, that has to be known only to a few and, like, I don’t even know... I just know it has,” Jodie informed him, “I just know what Mrs. Marchant has told me. Aren’t you like even curious about seeing your face altered to look like a girl’s?”

Tony had to think about it and, surprisingly to him, there was something... something very small, somewhere in his head, telling him that such a thing could be rather interesting... if it was safe.

“No, I can’t risk it. You have never tried it before and so you cannot be sure you would do it correctly.”

Tony stopped himself from saying any more. What was he even saying? He was responding to her ridiculous suggestion as though, if she had done such a thing before and knew she could both do it correctly and reverse it, he would consider it. Also, he was answering as if the whole idea was even possible. Surely it couldn't be, right?

“Let me just try, Babes. As you say, I've never even like attempted it and I may not even be able to morph you at all, in which case things go no further but if I can, then I'm pretty sure I can change you back, too. If there was a problem I'm sure that, through Mrs. Marchant, I can find a spirit that can,” she responded, hoping to reassure him.

“What? Another ghost entering my body? NO, I'm still not comfortable with you entering me; I don't want a whole load of different spooks going into me... what if one wanted to possess me?”

Jodie had a feeling that Tony was at least curious about her idea but not brave enough or confident that it wouldn't cause irreparable harm to him. Therefore she did what she did best... she nagged him, over and over. It was all to no avail though as Tony dug his heels in. He just didn't trust her to be able to alter his face, or, even more worrying, if she did, to be able to give him his face back as it should be. Plus, the whole idea of having a different face... a womanly one... unnerved him.

Jodie pouted and went silent. He was concerned about her leaving him again after he had solemnly told her how he understood how she felt at losing her life and her own earthly body to the extent that he would help where he could to give her some degree of happiness again.

“Will it make it up to you if I let you share my body for this evening?” he asked.

Still pouting and looking sulky, Jodie nodded. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“Okay, I’ll let you in after I get back from squash,” he promised.

“Squash? Is it tonight that you play with your hunky friend? I get lost on days as they have no meaning to me anymore. Can I go into you to play squash? I’d love to be able to play sports again, and against Chris. Mmmm.”

“No. I can’t have you in me when I’m trying to play squash, you would put me off my game,” Tony protested.

“Put you off your game, Babes? You lose to Chris every time. I may even be able to help your game if I can connect properly with you,” Jodie suggested.

Tony was reluctant. “No, I don’t think it would work. Look, I’m running late, our conversation has left me short of time. I have to get off to work now.” Tony had to tell her, leaving his breakfast unfinished and rushing out to his car.

“Bye then,” Jodie said with a pout and in an offended tone as she was suddenly left alone.

Tony drove to the sports centre that evening with the words of his boss, Brett, resonating in his ear. Once again his work had not been up to scratch and he had made mistakes. Brett had given him yet another verbal warning.

Parking his car, Tony took his sports bag out of the trunk and slung it over his shoulder as he made for the building.

He was just entering the changing room when he suddenly stopped dead and stared.

“What are you doing here?” he asked Jodie.

“I was bored. I want to have some fun. Can’t you please let me in?” the young ghost pouted.

“No.”

“Just for a short while?”

“I said no,” Tony told her firmly.

“Then I’m going to put you off your game. I’ll stand in front of you and wave my arms about,” Jodie countered.

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“You’ve improved since last week, buddy,” Chris told his friend as they took a rest. “Who knows, man, you may even be able to beat me if you continue playing like that... and get some weight off.”

“See, I told ya I could improve your game,” a joyful Jodie’s voice filled Tony’s head.

“I’ve improved my game, not you,” Tony replied.

“What? I never said I had improved your game,” Chris responded, screwing up his face.

“Uh! No, I wasn’t talking to you, man. I mean. I was talking to myself,” Tony replied, his face reddening.

“I’m ready for something to eat, I’m starving,” Tony said after the game as he drove back to the apartment flat.

Jodie was still residing inside of him and Tony hadn’t even thought about letting her out. He was starting to get used to the feel of her presence and it hardly bothered him any more.

“We can, like, prepare something together now that you have bought some decent foods and ingredients in. I’ll just run you through all you need to do, Babes. I used to enjoy cooking,” Jodie told him. “And

hunky Chris is right, you totes need to shed some pounds. Eat healthy, okay?"

Later in the evening Tony pushed his plate away from himself. "That was actually a very tasty meal," he complimented.

Still inside of him, Jodie was in Seventh Heaven. "You're telling me. Like, I used to cook that meal for myself quite regularly. It was a favourite of mine, but you have no idea. I didn't expect to be able to share your taste of the food you ate to begin with but when you haven't tasted food, hot cooked food, for nearly a year! Wowsers! That was amazing," she gushed.

With no work for the following two days, Tony rented and let the female ghost enter and share his body for an hour during Saturday morning. Only the entering and leaving was semi-uncomfortable for him now and he found he enjoyed conversing with Jodie through his mind when she was within him. He was learning much more about her and the hardship she'd had during her young life.

She was back out of his body in the afternoon as he made himself comfortable to watch sports on TV.

"So, I know you aren't dating, isn't there any casual girl you could call up... you know, to have a bit of bump and grind with? Release some pressure from your balls," Jodie inquired.

"Why are you asking? Are you concerning yourself over my sex life now?" Tony asked. "I guess there are some names in my book I could contact but I haven't really been bothered much since moving here. I've not been in the mood and too busy at work. At the end of the day I just want to relax... something I haven't had much of since you came into my life."

Jodie ignored the last comment. "I just think you are too young to let yourself go to seed," Jodie replied as she sat and looked at him.

“I’m well aware you were very sexual and promiscuous when you were alive but I’m thirty-two now and, well... I can take it or leave it.”

“You are so tragic, Babes. Oh and, like, thanks for thinking I was some licentious female. I enjoyed sex, yeah. Why not?”

“I wasn’t implying that you were... whatever that word was,” Tony countered.

“Licentious. Some shameless hussy,” Jodie scoffed. “I was just thinking of you, Babes; that you need to have some kind of life. Trust me, it’s no fun when you are dead. Get it while you can.”

“Oh, I get it now. This is you wanting to know what it’s like to be a man boning a woman. That’s it, isn’t it?”

“NO! Not at all. Well, maybe. Yeah, the experience would be like, well, awesome but I was thinking of you.”

“So, if I phoned up some ex and met her tonight, me and her together... not you... you’d be excluded, you would be quite happy for me?”

“What? You would do that to me? Not invite me along when I’d have the chance of that experience?” Jodie pouted. “Do you know someone who would be up for it?”

Tony grinned. He had known her suggestion was mostly for herself. “I may do. I mean, I’d have to take her for a drink first, then take it from there, but yeah, I do have an ex who still has a big crush on me. She was a bit too clingy for me, though.”

“Phone her. Phone her *now*,” Jodie told him excitedly.

“What made you ring me up, Tone?” Jan inquired, sipping a cocktail as she stared at Tony. “It must be eighteen months since we last went out together.”

“Yes, I know things didn’t quite work out so well for us back then, but you were always a favourite of mine and I’ve thought about you lots, especially since Jenny and I split up,” Tony told her as he rested his hand on Jan’s leg.

“You did? Yeah, I heard you and Jenny were no longer together. So why has it taken you so long to call me?” Jan replied, snuggling a little closer.

“I wanted to... I just didn’t have the bottle. I feared you would reject me, you know, believing I was just phoning on the rebound.”

“Oh Tony, pooh, I would never have thought that. We had some good times together; we still could have... if you wanted me,” Jan responded as she walked her fingers up his arm to his shoulder and settled her hand there.

This was going far easier than Tony ever could have hoped. But he had to remind himself just why he was doing this. Was he seriously thinking of allowing Jodie inside him while he fucked a girl? Intimacy should be a private thing, right? And she was going along for the ride right inside of him.

He stroked up the smooth skin of Jan’s bare thighs, up to the hem of her ridiculously short skirt. Three drinks and she wanted him, she *so* wanted him. Her looks had improved since they last dated; she was much sexier than he remembered, her hair longer, her body curvier. But he was not aiming to get back with her.

“Look, this may sound a little sudden but how would you fancy a few more drinks back at my new place?” Tony asked, looking into her eyes.

Jan smiled. "What you waiting for, tiger? Drink up," she purred.

Tony had poured two glasses of wine back at the apartment but there was a danger that they may never be consumed.

"I've missed you so much, honey," Jan told him as she ran her hands up and down his shirt and nuzzled his neck with her painted lips. Her breathing was becoming heavy with lust which had the effect of stirring Tony's penis.

"Oh wow! I can like feel like your willy stiffening and everything, that's, like, totally cool."

Tony did his best to just ignore the voice of Jodie in his head as he tilted Jan's head up from under her chin and then covered her lips with his own. Jan sighed and began fumbling to open the buttons of Tony's shirt, then ran her fingers through the hair on his chest.

"Oh, baby. I want you so bad," she told him as she stripped him of his shirt. "Hey, sweetie, you put on a bit of weight since last time we were together. You have some nice love handles there."

Tony blushed. "Too much fast food, don't worry darlin' I'm working on it," he told her as he started to redder.

Within just a few minutes the couple were both down to basic underwear, kissing and fondling on top of the bed. Amidst her groans, Jan was telling him how much she loved him.

"Blurgh! What a needy bitch!" Jodie voiced internally.

They worked each other's underwear off, Tony nibbling on one of her breasts once her bra had hit the floor.

From within, Jodie had enjoyed the sensation of kissing and nibbling Jan's breast. She regarded herself as open when it came to sex and she had made out with several females before her death.

Jan's hand reached for Tony's now firm penis and guided it towards her pussy opening. She screamed as Tony pushed into her, sinking her long nails into his back in response.

Soon Tony had found a rhythm and Jan raised her hips perfectly in time to meet his descent back into her. It was only when he was on the verge of ejaculation after twenty minutes of love making that he realised that he wasn't wearing a condom, the very thing that had been the reason for him fleeing from Jenny. Jan didn't seem the least bothered about whether she fell pregnant or not.

Afterwards, when both had redressed, they finished their wine whilst they waited for the taxi that Tony had called to take her home.

"That was such a good fuck, Tonykins. Mmmm, I could have lain there with you all night. You do want to see me again after tonight, don't you? You could come live at my place... it's much bigger than this apartment. We could start a family. What would you like?" she asked as she stroked her fingers deftly over Tony's face, "A boy or a girl? One of each? Maybe more than two."

Tony had no desire to have any children or to settle down with Jan. Sure he had enjoyed the sex, but he was not the getting-tied-down type. "A boy would be good but I wouldn't be opposed to one of each," he lied in response.

"So, we are going to keep on seeing each other? Go steady, make plans?" Jan asked excitedly, "Oh, Tone, I love you so much. You do love me, don't you, sugar plum?"

"You know I do, baby. Sure we can work at a future together... But for the time being, I'm going to be up

to my eyes at work. Big project. So I may not be able to see you for a few weeks.”

Jan pouted. “Oh, that’s not fair, I’ll miss you, honeykins but you are worth waiting for.”

It was after they heard the sound of the taxi pulling away that Jodie emerged from Tony’s body.

“Man! Is that babe full-on or what? Are you, like, serious about settling down and having brats with her?”

“No, of course not but I couldn’t say that to her, could I?” Tony responded after recovering again from the feeling of Jodie exiting his body.

“Chuffin’ hell. She could get a roll in Star Trek as a Klingon because she sure clings on,” Jodie continued.

Tony smiled at the comment. “Yeah, she’s a bit full-on. So what did you think of sex as a man with a woman? After all, that was the whole point of tonight.”

“Yeah, it was cool, different. I liked the feeling when you spurted into her... though maybe you should have thought of something to catch it in. It’s not as good as being a woman boned by a man, though, and you just get the one miserly orgasm. What’s that all about? No wonder men fall asleep after coming the once. You really got to try it the other way round now, Babes,” Jodie suggested.

“The other way round? What do you mean?”

“Being a woman fucked by a man, of course.”

“Well, that’s never going to happen, is it? For one thing it’s an impossibility”

“No, it can. Remember what I said Mrs. Marchant had told me? It may take a few goes but I could have the power to morph you.”

“I thought you said you could morph my face to look more female. That would hardly be enough for me to have sex with a man, as a woman,” Tony told her.

“Well, yeah I did, Babes, but with practice I could change your whole body to that of a female. It’s even possible that I could make you look like I did... both face and body. Then you could try getting fucked by a man and seeing how much better it is.”

“Even if you found you *could* do that, there is no way that it would happen. I’m a guy, a straight heterosexual guy. I don’t find men physically attractive and I’m not gay.”

“But if I transformed your body like a girl’s, then being with a man would, like, be normal. You know what they say, Babes, don’t knock it till you’ve tried it.”

“No. I don’t fancy men in the least; I certainly don’t want one of their cocks plunged inside me.” Tony gave an involuntary shudder as he tried even imagining it.

Jodie decided not to pursue it, just yet. But she would love to be able to feel a man inside her once again.

Chapter Five

On Sunday, Tony again let the ghost of Jodie enter into him; he was trying to keep her happy as he knew how much he would miss her if she got in a huff again and left. In fact, with each passing day he was becoming more and more attached to her, enjoying her company, loving her youthful enthusiasm. It really was a shame he could never have met her before she lost her life. There would have been an age difference but so what? She could have been the person he might have settled down with.

And Jodie knew how much he was trying to keep her happy and she really valued the couple of hours that he would allow her to reside in his body. If only he wasn't so stubborn about other things. She knew, if he would only allow it, that they could both have a really great time just sharing his body and, if she really could do it, for Tony to be her old resemblance some of the time, too. How she would love to be back inside a living bodily image of herself once more.

But it was on Monday that things were to start changing.

Time and days were almost meaningless to Jodie now; she never slept so time was just continuous for her. Sure she knew when day became night and vice versa but she had little idea of the changing months nor took notice of them.

It was on this particular Monday; Tony had gone to work and left the morning newspaper on top of the dining table. News, politics, world affairs... none of this held any interest to Jodie anymore. Her days seemed almost endless and dull and as she materialised and saw the newspaper, she casually glanced at it.

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On Tony's return from work later that day he knew something was wrong with his resident ghost. Ghosts don't cry. Indeed they cannot cry, but that isn't to say

they cannot show deep sadness and emotion. Tony picked up on it straight away.

“Hey! What’s wrong?” he asked tenderly.

“It’s today’s date. I saw it on your newspaper this morning. Like, I don’t even know why I looked. I don’t normally, I, like, was just drawn to it,” she replied morosely.

“Yes and...? is there something significant about today?”

“For me, yes. It would have been my birthday. I’d be leaving my teens and celebrating my twentieth. I suppose I should be happy, eh? Now I’ll never grow up, never get old,” she tried replying more positively, forcing a smile.

“Gee, Jodie. I’m sorry. What say we have a party to celebrate?” Tony suggested.

“And how exactly like am I supposed to do that?”

“Enter me. I’ll go buy some booze and some party stuff. You’ll be able to taste it. If I drink enough you may even get to share my thick head.” he then tried joking.

Jodie seemed to be unimpressed with the offer and remained looking sad.

“I’ll tell you what. This is your party and if you are hidden away, it would seem mostly like mine,. What if I get dressed up for you as well so that you feel like it’s you on the outside?” he offered against his better judgment.

“You mean dress up again?” Jodie responded with a touch more eagerness this time.

“Well, yeah. Why not? For you.”

Jodie thought about it. Her eyes brightened up. “Well, I guess but you admitted yourself that you



looked like the very worst drag queen last time. If you are going out for food and drink, will you also, like, buy a dress and a pair of heels?" she asked furtively.

"Oh. Jodie!"

"Pretty please... for my birthday? Regard it as a birthday pressie to me?"

"You want me to wear a dress and high heels? I don't really want to."

"To please me for my birthday, really make me happy..."

Tony decided that he was becoming too soft. Why did he allow a girl to manipulate him so much against his will? Jodie had insisted on travelling with him, inside him, so that she could select her own dress and shoes. She also had him only buying her favourite girly drinks; Malibu and Pina Colada, drinks that Tony screwed his face up at but at least he could enjoy the 'meat feast' pizza he had selected.

Again it was an embarrassment buying female clothes. At the shoe store Jodie actually asked him to try on a pair of black 3" heel court shoes for fit, which he of course refused to do. To go with the heels, she had also selected a cute LBD number that flared from the waist and had long sleeves to mask Tony's arm tattoos. And she had wanted a new bra and panty set that would be more in fitting with the dress... skimpier than the first bra and panties he had bought.

"I hope all of this is going to cheer you up," Tony said on their way back to the apartment. "That stuff cost me close to a hundred dollars."

"Chill. That's, like, way cheap, Babes. You got off lightly," Jodie told him chirpily, feeling happy that Tony was doing all of this for her.

“I should have tried to pick up a better wig than that birds nest thing too,” Tony then commented, almost to himself.

“Hey! Hold the front door. Are you, like, suggesting you want to look more convincing?”

“I never said that, but you have to admit that wig is pretty gruesome,” Tony pointed out.

“That is, like, so awesome... you *do* want to look more convincing. I can, like, totally feel it in you.”

“No. You’re just getting me wrong, If I’m having to get... dolled up, I would rather look at least nice than like a clown. I both looked and felt stupid last time,” Tony then protested.

“So... are you going to consider letting me try altering your face... a little?”

“What! No! You know that concerns me.”

“Oh, Babes. Do you know how much that would please me? That would, like, really make my birthday?”

“I’ve already spent a hundred bucks on your birthday and I’m allowing myself to get dressed up in female clothing. Isn’t that enough for your birthday?”

“Please, please, Tonykins... if you love me,” Jodie then said, imitating Jan’s voice.

It was an hour after they had returned home, an hour of Tony enduring Jodie’s miserable looking face after she had come back out from him that he asked the question he really did not want to ask.

“Will it hurt?”

“Will what hurt?” Jodie asked solemnly.

“Altering how I look... changing my face.”

Jodie's eyes gleamed. "Are you going to...?"

Jodie had wanted Tony in the new clothes, except for the shoes, first. Then she entered into him, giving him that weird, almost electrically charged tingling sensation once again. But if Tony had thought that sensation was weird, he was about to go to a whole new level.

"First, I need you to say that I have your permission to alter your looks and to do that I need to take some control of your body. Spirit law, we cannot do anything without permission."

Tony felt a reluctance to give up any amount of control of his body. "Do I have to? What do I say?"

"Just say something like 'I give my permission for the spirit within me to take part control of my body in order to make changes to the features of my face.' If you don't give it, I can't do it."

Tony repeated the words that Jodie had said, then waited with baited breath,

"Are you ready?" Jodie asked, then put all of her thought and energy into trying to change Tony's features. Suddenly Tony had the strangest feeling ever, like his skin was crawling, like the features on his face were moving. "Oh, my god. Stop! That feels just too weird," he cried out as his face began to morph.

Then his whole scalp felt strange, like each follicle was alive, standing up on end. "No Jodie, I don't like it. Stop!" he almost screamed.

Jodie obeyed. "Okay, I'll stop. I think I have made some changes. Go to a mirror and take a look," she suggested.

Reluctantly, Tony did as suggested, almost fearful to look and see himself in the mirror. When he did, he

had a shock. He looked upon his own face! And yet, it wasn't. It was more feminine. He looked like a mixture between himself and his two sisters. "Oh my fucking God!" he said almost silently.

He looked closer. There were subtle differences. His eyes seemed wider and the lashes darker. He still had his own eyebrows. And his cheeks! They were higher and his lips seemed thicker... a little poutier. Then he noticed his complexion. It seemed smoother, healthier.

He was so focused on his face that he failed entirely to notice the main difference, his hair. It had grown thicker and longer. He was no expert on women's hairstyles but it had grown over his ears in what he thought was called a page boy style.

"Holy Fuck! I did it. I made changes in you," Jodie exclaimed with glee from within him.

"Yes, you did. Now can you change me back," Tony responded.

"Change you back? What the heck for?"

"To make sure you can because I can't stay looking like this. I... well, I look like me and yet I don't."

"Exactly. Rather than changing you back, we need to put makeup on you and see what a difference that will make," Jodie explained.

"No, we have to make sure I can change back," Tony countered, almost panicky.

"That makes totes no sense, Babes. Look, if I can't change you back, though I'm pretty sure I can, then the damage is already done. So, there is no point in changing you back to yourself, finding I can and then having to go through the trouble of changing you back to this again."

Tony could see the logic in Jodie's words and yet he was worried sick in case the alterations were per-

manent. He would rather just make sure she could return him to normal for his own peace of mind but Jodie was eager to apply makeup to 'their' face.

"Come on, Babes. The sooner we get ourselves dolled up, the sooner we can have my birthday party and I can change you back again," the young ghost prompted.

As Tony stared at his feminised reflection in the mirror, Jodie was able to take control as she guided him into applying foundation and concealer, eyeshadow, liner and mascara, then lipstick. She had Tony also paint his fingernails. At least they had some remover this time.

Jodie was wildly pleased, she never thought she would stare into a mirror and put makeup on the face in the reflection ever again. As for Tony, he just felt weirded out. He was a man, he shouldn't be wearing women's underwear, dresses and applying makeup.

But Jodie's enthusiasm and happiness helped to be a calming affect and after he was 'all done' the bizarre coupling of human and ghost inhabiting the same body began preparing party food and pouring some of the drinks. They played music (Jodie's choices) and Jodie had Tony put on the heels and attempt walking in them. He was wobbly at first but with Jodie's promptings resonating in his head, he began to get the hang.

"Get your body straight Of course you are going to stumble if you are leaning all of your weight forward. Short steps, heel-to-toe. Look forward, not down to the floor, correct your posture, swing your hips."

Eventually Tony could rest his feet as he sat on the sofa to eat the food and drink the girly drinks that he wasn't used to. Jodie sang the words to the songs being played, in his head. It was her own music collection with many boy bands and singers he had never even heard of. It wasn't his taste in music at all but Jodie, the party girl, was loving it. So he kept himself amused just by pouring and drinking more chick drinks.

Tony's eyes slowly opened, they felt sticky. He was aware of a slight dizziness, his head feeling thick. "Jeez! What did I do last night?"

"Then he remembered aided by the fact that he had slept all night on the couch and that he was wearing a black dress. "Oh my God! The party!" he said aloud, using the word 'party' even though, theoretically, he was the only one there.

"What time is it?" he then asked nobody and glanced at the clock on the wall. 9:06. he was supposed to be at work at nine o'clock. "Shit!"

He jumped up and started tugging at the dress to pull it over his head. Once it was off, he cast it to the floor. Then another thought occurred to him "My face!" He wasn't sure if Jodie was still inside him or not. It didn't feel like she was.

"Jodie, where are you? I need you to alter my face, quickly," he yelled out as he rushed to the bathroom and looked into the mirror. "Oh! Thank God!" He already had his own face again... but it was smeared in eye makeup and lipstick.

Tony began quickly applying make-up remover to his face, noticing, as he did, that his fingernails were still bright red. Things were just getting worse. After washing off the makeup and quickly running a razor over his face, Tony sought out the nail polish remover. He fumbled with it and spilt too much onto a cotton pad. By the time he had finished each nail they were still left with a pinkish blush, but he had no time to mind that as he quickly dressed in his shirt, tie and suit.

It was twenty-past-ten when he finally reached the office. Brett looked far from amused.

"We've been here before, Tony. I thought you had gotten yourself together. I can't have you skipping days and coming in late. It's gotten to the point

where...” Blake stopped as he sniffed the air. “What’s that acrid smell? I recognise it.... Sharp and unpleasant,” he said almost to himself.

“Smell, sir? I, I don’t know.”

“That’s where I know it from! Doris uses it every time she cleans her nails. Acetone... nail polish remover. Why can I smell that in this office?”

Tony blushed as he lifted his hands, revealing the blush on his nails. “Oh, err... I had an old girlfriend round last night. She wanted to paint my nails for a bit of fun...” Tony lied.

“So, the whole reason you are late to your job is because you had a girl round who no doubt left your place late this morning but not before helping you to clean up from some tomfoolery last night. I’m sorry, Tony, but I have an office to run. I’m going to have to demote you and bring in Chad Myers in your place. You can help with marketing.” Blake told him in a voice that said ‘Don’t even try arguing with me’.

Tony was downbeat when he arrived home from the office that evening. Jodie, who was waiting for him with a happy, smiling face, noticed instantly that something was wrong.

“What’s happened, Babes?” she asked as she made her way towards him.

“I’ve got demoted at work. I was late in. Chad Fucking Myers has my job.”

“Late in? Oh no. That’s, like, totally my fault. I’m, like, really sorry.”

“Uh, don’t blame yourself. I guess it was coming. I got steamed and fell asleep without setting my alarm. At least I still have my own face again.”

A brief smile came onto Jodie’s face. “I told you I could return you to normal, didn’t I?” Her expression then became serious again. “But it *is* my fault. It

would never have happened if you, like, hadn't been the great guy that you are and tried to please me for my birthday."

"No. I shouldn't have drunk so much," Tony responded, "Where were you this morning anyway?"

"I felt all merry from the drink you were consuming. I wanted to dance and have fun, you fell asleep and I was just there stuck in your body. I came out of you, you changed back and I went out to find some spirit friends to continue partying with.. Had I not gone out, I, like, could have woken you."

Jodie drifted towards Tony until her face was close to his. Slowly and deftly, she moved forward until her ghostly lips touched to his. Not being physical, there could be no real touch but Tony felt an almost electric tingle run through his lips, which was very pleasant. He felt even more connected to the young spirit than ever from the intimate gesture.

"I'm not going to put any blame on you. I allowed myself to do what happened last night, I failed to wake this morning. You were just enjoying yourself. It sucks that I have been demoted and I will feel the drop in wages but at least work won't be so hectic and demanding. It also sucks that they are replacing me with a plank like Chad," Tony told her gently.

Jodie pouted. "It's so frustrating. I, like, so totally wish I still had a physical body. I feel so like making love with you right now and easing your sadness," she told him sincerely.

Tony felt the same frustration. "I wish too, but we can't. All that we can ever do is be together, you being inside of me so that we are as one. That is as close as we can ever be," he told her without thinking of exactly what he was saying.

"Can I? Like now?" Jodie asked. Tony thought for a minute, then nodded. He wanted to be in close contact with Jodie and this was the only way he could connect to her. All too soon he felt the energy as she moved inside of him.

They were content to stay like that, as one, as they made the evening meal together.

“I should be, like, the wifely one, cooking for my man after a hard day’s work,” Jodie told him.

“How would you manage that, though?” Tony questioned, “We’ve sort of hit upon this before.”

“I don’t suppose I could really. The only nearest point of reality would be that when you came home, I morphed you and we dressed so that it was like me doing the cooking.”

Tony laughed at the absurdity of the suggestion. In other words it would still be him cooking for himself, only in drag. He then let his mind wander in thought. “Last night, what did you get out of it?” he finally asked.

“What do you mean, Babes?” Jody questioned.

“Having me wearing a dress and makeup. What does that do for you?”

“It makes me feel alive and girly again. Like, I feel the soft underwear through you, I feel the flutter of the dress, I feel the makeup on your face as well as having the enjoyment of helping you apply it, making yourself, *our* selves, more beautiful.”

“Hardly, not with this face. I just look like a bad transvestite.”

“No, last night you looked totally more womanly. It could have been better but you told me to stop, so I did. And your hair had grown long enough that you didn’t have to wear that wig, long enough that we could have styled it.”

“So you are saying you could have made my face look just like a female?” Tony questioned.

“I don’t know if it would have been *fully* female. I just know I could have done more and you already

had the resemblance of a woman, even before makeup. I'm told that with practice I can, like, just get better. I could even get to the point where I change your body to female and, ultimately, I could make your face and body look like I used to look like," Jodie informed him.

"Yeah, you said. But, no, I can't believe that. You can't make a man's body into a woman's. Where would all the extra bulk go? How can you make ti... uh, breasts form? Or turn a cock into a pussy?"

"I don't know, Babes. How did I make the structure of your face more feminine? I just did. It's all like totally new to me, you know."

Tony was far from sure she could do as she claimed but, from somewhere inside, Tony found himself wondering just what it would be like... *feel* like, if she could really change his body into a woman's.

"Anyway, I know you don't sleep but I'm feeling bushed after the day I've had. I'm gonna hit the sack. You are welcome to sleep inside me or lay by my side or go visit Mrs. Marshall," Tony offered. Inside he had wild thoughts invading his consciousness that baffled him.

"It's Mrs. Marchant," Jodie giggled. "If it's okay by you, I'll just lay alongside you... keep all the monsters and ghouls at bay and keep my energy topped up," Jodie told him happily as she re-emerged from him. "I'll make sure you are up in time for work too," she added.

Tony had believed the one thing about getting demotion was that his working day would be easier. It wasn't. He felt tired and stressed when he returned home. He found Jodie patiently waiting for him.

"Hi Babes, how was your day?" she asked with smiling eyes as she floated towards him and again

did the gesture of making contact with his lips. Again Tony felt the light thrill of electricity in his lips.

“To be honest, it sucked. I hate that job and I had no rest from it. I’m shattered.”

“Want to de-stress by letting me make us beautiful?” she asked.

Tony knew exactly what she was implying. “I don’t know, I really am pooped and not in the mood.”

“I could help relax you; I’ve been to Mrs. Marchant’s again and talked with a few long-time, experienced spirits. When I am in your body, I can do certain things to please you or make you feel better, Did you know I can even take away aches and pains from your body?” Jodie informed him.

Before Tony could say anything in reply, Jodie’s eyes lit up. “Hey! And I have a surprise for you. I have, like, gotten you a whole wardrobe of clothes... all in your size.”

Tony looked baffled as he sat down on the sofa. “How could you manage that?” he asked.

“Easy Peezy, Remember we went clothes shopping last week? So, like, I know all of your sizes and I asked Mrs. Marchant if she would go buy a wardrobe of clothes for you. She is such a kind and loving woman. She didn’t hesitate to help.”

Tony looked alarmed. “So let’s get this right. This Mrs. Merchant, she knows I have dressed as a woman?” Tony felt his face redden in embarrassment knowing someone human knew what he had been doing. “And, and she was happy to pay for loads of clothes?”

Jodie giggled. “First thing first, Babes. Yes, she knows but she’s, like, totally cool with it. What’s the big difference in you letting me make your face more womanly or you wearing a dress? And, I paid for the stuff myself. Mrs. Marchant is a pensioner though

she does make money on the side from doing her psychic stuff.

“I still had money in my bank account and a credit card. Money isn’t, like, any use to me anymore.... But I can still make use of it by buying clothes for us. And I still have money left for when we need newer stuff.”

“And where is all this money from? Proceeds from prostitution?” Tony asked somewhat indignantly.

“What the fuck does it matter where it’s from? Money is money and I spent it on us,” Jodie responded in hurt tones.

“I’m sorry, that was mean of me, though you can quit with the ‘I spent it on us’.” Tony apologised with a friendly laugh, “It’s not me that desires to be dressed in any girl clothes. They are there to make you feel better when you are within me.”

“Can I be ‘within’ you now? And I’ll show you where Mrs. Marchant has put all of your new clothes.”

Tony smiled at the almost childlike sweetness and excitement of the young ghost even though she was mocking his choice of words.

“Come on then, you can enter,” he said fondly.

“Jodie wasted no time and there was almost a ‘whoosh’ as she entered into him. Tony shuddered; he would never get used to that sensation.

“Let me de-stress you as we go to collect your things,” Jodie suggested, “Though, there is just one thing. According to the laws of the spirit world, I cannot do anything unless I have your permission.”

“And just what does that entail?”

“You have to give your permission, think it or say it verbally, that you will allow me to take control of your body, like you did when I altered your face.

Tony was feeling embarrassed as he carried twelve large bags back to his apartment. Mrs. Marchant had left the shopping at a local convenience store where she knew the proprietor. The store names on the various bags made it quite clear that the contents were all female clothing. And just what had Mrs. Marchant explained to the store keeper had been the reason for leaving all the bags in his care? Tony would rather not know.

“Will you please tell me again just why I am doing all of this shit?” Tony asked the unseen Jody.

“Because you love me and want to help me by giving me some semblance of life?” Jody replied confidently and feeling quite satisfied.

Tony became quiet and in thought. ‘Because you love me.’ *Did* he love Jodie? Was it possible to love a ghost? He certainly had feelings for her. Sympathy? And he did really like her zany personality but could he honestly say he was in love with her? He doubted she had meant it in the true definition of the word but it made him question his own feelings. He knew he hated it and missed her badly when she wasn’t about.

All thoughts stopped as he suddenly felt his skin crawling, changing. Jodie was already setting to work morphing his looks. Again he could feel the structure of his skull changing... not greatly and not painfully, but it was the weirdest feeling ever. He felt close to telling her to stop again but this time a curiosity held his words. He wanted to see just how much like a female Jodie could make him appear.

Then he felt strange feelings in his body, the same crawling and, stretching. “Wait! Are you changing my body as well? We didn’t agree to that!” he suddenly yelled in panic.

“Don’t burst a blood vessel; I’m just trying something. I’m not going to give you a pair of titties or, like, take away your cock,” Jodie tried reassuring.

And then it was over. “Come on, I gotta see how good I’ve done this time,” Jodie’s voice prompted inside his head.

“What?”

“To the mirror. Let’s go take a look, Babes.”

Tony was still feeling a sense of shock. His face felt different on him and, also, there was a difference in his body. He felt it especially in his legs... but his arms too. Then he reached the mirror.

“Oh. My. God!”

Tony’s face was no longer his own. In its place was a female looking back at him... a pretty female. He felt scared, scared that he could just, suddenly, be given the face of a female. The nose was smaller and slightly upturned. His eyes were his own but he didn’t have the heavy lids that he’d had and they were larger. His cheeks were higher, his face more heart shaped, the skin flawlessly smooth. His ears were smaller and pinned back more. “Oh. My. God!” he repeated.

“Oh! This is great! I can’t believe how well I’ve done, this is so radical... and only my second attempt. Com’on Babes, we gotta get ourselves ready.”

Tony was far from being ready to get ready, he was still in shock at how different his face was. Eventually, after a whole lot of nagging and encouraging from Jodie, he allowed himself to be led to the mirror where Jodie, once again, initiated the makeup.

His hair was longer and thicker whilst still quite short. Jody had Tony brush it and sweep it backwards away from the face while she applied concealer and foundation. Eyeliner, shadow and mascara soon

followed, then last but not least, lipstick, in a colour called 'Summer Sunset'.

This time, with a much more feminine face, the cosmetics really enhanced Tony's looks. He had the face of a very pretty girl which both scared and enthralled him.

Once Tony's face was made up, Jodie decided upon extending his hair in a length that would suit the face best. Again Tony endured the weird sensation of literally feeling his hair growing out of his scalp and it continued down to his shoulders in lush thick waves.

"Brilliant! This is mega. I can't wait until I try turning you into how I used to look. Com'on, get out of those boring man clothes and let's get ourselves feeling feminine," Jodie told her host jubilantly.

"I still can't remove your tattoos from your arms but we have a long-sleeved top we can wear to cover them, not that they need covering. So many girls have large bold tattoos on their arms these days," she continued.

Tony looked at one of the bags that held newly-bought clothes and plucked up a garment on top, looking at it disdainfully. "Pantyhose! Do I need to put these things on?" he asked as he held the flesh-coloured garment out in front of him.

"Sure, why not? They will make your legs look sexy and they feel really nice on the skin."

"I doubt that, my chunky hairy legs will look ridiculous encased in these things," Tony remarked as he dropped them back into the bag.

"Don't be too sure of that, buster." Jodie replied with a grin.

As he reluctantly stripped out of his male clothes, Tony found out just what Jodie was referring to. The sensation he had felt had made his legs both slimmer

and shapelier, they looked longer and... they were smooth and hairless. "How? How can you possibly do all of this? It defies science," Tony remarked, feeling totally odd looking down and seeing such a shapely, silky smooth pair of legs below him. It was as if some crazed scientist had removed his legs and replaced them with the legs of a catwalk model.

Jodie was absolutely delighted with the results of her handiwork, and he was yet to see his long willowy arms!

Tony felt absolutely all wrong an hour later. How had things gotten to this? How was any of it even possible? Within five weeks he had not only encountered a ghost in his new apartment but he was allowing her to be inside of him and make extreme, feminising changes to his body. Not only that, but to be wearing female clothing and full makeup! Why had he allowed any of it?

Jodie had chosen for him a white mini skirt with an elastic waist band and a light blue, long-sleeved top to hide his tattoos. The miniskirt barely came past his bottom. She'd had him put on a pair of white sandals that had a single foot strap and an ankle strap; the sandals had a slim two and a half-inch heel.

Tony reached down and carefully nipped and pulled out the soft gossamer fabric of the hose he was wearing from his now shapely legs with his soft pink painted nails, his hair tumbling forward and hanging in long, billowing, soft locks as he did.

Jodie had initiated all of the changes and dressing up so as to de-stress him. So she had said, but if anything, he felt even more uneasy and apprehensive than he had felt when he had come home from work doing an harder and more demeaning job.

No, this was purely for Jodie, to make her again feel human, feel alive, feel feminine. Where, though,

would it end? She had talked about the possibility of being able to completely feminise his body and to even alter him into the likeness of her former self. She was able to influence and control him so easily. He could tell she was feeling in Seventh Heaven inside him but should he bring a stop to it, before it was too late?

End of Part One.

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In Part Two Tony is further induced by Jodie until he has experienced all that there is to experience in being female. Jody loves having her body back and tries encouraging Tony to be her more and more frequently. But should Tony stand up to her before he loses his own self completely?