I'm your Ghost

Oh hang on! When I say *I'm your ghost* I don't mean I'm the ghost of you…I mean I'm the ghost you called up to be present here before you.

No, no, no, don't be frightened. I'm not a real ghost. After all, if I was real, I wouldn't be a ghost would I? Perhaps I should suddenly appear through a closed door, shimmer a little and glide silently across the room?

But I'm here now so I won't bother with that.

Did you expect an ethereal being from 'the other side'? You're lucky! You're getting sound and vision. Not everyone gets that…have you noticed? Ghosts rarely speak and when they do it's just a voice coming mysteriously from somewhere behind a curtain. Or a quiet hissing barely audible. Or best of all, scratching and slavering from behind a door (especially with the door rattling and handle turning slowly). I can do all that if you prefer but I thought you being normal rational types you'd be more unsettled by hearing a normal everyday voice as though we were having a chat in a pub somewhere. And being unsettled is what you want right? Otherwise you'd see right through me – well of course you can anyway but you know what I mean!

But you do like to be frightened – just a little bit. Something sudden and unexpected will frighten you as long as afterwards you can retreat to the safety of your real and rational world. But you wouldn't want to be really threatened - a giant that really eats people, a vampire that really bites or a bear that is really dangerous. No, you don't want that.

I'm just here to tease you out of your planned and organized existence and give you a slight sense of apprehension – that there might be something out there…you just can't explain it. As a ghost I know you better than you know yourself. I know how much you appreciate the strange and will enjoy re-telling the story of how you once saw….hmmm, what exactly?

Of course, Halloween is busy time for us ghosts – we're called to do all sorts of things. This year I shall be the unfortunate Bishop Fisher who lived in Bromley Palace. He'd made himself very unpopular with King Henry VIII, when the King wanted an annulment by the Pope of his marriage to his first queen, Catherine of Aragon. When he didn't receive it, he severed the English church from the Papacy

and created the Church of England. Bishop Fisher dared to resist the king and was threatened with execution. The Pope tried to save him by making him a Cardinal, but Henry VIII said that ***"Bishop Fisher would have to wear his Cardinal's hat on his shoulders, as he'll have no head."*** …and he gave him the chop anyway.

Bishop Fisher's ghost has been seen wandering round Queen's Gardens in a bright red Cardinal's cloak and black Cardinal's hat – and no head. That's me of course! If you're lucky you might see me waving my hat to the crowd.

I'm also the famous White Lady of Bromley (yes, I can be any gender)! I was called to hover in the mist and drift silently across the mill pond by Glassmill Lane – but I drew the line at that!

But usually, we try to please, we ghosts. Although we can play tricks in the night when you're least expecting it – when it's quiet - and you're all alone. We're very good at reading people's minds and playing back stuff they didn't even know was there – stuff that was put there years before when they were very small. I can't tell you how we do it – you just have to believe that we can.

But be warned – if you believe in things you don't understand then you'll suffer. Now who was it said that? Not me – I'm only a ghost.

Peter Martin
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