

# *Manifestations of a Ghost*

*A Domestic Love Story in Two Acts*

by

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## CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

A Ghost

A Table

A Spectator

A Man

An Alien Hand

## ACT 1

*An unremarkable room, a ghost wanders up and down, talking to itself.*

GHOST: Who was it again who said that objects were perceiving us now? Klee, was it? He was wrong. At least they don't perceive me. And if they do, they don't show it. They ignore me. Objects ignore me. I can't get a grip on them. Reaching out for them, I don't feel any resistance, I can reach right through them. No resistance. Nothing.

*A table, artlessly carpentered, stands indifferently in the background. The ghost flashes nervously at it, hesitates, but continues with its monologue.*

GHOST: No resistance. I reach right through them. As if there wasn't anything there at all. And yet the objects are more solid than ever. Claiming space, spreading out, being present. Painfully present. And in their arrogant presence they keep ignoring me. Not giving themselves away when my hand reaches out to grab them. Not allowing to be grabbed, but not yielding, either. They don't give a fuck!

*The ghost turns its body in a way that would be unnatural were it not an astral body. Apparently it tries to watch the table while still directing its words to the spot where it expects the spectator to be. Meanwhile a man enters the room. He is of undefinable age and shape. The only remarkable thing about him is that he has an Alien Hand. Not having noticed the man, the ghost carries on with its rant.*

GHOST: This stubbornness! I grab and ... nothing. Grab at nothing where there is anything but nothing. Anything, but not nothing. Material, form ...

*The table doesn't move an inch*

GHOST: Density ... weight ... matter!

*The table remains exactly where it is. The ghost starts shouting.*

GHOST: I want to grab that table leg! I want to grab it and pull it away!

*The man turns towards the ghost. His body is slightly tilted and he listens attentively. The Alien Hand turns in the opposite direction. Impatiently it starts fiddling with the man's shirt. The man slaps it with his sane hand. It twitches and stops for a moment, but then begins to unbutton the shirt.*

GHOST: I want to bring the whole table down to the ground!

*The man rebuttons his shirt absentmindedly, he alternates between looking at the table and the ghost.*

GHOST: I want to bring the thing down to its knees!

*The Alien Hand grabs the wrist of the man's sane hand and tries to keep it from buttoning his shirt. He slaps it again whereupon it pulls back and hides in the pocket of his trousers. Meanwhile the ghost has approached the table and tries in vain to grab one of its legs.*

GHOST: It doesn't even bother to evade me! My hand grabs the object and slips because there is no resistance. It slips into the object and now there is a table leg where my hand should be! It won't even share the space with me, it fills it entirely! It fills me! Now the object inhabits me!

*The ghost pulls its hand back and, its astral body shivering, slowly walks backwards. The man makes a step to the side to make way for the ghost. The Alien Hand peeps out of the pocket, then slowly crosses the man's body and rests for a moment on his hips. It points determinedly at the table. It twitches and pulls forward, dragging the man behind. Arriving at the table, the Alien Hand positions itself on the table top, its palm facing down on the plane. It pauses for a moment. Then a brief movement goes through the Alien Hand, lifting its palm with the fingertips remaining on the surface before setting it down again and now lifting the fingertips. All this happens very fast. A wavelike movement travels through the man's body and he, reluctantly at first, places his sane hand on the table top, next to the Alien Hand. On the other end of the room the ghost, confused, shakes its head slowly and mutters to itself.*

GHOST: But I still feel attached to objects ...

*The man closes his eyes. He can feel the cool surface with palm and fingertips of the sane hand. He feels a gentle vibration and the skin between his shoulder blades cringe. He keeps his eyes shut. The ghost senses a movement in the room and looks up. It notices the man and the Alien Hand for the first time. It straightens and turns towards the scene, observing what's happening. The table starts moving slowly, sliding on felt pads. Its legs describe four small circles on the floor. The Alien Hand and the man's sane hand rest on the tabletop, moving with the object, but not guiding it. They move simultaneously now and lift their palms, still following the circling table. They both lift four of five fingers, only the middle fingers remain in contact with the object. The circles get bigger. The ghost steps closer.*

GHOST: What the fuck?

*One of the table legs has lost touch with the ground and the movement becomes less symmetric but more animated.*

GHOST (to the man): Oh, come on! Really? You believe in that?

*The man opens his eyes but doesn't pay any attention to the ghost. He is fully concentrated on the contact with the table. He doesn't seem to be the driving force, but rather in dialogue with the table, a strange dance of object and man. The ghost follows them, circling them and shouting, more and more enraged.*

GHOST (to the table): And you? Quite busy dancing around for an inanimate object, aren't you? How come you don't ignore him? He isn't really dancing with you, you know? He thinks he's conjured something. Something not from the physical world. That's what he's after. You understand? Something beyond matter, you understand?

*The man and the table are too immersed in their dance to pay any attention to the ghost. The ghost keeps on shouting for a bit, but its movements become slower and its accusations less frequent until eventually it calms and just watches the scene. It keeps watching for some time but then turns away. It looks at the spot where it thinks the spectator is and shrugs. Then it walks to the other side of the room, sits down and sighs.*

END OF ACT 1

## ACT 2

*The same room. The dance is over. The man stands bent-forward, supporting himself with both hands on his thighs, breathing heavily. He stays in this position for a short while. Then he straightens slightly, still struggling to catch his breath, and puts his glasses straight. He stretches his body and glances around, seemingly not able to understand the scene for a moment. Then a notion of recognition goes through his body, manifesting in a slight slump of his shoulders and a general loss of tension. His eyes meet the table and an embarrassed expression flickers over his face. As casually as possible he turns in the opposite direction and slowly walks to the door. He has already almost disappeared, when the Alien hand very quickly reaches out to the light switch next to the door and turns the light off. The man and the Alien Hand exit through the door and leave the room pitch-dark.*

GHOST (to the table): I know you're still there.

*No reaction.*

GHOST: I know it.

*No reaction.*

GHOST: But most importantly: I FEEL it. I can FEEL your presence.

*No reaction.*

GHOST: The problem is ... I don't feel mine ... fucking astral body!  
No feedback, you know! This body is of no use, because it doesn't give any nervous feedback. It is like moving in your mind only, you see, no feedback that tells you whether you actually have. No touch, no friction, nothing.

*The ghost carefully makes a step towards the table. But as predicted it doubts immediately that this has really happened. So does the spectator.*

GHOST: I know I did move. I know it. But I can't feel it. And because I can't feel it, I'm not that sure anymore. Knowing is as useful as an astral body! But you! You I can feel! I feel your presence. Not in a reassuring way. I don't know exactly where you are. That is why I don't like the darkness. I might move and walk right into you and I wouldn't even notice.

*A shiver runs through the ghost's astral body when it pictures what it just said. The spectator gets suspicious about this, his intuition telling him that astral bodies don't shiver. But unable to put his suspicion into words, he makes a note to himself and plans to think about this later. The ghost continues talking.*

GHOST: I know what you're thinking. Why does it matter? That's what you're thinking. Why does it matter if I step right into you if I don't even notice? Well, it does. Let's say it just does, ok? I don't feel comfortable with it. It doesn't feel right.

*After a brief pause:*

I've been avoiding matter for some time now. For example, I never got used to walking through walls. I always use the door. Only if it's open, of course, I can't turn the handle and push it open myself, you see.

*The ghost seems lost in its thoughts. Then something appears to dawn on it and it looks up and cries:*

GHOST: Hold on ... Oh! ... it's not what you're thinking! Oh no, it's not like THAT! It's NOT about the door being an object, and me trying to use it! I'm past that sort of thing! The world appears different to me now, I can look beyond that! I really can!

*The ghost sighs helplessly and apparently struggles to find the right words. It tries to explain.*

GHOST: Ok, look, there is the door and there is the wall, right? You think I use the door just as any human would, don't you? Just walk through it, right? Walk through the doorway. But that's not how it works for me. I don't use the doorway, I avoid the wall! I avoid it

because it is of MATTER, it is PRESENT. So I go for the doorway instead. Which technically is an object, I admit, but for me it's mainly a hole in the wall, you see?

*The table doesn't move.*

GHOST: It is true that I use it, use it as one uses an object. I seemingly act like my former anthropocentric self, I can see that it must look like that. The truth is, I respect the wall! I don't walk through it although I easily could. Easily. That's the only thing my body is good for: walking through things. But I don't. Not because it is a wall, but because it is matter and I respect that. See, what I am getting at? I don't CARE if you are a table, an abused object. What counts for me is that you are matter, that you occupy space, that you are present, you see?

*No reaction.*

GHOST: Don't you understand? I look beyond your function, I see YOU! I see the true YOU!

*The ghost goes down to its knees and continues talking in the same manner. The table seemingly stays indifferent to the ghost's manifestations. "But who can be entirely sure?" The spectator can't help thinking.*

END