

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT SPACE STATION - DAY

The cluttered space station looks lived in and comfortable.

LATIN AMERICAN music plays in the hallways.

INT. GALLEY - DAY

Leaning back in a chair with his feet on the table, ERIC, 31, *
a thick and stout laborer, reads a magazine titled "Knitting *
Made Easy."

Opposite him sits JOHN, 23, clean-cut and by the book. He *
picks at his lunch. ABIGAIL, a small calico cat, placidly *
sits on the table.

JOHN *
Hey Eric, do you mind turning off
the Tito Puente Cuban Liberation
Front music?

ERIC *
(behind the magazine)
What's the matter? Too much 'ritmo'
for you?

JOHN *
No. I just need some peace and
quiet.

ERIC *
Alright.

Eric grabs the remote and presses a button. The music stops. *

ERIC (CONT'D) *
Better?

JOHN *
Yes. Thank you.

ABIGAIL
Meow.

Below the silence a low CREAKING can be heard. *

JOHN *
What was that?

ERIC
(not looking up)
What was what?

JOHN
That creaking sound?

ERIC
Oh, that. Nothing. Just Norry.

JOHN
(confused)
Norry?

ERIC
Yeah, the station's resident ghost.

JOHN
Yeah right.

Eric looks over the top of his magazine.

ERIC
You don't believe me? Astronauts
have always reported seemingly
inexplicable things while in space,
like John Glenn's fireflies.

JOHN
But they said that was just the
heat shield.

Several loud POPPING sounds, then a metallic GROAN.

ERIC
That, my friend, was no heat
shield. Spirits have always
accompanied travellers, and space
is no exception.

Abigail stands, stretches, and jumps off table and scampers
into the hallway. Silence settles on the galley, then more
strange CREAKS. John looks nervous. A loud BEEPING startles
him out of his reverie.

JOHN
What's that!?

Eric looks at a panel on the wall.

ERIC
10:30. Time for some routine
maintenance checks. Let's go.

INT. MAINTENANCE BAY - DAY

Two small work vehicles take up most of the space in an already crowded workshop. Four space suits hang on a wall.

JOHN

So ghosts? Do you really believe that? Sounds superstitious to me.

*

ERIC

Ever hear of the Octavius? The Mary Celeste? The Carol Deering? Ships found intact with either the crews missing or inexplicably dead.

*

JOHN

Yeah, but that was centuries ago. I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation.

*

ERIC

If you say so. Still, things like that have happened up here.

*

JOHN

Really?

*

ERIC

Yeah. A few years back one of our guys, Nelson, Norgay, N-something. Anyway his last name was Atall, went on an EVA, but never returned.

*

JOHN

Seriously?

*

ERIC

They found the work vehicle empty, moored near an airlock, no sign of Atall. No suit, no body, nothing.

*

*

JOHN

I don't think that...well, I can't say what I think about that.

*

ERIC

You can check the recordings when you get back. People have disappeared inexplicably up here.

*

More unexplained CREAKS.

*

JOHN
(hesitates just a bit)
Let's just get to work.

Eric helps John get into his space suit.

ERIC
Now don't forget to check the comms
array while your out. I think one
of the antennas is busted.

JOHN
Okay. Helmet?
(grabs helmet from Eric)
Thanks.

ERIC
Just keep your eyes peeled while
you're out there. Wouldn't want
anything to happen to you. I'll be
all alone if you don't come back!

Eric wipes non-existent tears away as John climbs into the
work vehicle.

JOHN
Okay Mom.

INT. WORK VEHICLE - DAY

John activates the control panel, monitors light up. He grabs
the joysticks and begins to move the vehicle.

JOHN
This is SWV One. Control, how do
you read?

ERIC (V.O.)
Five by five. Opening airlock.

JOHN
Roger. Heading out.

EXT. SPACE

The work vehicle moves over the surface of the station, with
stops every few meters for inspection.

JOHN (V.O.)
Everything looks good so far. Make
a note to fix the drain on the lav.
There's a lot of ice built up.

ERIC (V.O.)
Got it. Are you to the array yet?

JOHN (V.O.)
ETA thirty seconds. Yeah antenna
three looks like it's in bad shape.

A white shape slowly rises from behind the station.

INT. WORK VEHICLE - DAY

JOHN
Hey Control, can you see what's on
camera two?

ERIC (V.O.)
Yeah. I dunno...
(static)
...could be from an old...

Radio goes dead.

JOHN
Control? Eric? I didn't get that
last transmission? Control?

Nothing.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Well, I'd better take a look.

EXT. SPACE

An old space suit floats freely above the station. John
approaches the suit, and grabs it with one of the work
vehicle's mechanical arms.

JOHN (V.O.)
Control, I don't know if you are
getting this, but it appears to be
a space suit, one of ours.

INT. WORK VEHICLE - DAY

JOHN
I'm going to turn it over to get a
better look.

John flips the suit to face him. Inside the helmet floats a
human skull.

John lets out a YELP, then catches his breath. *

JOHN (CONT'D) *
(trying to sound calm) *
Eric, there's a body in the suit. *

Static from the radio. *

JOHN (CONT'D) *
I'm taking a closer look at the *
suit. The name patch says...it says *
N. Atall! *

The skull rattles around inside the helmet.

JOHN (CONT'D) *
(on the edge of panic) *
It's Atall! He's...been...here... *

Pale and sweaty, John removes his helmet and breathes slowly. *
He regains his composure. *

Something taps him on the neck. He screams.

JOHN (CONT'D) *
Control! Eric! Eric! Get me out of *
here! There's something in the pod *
with me! *

ERIC (V.O.) *
(laughing hysterically) *
Boy did I ever get you! Ha ha ha! *
Wait. Did you just say something is *
in there with you? *

JOHN *
Yes! There is something in here. *
Ow! It's attacking me! *

John screams again and doubles over out of view, then all *
goes quiet. *

ERIC (V.O.) *
Wait, what? John? *

No response

ERIC (V.O.) *
John? John? Do you read? Answer me! *
The suit was just a joke. It's not *
really a person. I set it up. *

JOHN *
(relieved)
Oh, whew! It's just Abigail. She
got in the pod somehow.

ERIC (V.O.) *
You okay John?

JOHN *
Yeah. Stupid cat. So this was some
kind of prank?

ERIC (V.O.) *
Yeah. They did to me when I first
got here too. The name of the
ghost, Norry?

JOHN *
Yeah?

ERIC (V.O.) *
Short for "no reason at all."

JOHN *
Seriously?

ERIC (V.O.) *
Yeah. The story gets better with
the telling I suppose.

JOHN *
I hope so. That's scared the pee
out of me. Good thing these suits
are equipped for that.

ERIC (V.O.) *
Really?

JOHN *
No, but pretty close. Let's get
back to work.

ABIGAIL
Meow.

FADE TO BLACK.