



7-15-1992

Georgio's Ghosts

Orv Owens

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Owens, Orv (1992) "Georgio's Ghosts," *Westview*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 4 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol11/iss4/3>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



GEORGIO'S GHOSTS

by Orv Owens

(Author's Note: This story calls for fictional treatment. The details are true; the characters are a figment of my imagination and are real only in the sense that some people do die after abusing drugs.)

The apparition came at 4:13 a.m. to say goodbye.

Forever.

Georgio Carillo knew the moment the apparition appeared that another close friend had died.

It happened every time.

He never understood how the apparition appeared, nor why; but when Mellanie held out her arms for a goodbye kiss and smiled in that old familiar way, he knew that she was going away. Eyes dulled by drugs, she touched her lips and blew toward Georgio.

The next time he saw her would be at a funeral.

He stretched out on the Motel bed and waited for a girl he knew would never come—not the Mellanie of flesh and blood he knew so well.

She floated to a chair by the window. The pale flesh contrasted with flashing blue neon from the Penny Arcade across the street. She sat down on Georgio's Hawaiian shirt and jeans, smiled, and crammed her feet into his brown cowboy boots.

By appearing in this manner, Mellanie had just canceled Georgio's Saturday night date.

The sweet, gentle face—lovelier in life than in apparition—faded into the night.

Georgio knew how she died; but if asked, he could never explain how he knew. He just did. Too many fun-loving, thrill-seeking friends had passed through the portal into another time, another place, another world where (he fervently hoped) there would be peace and tranquillity.

The pusher might as well have taken a pistol, rammed it into her mouth, and pulled the trigger. The effect would have been the same.

Georgio slipped into his clothes and went out to a dew-wet street to walk and think. He ignored an occasional passing car, a barking dog, and a disturbed cat prowling during early morning.

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

He felt the need press in upon him. He had entered a two-way street of insanity. Death became an avenue of escape into the great mystery of time stacked upon time stretched into eternity.

In the past year alone the specter had called Mary, Mike, Todd, Ellen, and a couple

of eighth graders whose names Georgio hadn't known. Now Mellanie responded to the knell that only she could hear.

A cocker spaniel came barking viciously out of a dark alley—teeth bared, threatening.

Georgio stared at the dog, mentally commanded it to retreat. It went, tail between legs, back to the alley. Georgio breathed a sigh of relief.

Where had it all gone wrong? Where did it end?

They came back now to play around the streetlights. Mary, Mike, Todd, Ellen, and Mellanie. They danced, flung their arms wildly about light poles. They laughed as Georgio had seen them laugh, cried as he had seen them cry, yelled as he had seen them yell. It was a carefree yell full of youthful energy. Their spirits preyed on him, tried to take his hand, pull him toward tomorrow before he had finished living today.

Tentatively, he reached out, pulled back, finally tried to ignore them. There were so many things he wanted to do, so many girls he wanted to date, so many movies he wanted to enjoy, so much success he wanted, so much life he wanted to experience with every fiber of his being.

They floated away, angry at him for not joining their game, only to return after he crossed the street.

Their eyes told him the story. The hunger of their souls cried out to him vividly. They were gone...gone before they had a chance to live and laugh and love all the years through...before they had a chance to be whatever was meant to be.

Wasted lives. Wasted because they could have contributed their uniqueness and special knowledge to a world desperately seeking answers.

What was the reality? What was the dream? What they could have been could never, never be.

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

Each time the crack knelled, a spirit crossed the border into another world.

The apparitions faded, returned, faded, returned, laughed, scowled, played tag with Georgio's soul.

Why did they dog his footsteps? Why didn't they let him sleep? Why him of all the friends they had? Because he cared? Really cared about what happened to them?

He nodded, clasped his hands behind his back as he walked, head down, thoughtfully, footsteps echoing down a four o'clock street.

He had walked by their sides, shared his dreams with them, laughed and cried about the same things with them; his goals had been their goals...

Mary's apparition had sat on the casket at her funeral. She laughed, pointed at the blonde version of herself while the corpse, behind closed lids, stared, saw nothing, or did she?

Georgio had gone alone to say goodbye. He had stood, pen in hand at the guest register in that oppressive room, nose filled with death that rose petals couldn't overcome, and stared at the Mary that only he could see.

MISCELLANY

"You lied, Mary," he whispered.

His gentle gaze looked at a teenage beauty who had walked the last mile in a fog beyond a fog. She never returned.

"You said it couldn't happen," he said to the casket. "You said a high was just a high, but a high was..."

He went to another funeral. This time, Todd. His blue eyes were lidded, lifeless. Todd's time had ceased to be. The place in the sun Todd had planned was never to be.

Brown curly hair contrasted with the antique white lining of a brightly polished coffin.

A would-be engineer (he hadn't completed requirements for a degree) who had engineered himself into a position of no-deposit, no-return.

"You told me," Georgio whispered in what now seemed a long time ago, "that it wouldn't happen. You lied. Mary lied. If it happened to you, it can happen to me."

Todd's taloned fingers curled into a fist. He lifted his fist, shook it at Georgio. Then he grinned that old Todd grin, climbed upon the casket to look down at himself, tried to re-enter his body in the casket, and failed. He opened his mouth to scream.

Only Georgio could hear the scream—the scream of genius gone before his time, before he had a chance to live, before he understood that life wasn't to be lived for a cheap thrill, but for pre-determined purpose.

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

Somewhere in the night on a lonely, sad street, two hands clawed at the sidewalk; and when the fingers stopped bleeding, dark eyes stared at the stars high in the sky. The apparition that was Todd floated away to welcome the crackhead home.

"You could have had it all, Ellen," Georgio said sadly. "You could have been the Sally Field our generation will never know. You could have been the greatest—like Betty Davis, but you, too, didn't think it could happen."

Your father and mother were there, Ellen. Their tears washed away the anger, but the hole is still there waiting for someone to fill it with love. The hole you left them. The hole that will embrace them all their days. Do you care, Ellen? Really care? Why were you so selfish, Ellen? Why did you go? Wasn't life worth living?

They can't have other children, Ellen. They will have to be content with memories—not what was—but what might have been. Such futility, Ellen. To remember the bright teen so full of promise can never fulfill the goals she had in mind—never become the actress she dreamed of becoming. Never, Ellen, never, unless that other world has reality instead of illusion.

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

"I loved you, Mellanie. So much. We could have had it all, Mellanie. The white cottage, the picket fence, the kids you wanted more than anything else. And the fireplace of home. The evenings by the

fire planning the future step by step. It could have been ours, Mellanie. The world could have been our peach and pie. We could have been great together, but you decided to play the game your way. Remember the moonlit lake, the spooky elm shadows all around us? The owl we thought was wise. Perhaps it was, and we were the foolish ones.

"I can see you now as your shadow-self smiles at me. Your pale lips that were once vibrant with life touched mine a thousand times or more. Do you remember? Can you feel in your new home? Is there anything you remember? Can you love there? Feel a warm embrace?

"Can you laugh and cry? Feel pity? Feel pain? Or is it all numb there? Beyond all emotion?

"I just wish you hadn't believed it, Mellanie. I wish you had believed that it could happen—and did."

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

They parted at the lake and gazed at the reflection of the moon and stars in the white-capped lake. Tall elms sighed, leaves rustled in the southwest breeze, and the sound of forever whispered an age-old song.

Sue leaned her head against Georgio's shoulder. He looked into her elfin face, declared it beautiful as she somberly watched white caps race toward the shore.

She knew she was just another plain Jane in the scheme of things without the kind of beauty Mary, Ellen, and Mellanie had. She was just an

ordinary working-class girl with goals of cottage and children and a swing on the porch when they were too old to work.

Georgio grinned at her and sobered when the apparitions appeared, dancing on the lake.

"Do you see them?" he asked.

"Who?" she replied.

"Mike, Todd, Mary, Ellen, and Mellanie."

She was puzzled. "But they're..."

"I know, but spirits live on. They haunt me. They could never enjoy a movie, popcorn, or a soda. They wanted too much too fast."

"I love simple things," she said, with a mischievous glint in her eye.

"You oughta like me. I'm pretty simple."

They laughed.

"Think you can stand a guy who sees ghosts?"

"Are you asking me to marry you?"

"Could be."

"I'll have to think about it." Lordy, went her thoughts.

Lordy.

And Lordy again.

"You'll have to give up your ghosts."

Georgio looked deep into sea-green eyes backgrounded by short black hair. "They'll have to give me up. I've already let go."

Georgio sighed. *They wasted their talents looking for a high.*

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

"Let go, Georgio, let go," Sue urged, sensing rather than seeing what he saw.

MISCELLANY

"It's almost like they were addicted to life and can't let go."

She would never see the apparitions that came in the night. Would there ever be a time when he was free?

It could happen. It did happen. What a terrible waste of flesh and blood.

"Help me, Sue. Help me give up these shadows dancing in my mind."

The answer was plain in those beautiful eyes.

"We're so vulnerable, Sue. So vulnerable."

Crack, screamed Mary and clawed at Todd.

Crack, yelled Todd, and kicked a wave.

Crack, said Ellen, eyes swimming.

Crack, whispered Mellanie, and reached for Georgio.

Georgio ignored the apparitions and touched Sue's lips with his own. Georgio hoped they disappeared forever. They were yesterdays and dead to today.

"How true," the ghosts said in unison, "and how utterly insensitive to abandon us."

Goodbye, went Georgio's thoughts.

Goodbye, apparitions.

Don't come my way again.

The past dead came to life in their spirit world where angels feared to tread.

The lake gradually became covered with apparitions bumping into one another as they tried to play all the roles they had played in life.

And when they tired of role-playing, they gathered around the car, moaned in mock horror, and pointed skeleton-fingers at Georgio as he bent his head to waiting lips again.

The warmth of Sue spread its blanket of forgetfulness around Georgio. He glanced up but didn't see the growing number of apparitions that numbered in the thousands.

"Hello, my new love. Hello, Sue," Georgio said softly. "Welcome to my ghostless world."

She smiled, snuggled closer, and felt excitement as crack-free lips blended with a future that was denied Mary, Ellen, Mellanie, and Todd. They were lost forever in a land they created from the fabric of myth:

It can't
happen
to me.■

ORV OWENS submits often to WESTVIEW and has in the past written columns for THE DEWEY COUNTY NEWS (Seiling) and currently for THE WATONGA REPUBLICAN.

See our Trust Department to provide professional management for your assets and security for your families.



**FIRST NATIONAL BANK
AND TRUST COMPANY
IN CLINTON**

Fifth and Frisco • Clinton, Ok • Member FDIC

THE RELIC OF THE PAST

by Jill Logan

As I stroll along the road, taking in the sights,
 I notice a tattered, weathered shack,
 beyond the ditch on my
 right.
 Piqued by curiosity, I venture over that
 way,
 Scooping up leaves with the toe of my
 shoe, and crunching
 them under my weight.
 As I reach the shanty, I hesitate, contem-
 plating whether
 To go in, despite the fact that the wood
 has started to
 rot.
 However, the voice of caution in me
 gives in to that of
 adventure,
 And in through the splintered, crude
 wooden doorway, I,
 quietly, venture.
 Beams of light are streaming through the
 holes which are
 worn in the wall,
 Lighting the flecks of dust in the air and
 warming the
 spots where they fall.
 In one corner of the shack, a solemn
 broom sleeps away,
 Although the cobwebs gather in corners,
 and dust blankets
 all in its way.
 As the leaves rustle outside these walls,
 a strange
 feeling comes over me.
 Though I know I'm alone, there seems
 to be a presence in my
 company.
 I hear the echoes of young children ring
 out through the air,

But the children are of long ago and no
 longer frolic there.
 Scents of dumplings on the griddle,
 transparent as they are,
 Bring in the specters of tired men who
 labored yonder far.
 The wind brings sounds of joy and
 laughter, tunes of familiar
 songs,
 That christened the day with their happi-
 ness and shortened
 the work so long.
 This one-room house in which I stand
 was once one of many,
 Back in the days when, in this area,
 labor positions were
 plenty.
 Back in the days when these streets
 were filled with the
 hustle and bustle of towns,
 Back in the days when this house was
 filled with all
 of life's ups and downs.
 But slowly, slowly, things just died, work
 grew less and
 less,
 And one by one the families left, leaving
 only their houses
 to rest.
 And rest they did—they slept away till
 nothing was left but
 decay,
 And some mushrooms and moss on
 chunks of wood, except for
 this house here today.
 This house is the only tangible relic of
 that life which
 vanished so fast,
 Except for the ghosts which still linger
 here, mourning
 their home of the past.■

JILL LOGAN, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Jim Logan of Weatherford, is a junior at Weatherford High School where she's an honor student and a participant in Cross Country and Track. "The Relic of the Past" is her second WESTVIEW publication.