

Franklin, the Ghost Who  
Successfully Evicted Hipsters  
From His Home  
and Other Short Stories

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*Dedicated to The Delta Writers Group, and all writers  
who call the Delta home*

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Introductions are best kept short - the last thing the reader wants to see upon opening a book is a lengthy introduction they need to trudge through before getting to the 'good stuff'. So here's one of the shorter introductions you've ever read.

I started writing short stories in 2012 as a way of combatting crushing depression during a stressful job search. Posting a short story or poem a day, for 100 days, was therapeutic. It provided a distraction while also giving a much needed sense of control to some small part of my life. In 2016, the Delta Writers Group was formed, and I began writing again, this time a number of short stories to have discussion pieces at our group meetings. This volume is a collection of short stories from both periods of time, and I've given background on my motivations to write and include each piece. I've separated this volume into 3 broad categories: Hypothetical (my speculative fiction pieces that often include some form of fantasy or supernatural), Heartwarming (pieces that are designed to evoke an emotional reaction, many revolving around mental health in some way), and Humor (pieces that are just fun and light hearted). I hope you enjoy all of them, and am eager to hear your thoughts. Toward the end, I've also included the first chapter of my third novel, *One in the Same*, in case you're interested in reading more of my ramblings that intersect all three of my H topics above!

Sincerely,

J. Westfall

8/17/2019

## Franklin, the Ghost Who Successfully Evicted Hipsters from his Home, Part 1

*Franklin is one of my longer short stories, here split up into 4 parts. He's an intrepid little ghoul, fighting the good fight.*

Franklin had died about 400 years ago, in about the most humiliating fashion imaginable. Suffice it to say, he was sensitive about it, and he knew that if anyone were to know how it truly happened, he or she would likely die as well. Of laughter.

Since then he'd been practicing, as best he could, to be a ghost. It was a common misconception that this was a natural ability, and not a finely-honed skill. To be honest, the work it required was likely the reason most decided to simply move on to the afterlife, rather than toil daily improving their haunting skills. It required dedication, tenacity, and a lot of time. Fortunately the last of these was given in abundance to the dead.

Franklin probably would have skipped specter school if his stately grandfather had not recently passed, scarcely a fortnight before his untimely demise. In the queue to meet the maker, Franklin had spied granddad just a few hundred feet ahead (Who knew they'd group them by where they lived on earth?), and the shame hit him. So reluctantly he stepped out of line, walked over to the Alternative Careers booth, and traded his harp and halo for a shadowy appearance and ice-cold chill. His recruiter had promised him that it would only be a few years before he was rattling the windows, scaring the dogs, and forcibly ejecting homeowners from their manses. 399 years later, Franklin could easily tell just how hard he'd been duped.

First, there was the persistent problem of staying up with the times. Things changed in the world of the living, and what was once considered frightening (e.g., the putting out of a flame) was now a mere inconvenience. Growing secularism was also a problem. Each year his small actions were less likely to be seen as demonic and more likely to be seen as random life happenings. There was a time, in the early 1700s, that blowing out a lady's vigil light on the altar of a church would cause her hackles to raise. Now the ladies didn't even light the lights anymore. Or go to the church in the first place.

Lazily, Franklin had decided, around 1900, to give up on haunting all together. His contract would be up in another 200 years, and at that time he'd just tell granddad the truth. It would have been 600 years at that time, surely the old man would understand the disgrace. In the interim, Franklin had found himself a shabby old home in a run-down part of the city. He'd furnished it with a television (well, he actually hadn't, the drug dealers had left it there before their hasty exit), and on a particularly good afternoon, he'd be able to get enough spectral force going to hit buttons on the remote and find a show he'd enjoy. On bad days, he was lucky to simply hit the power button.

That was what they didn't tell you about being a ghost – the busywork involved. The stupid incantations, the psychic energy of crying children (luckily the number of unwed mothers in this part of the city helped with that immensely), and the rules of it all. You could only manifest out of the corner of an eye. You couldn't allow yourself to be photographed (a major inconvenience now that mortals seemingly kept a camera on them at all times). If someone tried to talk to you, you couldn't talk back. All a royal pain



in the ghostly rear for those the like of Franklin, but especially the last one. He had questions he wanted answered – curious gaps of knowledge that he hadn't picked up. For example, while he knew what a judicial system was, he had no idea how Judge Judy fit into it. Cars fascinated him – he understood they used some form of bottled energy, but what it was he could not say. In some areas, these were small questions – how to beat level 481 of Candy Crush Saga? In other areas, very large – How could McDonald's be in so many places at one time?

Anyway, Franklin was happy for the moment until the day he awoke to find his TV gone. There was work going on in the house, he felt the disturbance as the men walked through his invisible presence, complaining of a draft in the – what did they call it? – 'Hipster Chic' mansion. Franklin didn't know what that was, but he was sure he wouldn't like it.

Then came the day they moved in. Asher and Saffron, with their baby, Juniper. Franklin hovered as they spoke about the way "this part of town was really coming back slowly", and how "no one has found it quite yet". Baby Juniper cried far too little for Franklin's taste, and he swore he could see the faint outline of a beard similar to her father's. Perhaps his spectral vision was going. No matter, Franklin wasn't bothered. They could easily be ignored. He could find another house, or perhaps another town entirely.

He was set to leave until he heard them insult him.

"I'm so glad there aren't any churches left around here", Saffron said as she unpacked the non-GMO 100%-organic vine-ripened artesian tomatoes from the reclaimed canvas shopping satchel.

“Me too, my Earth Goddess, our princess will never know a world of silly superstition and talk of gods or afterlives”, Asher replied as he checked his tight jeans to make sure they hadn’t cut off circulation.

“eh heh he”, cooed Juniper in her bassinet, no doubt crafted from trees who had gallantly and sustainably committed suicide rather than succumb to the barbaric woodsman.

They were mocking him, Franklin realized. They didn’t think an afterlife existed. They didn’t believe he could even be there with them. He had to take a stand. It was the first time in 400 years that Franklin decided to haunt the living shit out of some people. To make them his astral-apparative bitches.

*Franklin’s Story is Continued throughout this collection, in 4 additional parts. You may read them now, or savor them as they appear between the other short stories!*

## Part 2: The Pocket of Hell

Franklin decided to begin his assault by dividing and conquering the young family. His first target would be that loudmouth ironic-neckbeard wearing Asher. Who even names their kid Asher? Horrible people, that's who. Franklin would be after them next, especially if he found they supported the same views as their bespectacled yet perfect-visioned son.

Asher had a deep, dark secret, as many had. He hid it from Saffron well. But he couldn't hide from Franklin. No no, Franklin knew what he did every night when he came down right before bed. Franklin knew why his breath smelled weird to Saffron (he had fed her some line about a new non-abrasive ivory teeth scrub, which she had stupidly believed). It was not the goo he scrubbed on his teeth that made that smell – it was his vice that he kept securely hidden in the mini-freezer powered from an old laptop power supply. The food tubes in specially wrapped sheaths. Asher would grab one, pop it in the microwave for a minute, then take it out and consume it while his stupid wife was none the wiser. He'd done it the past 3 nights, however, each time he'd been interrupted as Franklin watched. The first time, Saffron had come dangerously close to him as the microwave turned off.

“Whatcha doin, my natural fiber fella?”, she asked.

“Just running the microwave with some water in it, to help purify the coils”, he lied seamlessly,

“I read about it in Natural Family Plan Magazine Online”.

“Oh, how often are you supposed to do that?”, she asked.

“I think daily, keeps the chi well warmed in the flow

of the room”, he said with a straight face.

“OK, well come back to bed soon lover, it’s my night to be the flying goddess with you frenching my venus”, she said without a hint of irony.

“Be there soon babe”, he said, with a slight sense of sadness undetected by she named after crocus sativus.

He quickly took the food tube from the microwave and scarfed it down unceremoniously. The next two nights were similar – he’d finish his covert microwavism and then be interrupted for a few minutes before eating his odd delight. Tonight though, Franklin was ready. He’d been storing up energy all day and had even read up on exothermic 5<sup>th</sup>-dimensional transfers. When the timer went off, he spent his entire saved energy on the dirty deed and floated to the corner to watch the reaction.

He opened the microwave.

He took out the food tube.

He put it in his mouth.

He took a bite.

His eyes grew with alarm. His mouth flopped open. He had bit into the hellfire prepared for him.

Scalding hot mostly-meat hit his mouth in all directions. Franklin smiled. He could tell that this would surely get Assherhole’s attention. He’d be running to tell flower child that the microwave was possessed any moment now. And she’d find out it wasn’t water he was microwaving, but the vile GMO-infused preservative-extra-added sleeve-warmed demon flesh in his hand. This would surely get their attention!

But instead, Asher spat the food into his hand. Drank some water, and then placed it back inside his mouth after it had cooled. He acted like this was a

NORMAL THING! But it wasn't. It was Franklin's haunting skills in all their glory. Franklin had failed. For now.