

The Ghost Catcher

By Caroline Feller Bauer

Tilly paid great attention to her appearance. She was always combing her hair and checking her looks in the mirror. Her clothes were always freshly pressed. She was chosen “Best Dressed” in her high school two years in a row. Her hobby was fashion; her avocation was cosmetology. She carried her cosmetics case with her wherever she went, even to the aerobics class that she attended twice a week at Gagny’s Gym. When she left the exercise session, she always changed, showered, and primped.

One night as she left Gagny’s, absorbed in the business of gracefully waving goodbye to the owner, she couldn’t help but notice the glorious full moon, a harvest moon. “Bye, Til. Watch out for ghosts. It’s almost Halloween,” Jim Gagny warned.

“I don’t believe in ghosts, Mr. Gagny,” said Tilly as she glided out the door. She hadn’t walked more than five yards when she took out her mirror to check her makeup. “Not bad,” she thought to herself. “Here’s hoping I meet the man of my dreams tonight.”

Tilly’s fantasy was that her predestined “knight in shining armor” would emerge one night from the shadows on Main Street and sweep her off her feet, marry her, and take her to live in a villa in the South of France. So far she had met only Old Man Bundy and his dog, and once Ms. Pritkin, her math teacher, on her way home.

Ghosts do exist, whether you believe in them or not, and two swooped down from the roof of MacArthur’s hardware store and barred Tilly’s way.

“WOOOOOO. HOOOOOO,” they wailed as they floated around Tilly’s head. “WOOOOOOO. HOOOOOOO. Prepare for a voyage. We’re taking you to the boss in the dungeon.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” said Tilly. “I’m not dressed for an audience with a ghost, even if he is your leader.”

“WOOOOOOOOO. HOOOOOOOOO. Now we will seize you.”

“Don’t come any closer,” screamed Tilly. “I have my ghost catcher here in my bag. I’ve caught two ghosts already tonight. Here they are.” Tilly reached into her cosmetic case and pulled out her mirror. The ghosts looked in the mirror and saw themselves.

“WOOOOOOOOOO. HOOOOOOOOOO,” screamed the ghosts. “Let’s get out of here.”

Tilly sat down on the curb in front of MacArthur’s Hardware. She recombbed her hair. She reapplied her lipstick. Then she put away her ghost catcher and went home to take a nice hot bath and to wash and blow-dry her hair for tomorrow.