

The Ghost Within Me



Deena Gomersall



A "Her TV" Novel



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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.