



OP-ED: An Alton ghost story

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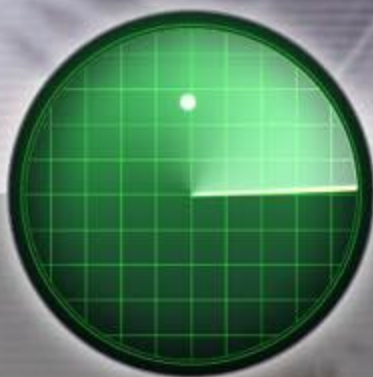
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ALTON – So I live in a house more than 100 years old in Alton, and guess what, I think it is haunted.

The unassuming two-story abode on Court Street is owned by my aunt who warned me there was a “friendly little girl ghost” who may have died in the house at the turn of the 20th century. I fancy myself a skeptic. Part of my job is checking facts and documenting sources and ultimately chasing the truth, so anecdotal tales of the departed coming back have always been just a bit fun for me to consider, especially since I live in what many claim to be the most haunted town in America.

I paid no real heed to my aunt's gentle reminder the place was full of ghosts. I have only wandered into the cold stone basement a time or two, and I never meandered anywhere creepy without some sort of light source blaring. I figured following those rules would keep me somewhat safe.

But last night, I was watching YouTube videos about various conspiracies alongside my good friend and local musician Biff K'narly. We are both night owls, so we save the long wonderful hours after 10 p.m. for deep conversations regarding the nature of the universe, the pros and cons of Alton, ways to improve the world and just how weird animals are.

We were sharing such a time Wednesday night around 11:45, when Biff caught something out of the corner of his eye. He said it was a young girl wearing a weird dress. He said she was angry in the face, and her form was shaking with what appeared to be a hearty dose of wrath.

Biff is a clown, always pulling pranks on me, so I just assumed it was him messing with me a bit. Admittedly, the room did feel strange, but it always feels strange that time of night. He waited to tell me she looked mad until halfway through me driving him home with me knowing I would have to return by myself and be alone with whatever he thinks he saw.

When I parked in his driveway, the lights in my car flickered several times, before too many of them were fully illuminated. Lights under my rear-view mirror were glowing, and they should not have been. It was at that time Biff and I each noticed the darkened silhouette of a young woman in the backseat for a split second.

At that point, we resigned to the fact we were now in a very Alton horror movie. We returned to my house and Biff downloaded a hokey ghost radar for his cellphone. According to its most likely horribly flawed calculations, I had myself a vengeful spirit named Mary who wanted to harm me and did not care if I cleaned the house or did the

dishes. (Biff believed the ghost was haunting me, because I am messy in the house in which she once lived).

I finally fell asleep by myself on the couch with all the lights as bright as they could be and the television blaring. I don't know what I'm going to do for the rest of the time I live there, but I guess I'll start by doing the dishes and vacuuming. Maybe I'll walk down to It's Raining Zen and get me some sage spray or ask the discussion circle Saturday at Mystical Journeys.

One of the great parts about living in the most haunted city in America is having so many experts in the field living within walking distance from your front door.