

THE GHOSTS ARE MY FRIENDS

Written by

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INT. CHAPEL - DAY

An almost empty chapel making for a sad looking funeral.

Two volunteer parishioners, JANET and LEANNE, gossip quietly.

LEANNE

She usually doesn't set foot in the chapel.

JANET

I'm surprised she didn't burst into flames the second she stepped in.

LEANNE

(secretly delighted)

Janet!

JANET

What? It's God's house after all.

LEANNE

You think she knew him?

JANET

She might as well know all of them.

Slowly we reveal FLORENCE HANNAN, 31, dressed all in black, gloves included, sitting towards the back holding a small hand bound book. She looks put together, but underneath something anxious brews.

MARGARET, the daughter of the deceased, and her TWO KIDS gather up their things and leave.

As they pass Florence stops them.

FLORENCE

I'm so sorry for your loss.

Margaret nods and tries to continue pass.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

This is for you. From him.

She holds out the book. Margaret looks at it but doesn't take it.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

It's a memoir of his life.

MARGARET

Do I know you?

FLORENCE  
No. He paid me.

Margaret looks up her up and down.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
To write the memoir.

MARGARET  
No thank you.

Margaret moves herself and her kids out of the chapel.  
Florence follows.

EXT. CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

FLORENCE  
It was his last request that I get  
this to you.

MARGARET  
Look I don't know what sugar coated  
version of his life he sold you.  
But my dad was not a good man.

FLORENCE  
I know you didn't have the best  
relationship-

MARGARET  
You don't know me.

Margaret continuing to walk to her car. She loads in her  
kids.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
He didn't want to know me in life  
and I certainly don't want to get  
to know him in death.

FLORENCE  
I understand-

MARGARET  
Why else do you think no one is at  
his funeral? God I shouldn't even  
be here.

FLORENCE  
I'm just trying to finish my job.

MARGARET  
Not my problem.

Margaret books it for the car door. Florence panics slightly.

FLORENCE

You don't have to read it. You can do whatever you want with it. But can you please just take it?

Margaret looks at her. Considering.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I told him I'd make sure you got it. It was in our contract.

She grabs the book harshly and closes the car door.

She drives forwards for only a moment before stopping abruptly. She rolls down the window and chucks the book into a dumpster.

Florence watches her leave. With a sigh she walks after her.

She looks down at the book amongst the trash and grimaces. She grabs a handkerchief out of her purse and uses it to save the book.

The chapel parking lot is completely empty. Florence walks over to the stairs and sits down.

She looks back at the casket, then down at the book. She opens it, flipping through it's pages fondly, as if chatting with an old friend.

After a moment she reads a passage.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

*I don't remember much from the house I grew up in, except for the attic door. When it was windy the drafts that flowed through the cracks by that little door sounded like ghosts. They would holler and howl, and keep me up all night. I remember spending evenings just staring at it, almost expecting it to open itself. You couldn't ask me what was up there. I never went. Not once. Yet when I think about home, what I hear is the howling.*

Florence stops and ponders. She gets up and leaves.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Florence b-lines it to her mailbox. SHARON, a worker, calls without looking up.

SHARON

Welcome to the post office how can-

She looks up.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Florence.

She looks back down. Florence opens her box and skims through the mail.

Florence approached the front desk. She looks tired but she puts on her friendliest face.

FLORENCE

Hi, Sharon, is there anything else that came in for-

Sharon, without looking up, slams a small box on the table.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Oh, great. Thank you.

Florence grabs for the box, her gloved hands grazes Sharon's. Sharon quickly pulls away with a look of disgust. Florence takes a step back.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Have a good one.

Florence smiles at Sharon, who avoids eye contact. Florence leaves.

EXT. SMALL DOWNTOWN - DAY

Florence casually opens the box as she walks back to her car. She makes eye contact with a man walking towards her. He crosses the road. Was he trying to avoid her?

Inside the box are chocolates from another country. A voice catches her off guard.

ANNE

Good morning!

Florence turns to see ANNE(31f), smiling bright.

FLORENCE  
It's afternoon. Actually.

ANNE  
Semantics. Feels like morning  
still. To me at least. Get anything  
good?

FLORENCE  
Nothing really.

ANNE  
Okay.  
(then)  
I've got some time. Would you maybe  
want to get lunch together? On me?  
I know they took it off the menu,  
but if we ask Charlie nicely maybe  
he'll make us our favorite ham  
frenchies again?

FLORENCE  
I don't really eat meat anymore.

ANNE  
Okay, cheese frenchie then?

Anne smiles again, hopeful, convincing. Florence wants to but-

FLORENCE  
I really can't. I'm sorry. I need  
to go.

Florence heads for her car.

ANNE  
Okay. See you around then.

Florence doesn't even turn around.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An old, charming house. The decor is lovely but feels like it  
was decorated by an 80 year old woman.

Florence enters and begins a ritual of sorts. She carefully  
removes her shoes, disinfects them, and places them in their  
exact spot.

She empties her purse, disinfects the items, and puts them in  
their respective spots.

Lastly she gingerly removes her gloves and coat placing them in the wash bin.

She grabs the book and a newspaper and walks over to a large bookcase, though it looks like more of a shine. There are tens of memoirs, each with lit candle and framed obituaries of their owner next to them.

Florence carefully puts the book in a open spot and lights a new candle.

She opens the newspaper, finds the latest entry and reads from it.

FLORENCE

*Mr. Henderson is survived by his  
only daughter Margaret.*

She sighs and grabs a pair of scissors.

INT. FLORENCE'S ROOM - DAY

A room still, in many ways, dressed by a child. Florence walks over to grab a journal off the desk.

Behind which is an alarmingly full shelf of color coded journals, just like the one Florence grabbed.

As she steps towards the door one of the floorboards creaks then gives away. Tripping Florence, who lands on her side. She's okay but shaken up.

She examines the floor. Why was now the time for this to happen. She decides to look into it more later, and leaves, passing a calendar on her way out. A few weeks from now a mysteriously circled date.

INT. HANNAN FARMHOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Florence passes family photo after family photo. None recent.

She exits, behind her the door to the master bedroom slowly creaks opens on its own.

EXT. HANNAN FARMHOUSE - DAY

Florence exits the house, journal, the rest of the mail, and the chocolate in tow. She breaths in the fresh air. The house looming and beautiful. Far too big for one person.

EXT. FAMILY CEMETERY - DAY

She strides over to a small family cemetery and stops in front of one of the gravestones, her mother's. She lovingly places half of the chocolate bar in front of the grave.

FLORENCE

I'm told this was a favorite.

She looks up at a few of the other gravestones. Her father's, her grandfather's, and lastly her grandmother's. Each is spotless, obviously well cared for.

She sits on a stone bench and eats the other half of the chocolate.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

It is really good.

She crushes the candy wrapper in her hand, a quick moment of anger, then release.

She grabs for her journal, but a colorful handwritten envelope peeks out of the rest of the mail. Florence can't resist and decides to open it.

Inside is a lovely handwritten letter, on beautiful parchment.

She starts to read it then pauses. She speaks to the graves as if they can talk back.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Do you all want to know what it says?

(reading from the letter)

*Dear Ms. Hannan, I'm writing to you, as I'm sure many others have before me, to ask of your services. While I am not so close to death myself, I worry it could come for me any second.*

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Florence's truck passes by.

FLORENCE (V.O.)

*I think it would be a shame I never put my life to paper. It suddenly feels very important to me to make sure there is some sort of record.*

(MORE)



FLORENCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*Would you be so kind as to meet me  
at mine and see if we might be a  
good match? Sincerely, Connie  
Bernard.*

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Florence exits her car, anxiously adjusts her gloves, and straightens out her pants. She looks professional.

She goes to knock on the door when she notices, it's ever so slightly ajar. A grim feeling settles over her.

Still she knocks.

FLORENCE  
Hello? Ms. Bernard?

Silence. Florence hesitates before knocking once more.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Ms. Bernard, it's Florence Hannan?  
We had an appointment.

BANG. What was that?

INT. BERNARD HOUSE LICING ROOM - DAY

Florence swallows her manners, opens the front door, and walks in slowly. The house is in need of a serious cleaning.

The tv is on, but otherwise it's quiet.

FLORENCE  
Hello?

BANG. Florence almost jumps out of her skin. Florence slowly approaches the source of the sound.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Ms. Bernard?

CONNIE (O.S.)  
What?

Florence turns the corner and breaths a sigh of relief. She sees CONNIE BERNARD, Mid 70s, covered in flour and stirring frantically.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Can you get that?

She points to the pot on the stove.

FLORENCE

What-

CONNIE

Quickly! It's going to overflow!

Florence rushes over to the pot and lowers the heat.

FLORENCE

It's nice to meet-

An alarm goes off.

CONNIE

Oh the cookies! Hot pads-there!

Connie points again. Florence rushes over to the hot pads and pulls the cookies out of the oven.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Perfect! Still a little doughy.  
Here.

Connie hands Florence the bowl and spoon, then climbs up a step stool and looks loudly for something in an upper cabinet.

FLORENCE

Ms. Bernard?

CONNIE

Coco.

FLORENCE

What?

CONNIE

You can call me Coco.

FLORENCE

Okay. I'm Florence Hannan. We talked on the phone earlier, remember?

CONNIE

Yes I know who you are. I don't have just anyone stomping through my front door.

FLORENCE

It was open.

CONNIE

By design!

FLORENCE

Okay. Well. You didn't have to make these for our meeting.

CONNIE

Oh these aren't for you.

Connie puts some fresh cilantro on a cutting board and grabs the bowl from Florence.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Finely chopped.

She points to the cilantro. Connie pours the mixture from the bowl over the cookies.

FLORENCE

Connie. I'm not here to help you cook. Shall we get started?

CONNIE

Oh I can't right now, but maybe I can pencil you in.

FLORENCE

We scheduled this.

Connie gestures to the cilantro again, Florence apprehensively starts cutting.

CONNIE

You're here to get to know me?

FLORENCE

Yes.

CONNIE

So, isn't that what we're doing?

FLORENCE

No. Uh. Usually we'd sit down, and starting at the beginning we'd go through your memories.

Connie points at the cilantro.

CONNIE

When you're done, it goes in the soup.

FLORENCE  
Are you dodging my questions?

CONNIE  
Have you asked one yet?

FLORENCE  
Who is this all for?

CONNIE  
It's a surprise! Except the soup.  
That's just my supper. Why I  
thought I should start it now I  
don't know.

Florence puts the fresh cut cilantro in the soup and stirs.  
Connie piles the cookies into a travel container.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
You can turn the heat low for now  
and cover it.

FLORENCE  
Aren't you worried it'll burn the  
house down?

CONNIE  
Eh. It can have the house.

She heads for the door. Florence turns down the heat and  
follows her.

FLORENCE  
Where are you going?

CONNIE  
Surprise. It's a surprise.

FLORENCE  
Connie. Please. Just for a moment.  
There's a procedure.

CONNIE  
Sounds boring.

Connie heads out the front door, cookies in hand. Florence  
waits, then follows.

EXT. BERNARD HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Connie continues past the house. Florence catches up. Worried  
that Connie is over-exerting herself.

FLORENCE

Connie.

She grabs the cookies from her.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Let me help you.

CONNIE

I can do it myself. When I need help I'll ask.

Connie grabs the cookies back. Florence looks at her, unsure what to say.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You expect me to just tell everything to a person I don't even know?

FLORENCE

What?

CONNIE

This memoir thing. Seems unnatural.

FLORENCE

Do I need to remind you that you reached out to me?

CONNIE

I might seem daft but I can assure you I'm not.

(then)

You know, I love what you wrote for your grandfather in the paper. Instead of an obituary.

FLORENCE

(taken aback)

That was years ago.

CONNIE

I know. I liked it so much I clipped it and kept it. It's a beautiful way to be remembered.

FLORENCE

Thank you.

CONNIE

Where you were born. What you did. Who you're survived by. Is that all there is?

Florence seems surprised. It's like Connie is saying her thoughts out loud.

FLORENCE

I like the little details, beloved pet, hobbies, what they're be remembered for really.

CONNIE

They always seem much more cut and dry.

FLORENCE

Not always.

CONNIE

What do you write obituaries too?

FLORENCE

No, but I read them every morning.

CONNIE

That's odd. You're odd.

FLORENCE

You're odd.

Connie wrinkles up her face as if to say "Touché".

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I can understand why you feel the way you do.

CONNIE

Thank you.

FLORENCE

But I can't write a memoir, if I don't know you.

Connie shrugs. Florence thinks.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

How much further is this place?

CONNIE

It's just up the road.

EXT. AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM - DAY

Florence and Connie turn off the road into the parking lot of the town's local after school program. Connie walks with confidence up to the door, but just as she opens it.

JANET (V.O.)  
Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.

Janet comes running out from behind a counter and guides both Connie and Florence outside.

CONNIE  
It's good to see you too Janet.

JANET  
Connie, we've talked about this.

CONNIE  
Yes, you said I could no longer come weekly. So I was thinking bi-weekly might suffice?

Janet notices Florence. She talks quieter.

JANET  
Connie, you know how much I-we appreciate all the work Gary did, and for that I will always be grateful, I will. But you just can't bring these anymore.

CONNIE  
They're cookies Janet, not poison.

JANET  
We've been through this. Times have changed. The parents don't want their kids having all that extra sugar.

CONNIE  
It makes them happy.

JANET  
A lot of things make kids happy. They're here to improve their studies, not for fun.

CONNIE  
It can't be both? I so happen to remember one young girl who would wait for me right here every week.

Janet smiles softly.

JANET  
I do too. You know this place is having a hard time.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

I can't give these parents any reason to go elsewhere. I'm sorry Connie.

CONNIE

You want one?

Janet considers. Then grabs one and takes a bite.

JANET

(chewing)

Delicious. As always.

(then)

Come around next week. Without these. You can help me go through some of the old photos.

Connie nods. Janet pats her on the back and heads inside.

Connie walks towards the curb and sits. Florence watches then joins shortly after.

Connie opens the box of cookies.

They both take one. They sit in silence for awhile.

FLORENCE

These are really good.

CONNIE

I've had practice.

Florence looks at her. Despite Connie's energy something seems to be weighing on her. A new idea forms in Florence's mind.

FLORENCE

When I was in elementary school there was this girl.

Connie turns surprised.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

And everyday she had the most amazing lunches. Beautiful sandwiches on freshly baked bread. Croissants. Homemade cupcakes. Her lunch bag smelled like a bakery. Which made sense because her mom owned one.

Connie puts down her cookie, amused by the tale.



FLORENCE (CONT'D)

So, my grandparents were many things, but good cooks, not so much. This girl, the other kids thought she was kind of annoying, I guess, but I decided to try and befriend her because, well, I wanted to mooch off her lunch.

CONNIE

You did not.

FLORENCE

I did. And it worked. She started bringing extra treats from the bakery for me, we'd eat lunch together every day.

CONNIE

I wouldn't have guessed you were a schemer.

FLORENCE

She would bring me anything I asked for, and it was all so good. I still dream about their kolaches.

CONNIE

Did she find out?

FLORENCE

It's funny actually, it started as fake, but you spend that much time with someone and I guess you become friends. So, no, but I'm sure she had a suspicion. She's smart.

CONNIE

Food brings people together. Always.

She offers her another cookie.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

How do mine compare? To her mom's?

FLORENCE

Honestly?

CONNIE

Don't even finish.

They both laugh. A long silence.

FLORENCE

Now you know something about me that I've told almost no one. You want to tell me something?

CONNIE

What? Like a story for a story?

FLORENCE

Yeah, that's a good way of putting it. If it'll make you feel better. About the memoir.

Connie considers.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

You said, in your letter, that it would be a shame not to get these memories down. I think it would be too.

Connie thinks for a long while.

CONNIE

Gary, my husband, he opened this place gosh, 40 years ago? He always talked about this. This was his dream, and he really did it. Who else can say something like that? He was a teacher but he saw that kids needed more tutoring or after school activities, and-It's funny. When you're in your 20s you just assume one day you're going to have it all figured out. I think for some people that never comes. Not Gary though. If you could meet him you'd just know that some people really had figured it out.

Florence looks at her.