

## DEADLY HELLO

By

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Betty was afraid of the dark, spiders and especially, ghosts. Living across the street from the historic and supposed ghost ridden, Flavel Mansion was unsettling. The view from Betty's window mirrored Katie Flavel's. Katie had died in her room and it was rumored that she haunted it. Betty avoided looking out her window at night for fear that Katie's ghost would be looking back at her with red demon eyes and snarling teeth. She knew it was irrational and silly, but the thought still terrified her. *I hate that damn house, it's super spooky*, she thought.

The house was spooky and for good reason. Originally the home of Captain George Flavel, an influential businessman of Astoria and famous bar pilot, the Flavel House is riddled in mystery, death and yes, ghosts. The awe-inspiring, 1800s Queen Anne boasts 11,600 sq. feet and has six fireplaces. The beautiful octagonal tower is the crown jewel and according to Betty, gives the house that quintessential haunted mansion vibe. Museum volunteers allege that Katie opens the curtains to her room just moments after they've been closed.

Winter had shown up early this year and Betty hurried up the front stairs of her Italianate style Victorian clutching her jacket closed.

"Brrrr... man, it's already so cold," Betty said to her roommate as she entered the kitchen.

"The kettle's on if you'd like some tea." Marcus pointed to the stovetop.

"Thanks, but I'm tuckered out. Straight to bed for this one."

"Night, night," he smiled.

Betty climbed the steps to her room and immediately flipped the switch on her radiant heater next to her bed. The heater hadn't been on since spring and the smell of burning dust filled the room. "Oh, crap, that stinks." Betty walked toward the window to air out the burnt-hair smell. "Damn, it's stuck." She struggled to open the one-hundred-year-old window. "Marcus, I need your help," she shouted as she continued to fight with the window.

"Be right there," he shouted from the kitchen.

"Grrrr... got it! Never mind," Betty said as the window freed.

Betty's eyes were forced shut by a gust of winter chill that filled the room. She opened her eyes and purely by instinct, she peered across the dark and blustery night to the Flavel House and Katie's bedroom window. To her horror, her worst nightmare had just come true. *There's someone in the window! It's her! She sees me!* Betty closed her eyes hoping that when she opened them again the

person would be gone. *Oh no, oh no! Crap! She's still there!* Betty froze in fear and couldn't look away. Her eyes bulged as she held her breath and her heart pounded as she watched. The figure in Katie's window looked at Betty and waived. Betty's vision wavered, and her body flushed dizzy with fear. All she could think to do was run. *The ghost is going to get me!* Betty broke from her frozen state and ran across the room, knocking over the heater as she sprinted out of her bedroom towards the stairs. Betty had lost all reasoning as she fled full speed.

Marcus hearing the commotion upstairs, headed toward the base just in time to see his wide-eyed roommate literally flying down the staircase before crashing into the banister breaking her fall and smacking her head against the handrail.

Betty was no longer cold and was no longer afraid. Floating above, she was calm but confused by all the people fussing about below her. She wondered why Marcus was crying. There were two medical people doing something to... *Oh! That's me,* Betty thought. *Am I dead?* She wasn't afraid, just curious. Betty looked down at her lifeless body. An indescribable yet wonderful feeling of love and warmth filled her.

As interesting as it was watching the drama of her lifeless body play out below, Betty felt compelled to venture out. With just a thought, poof! She was now several hundred feet above of Astoria. *It's so beautiful,* she thought. She looked down at the rooftops and with ease soared across the town like a hawk. Curious, Betty held her hands in front of her face. Instead of seeing her milky white skin, she only saw a radiant outline of her fingers. Betty was not shocked by this. Instead, she felt perfectly normal and was relieved to be rid of her painful body. What can only be described as a pull, Betty was guided towards an ever-growing light. She could hear familiar voices in the distance... both people she'd known that had died and people she hadn't known but their voices were familiar to her like long lost friends. An overwhelming feeling of joy filled every part of her being as she floated closer and closer. It was pure love, pure joy. Just as the light enveloped her another voiced shouted, overpowering all the others.

"It's not your time. You must go back."

"I don't want to go back," Betty pleaded.

"You must."

In that instant, Betty gasped. She opened her eyes as the pain flooded her earthly body like daggers. "We got her, we got her!" A paramedic said. Betty closed her eyes. She was indeed back in her throbbing, broken body. *Crap,* she thought.

"Betty! It's Marcus. You're going to be okay." He kneeled next to her still crying. Though Betty wasn't happy to be back, she looked up at her friend and gently smiled.

"Did I die?" Betty asked, even though she knew she had.

"Don't try to talk. Stay still," the medic said."

Betty closed her eyes, remembering each detail. *It was real. I know it was.* Betty felt herself lift again but not like before. She was strapped to a stretcher and was being carried to a waiting ambulance.

"Is she alright, Marcus?" A woman's voice asked.

“Amy?” Betty recognized the voice of her close friend.

Amy came over just as they were about to lift her into the ambulance. “I thought you were dead. You scared the hell out of me!” She grabbed Betty’s hand.

Betty wanted to say, “I was dead, and it was wonderful,” but she bit her tongue. “I’m fine. Well, I will be. What are you doing here?”

“I was at the Flavel House and saw the ambulance from the window.”

“Wait, what?”

“Yeah, remember? I was hired to restore the walls in that creepy girls’ room. You saw me. I waived at you.”

Betty realized she hadn’t seen the ghost of Katie Flavel, the ghost she’d always feared. All she saw was her best friend, Amy, waiving to her. Betty chuckled then burst into laughter at her blunder.

“Betty, what is it? Are you okay?”

“I, I thought you were a ghost.” Betty laughed hysterically.

“A ghost. What?” Amy let go of her hand.

The paramedics rolled Betty into the back of the ambulance, but before they closed the door, Marcus jumped in and sat by her side. As they drove off, Betty looked up at Marcus and said, “Dude. I’m totally moving out.”

THE END