**Ghosts Versus Phantoms**

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“There’s a ghost in this one”, my brother says.

Black smoke billows from the hood of the U-Haul but he just keeps flipping through the family album. I point at the photo, at our mom specifically. She’s at a barbeque, my brother swaddled against her breast in one hand and a horseshoe in the other. She’s smiling. “Oh yeah, I see it now,” I say.

He laughs in that way. The way that says the joke was bad, but silence is worse. According to him, mom is more of a phantom.

“And I think it’s important,” he says, “to know the difference.” He grabs my wrist and checks my watch. Triple A said they’d be here by now. “Ghosts appear. Phantoms vanish.”

Our view from the side of the highway is durum wheat and corn and switchgrass in every direction. My brother flips and flips, and when he’s done with an album, he picks up another from the trunk and starts flipping some more. Every so often I stop him, point to a photo, and ask where the ghost is.

“That’s easy,” he says. It’s always easy. “You can see his nose in the leg of the table.”

“Ah, silly me.” A car approaches where the heat swivels up from the road. That’s us. It’s gotta be us. Smog threads through countless rows of amber.

My brother is talking about how to look for ghosts in photos. “The thing about all the famous ones—the Falling Body, the Newby Monk, the Brown Lady—they’re too obvious. They’re just double exposures, or lint on the lens.”

“So, what do you look for?” I wonder if the Triple A guy wants in on this information. Maybe he’s an enthusiast.

“That’s just it,” my brother says. “They want to be seen, but not by everyone. More than anything, they want to be looked for.”

“I didn’t know there were so many rules.”

He hands me an album. “You’ll get the hang of it.”

I open the pages and stare. Our mom, our house. Laughter. Our lives. It’s familiar, but only like memories of vacation. Like sleeping sickness. The ghosts don’t reveal themselves to me. Nothing does. I want to scream at my brother, tell him what I really see in all these. He’s not interested in what doesn’t appear.

The car on the road flies by. I watch it leave for way too long.