

The Ghost & Captain Kirk
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For more information, cyber over to <http://kellijaebaeli.com>

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The Ghost & Captain Kirk
Kelli Jae Baeli



I'm in my home office, writing, and the lights in the room go out. I check the bulb, change it, but after I sit down, the lights go off again. I look over and notice the light switch is off. I turn it on and the light comes on again. Confused, I cross back to my desk and the light disappears once more. I look back and the switch is off. I get back up and turn it on, adding a strip of duct tape over the switch for good measure, telling myself the switch is loose, faulty.

Back at my desk, I soon hear the sound of the microwave. The beep of buttons, like someone is setting the timer. I go check it out, and no one is there. But the microwave glows with 30 seconds, blinking on the panel. I hit the clear button and stand staring at the machine, wondering how the hell that could even happen.

Back at my desk once more, I bend back to my writing, distracted by the light and the microwave incidents. Then from another room, I hear a sound of something falling. I tell myself, *it's just the cat*. I go check it out.

A table flipped over. Normally I would explain it by saying somehow the cat jumped off it and knocked it over, but it was a table with a drawer in it, not exactly flimsy, and it was completely upside down. Inverted over one of the legs was a small wire trash can, its contents dumped onto the floor. I knew the cat couldn't do THAT. Even with opposable thumbs and a pulley-system.

Finally, I have to admit the obvious. Out loud, to the empty living room, I say, "What do you want? Why are you tormenting me? If you want to frighten me, you succeeded, but I want you to stop now. If you can't stop, at least be nice. Don't do anything dangerous and don't hurt me." And as an afterthought, "Or my cat."

A sound of running water begins in the bathroom, and when I investigate, I find the tub half full, the water on, and running into it. I turn the water off.

"Is there something you need? What can I do to help?"

My monologue is met by silence. I stand there for maybe ten minutes, and nothing else happens. But I have the creepy-crawlies and I don't want to be there anymore. I grab my keys and bag and head out to the driveway.

I drive aimlessly into the city, and for no reason apparent to me, pull into a large parking lot. When I put the gear shift into park, I notice an older man shuffling across the blacktop. It looks for all the world like Captain Kirk. *Well, William Shatner*, I correct myself. As he moves closer, I realize it really is him. *No shit. William Shatner*. And by the look of his gait, he is half-lit. I almost say, *Na-noo, na-noo*, but realize that's what Mork used to say, from that show *Mork & Mindy*, which of course wouldn't apply to the leading man of *Star Trek*. Then I remember that Mork was Robin Williams. *Williams*, I think. *Williams and William Shatner*. I don't know what to

make of it, or if it means anything. What was it Captain Kirk said? *Make it so?* No, that was Patrick Stewart in *The Next Generation*. *Dammit, Jim, I'm a doctor, not a--* no, that was the other guy. Kirk said...*beam me up, Scotty*. Yeah. Maybe he said something else, but I couldn't remember. Which is probably what I should have said at that moment, because my thoughts were just a little alarming. And Robin Williams is dead. Sadly, he committed suicide; and as I watch William Shatner cross in front of me, I think he looks like he might do the same. Bold as a magic marker, I say, "Hey. Where's all the paparazzi?"

He huffs without humor. "Oh, they don't care much about me anymore. I'm old news."

"Nah. I don't believe that. Where are all your minions?"

"They are probably at some sci-fi convention somewhere." He is, perhaps involuntarily moving toward me, like my voice is a beacon and he's lost in the dark.

"Okay then. What about your friends?"

"Don't have many of those anymore either." He stops in front of me, his hands in his front pockets. The parking lot night lamp is behind him, casting him in an ethereal glow that makes him look like some wayward angel.

"Well I've never been as famous as you, but I've had some success with books."

He asks who I am and I say my name, adding that he probably never heard of me.

He says that on the contrary, he read my last book a few months ago and really liked it. He sits down behind me on the retaining wall, seeming a little winded. I turn and join him there.

"Thanks for that little thrill. William Shatner read one of my books."

"It was really good. You should be proud."

"Thanks. You write some too don't you?"

"Used to. Not much anymore," he says.

After a moment of silence in which we stare out across the parking lot, a crumpled religious flyer frees itself of a car's windshield wiper, and skitters across the pavement under the yellow glow of the security light. I say, "If it helps, I know how it feels, at least. To be lonely."

"Most people eventually do, I guess," he says.

As an afterthought, I say, "I really liked you in *Boston Legal*. Much better than in *Star Trek*."

He laughs. "Yeah, that show was fun. And *Star Trek*. Well, those were the days before I actually knew how to act."

I smile. It wouldn't be courteous to agree with him, so I say nothing.

At first it's odd talking to him, because we'd of course never met, but then as we chat, it's like we are old friends, sitting on the edge of this retaining wall. We talk about what it is like to be older and alone. Each day a new adventure in signs of aging. The new wrinkle. The mysteriously appearing liver spots. The cracking, aching joints, receding gums, strands of gray hair.

He says, "Yes, of course everyone thinks that mine must be the good life. Having fame and fortune. But none of it means anything when you go home to an empty

house and you have no one to share it with. You know, someone special. It's lonely. I never thought my life would be like this at my age."

"Neither did I," I say. "I live alone too. So I know exactly what you mean. I hate it, really."

"Me too. I mean, I can even have fans around me, or crowds at some Hollywood gala, and I still feel alone."

I'm sad for him. And I feel sad for me, too. I sense myself sort of emotionally clinging to his presence. Not because he is famous, but because he is another human being. A kindred, it seems. Another person who feels like I do, and somehow we've crossed paths on this lonely little night in the city.

Then I think about having to go home. Think about the ghost in my house, and I want him to ride with me so I can tell him-- I really want company. Really want to go home with him, even, but that would be weird, wouldn't it? Still, I can't leave things the way they are at my house. And my cat is there, hiding in the closet. Scared. I feel guilty for leaving her there alone. There's that word again. *Alone*.

Breaking the spell, he says, "Well, it was nice talking to you," --and says goodnight, heads over to a pickup truck, and unlocks the door. I never pictured him driving a pickup. I thought he'd be in some luxury car. A Mercedes. A Beemer, maybe. I get into my car, which is also not a Mercedes or a Beemer, and think of the ghost. Then I realize also that William Shatner is about to drive in his condition. "Hey," I call out the window to him. "Are you really tired?"

"No...I'm not tired at all, actually."

"Well, you wanna go have some coffee? Honestly, I need to talk to someone...about something that's happened...so...and I'm worried about you, too. You're too inebriated to drive. Why don't you let me give you a ride? You might hurt yourself or someone else." He looks at me over the hood of his truck, contemplating what I said. "If that's not enough, then think of what a DUI would do to your reputation. Especially if you hurt someone else..."

He says, "Me, just getting in the car with you...someone I just met tonight...wouldn't that be weird?"

"Yes," I say. "but who cares?"

He laughs.

Pocketing his keys, he comes over to my car and gets in the passenger side.

"Really?" I say, laughing a little.

"Yeah. Really." He says. "I must be too inebriated to think clearly."

"My point, exactly." I start driving.

He eyes me a little suspiciously. "You're not a serial killer or anything, are you?"

I giggle. "I'm much too sensitive to be a serial killer."

"Serial killers are insensitive? Who knew?"

We laugh.

He probably didn't care about the risk, if he was borderline suicidal. He could go out with a bang. *William Shatner, victim of a mysterious serial killer. Tonight on Inside Edition.*

He says, "So what happened? What did you need to talk to someone about?"
I'm rather inadvertently driving back to my house. "Well, now that I think about it, it's going to sound weird."

"We started with weird, why quit now?"

I laugh again. He's a really personable fellow. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

He chuckles. "I do, actually. My grandmother had a ghost." He paused, looking out the window as we strobe through the light and dark of street lamps. "That makes it sound like she went down to the ghost-store and brought one home. But she did. She had a ghost in her house."

"Well, I have one in mine too, and it's freaking me out a little," I say. "That's why I drove into town. I didn't know what to do, but I was spooked and wanted out of the house. But now I feel guilty because I left my cat there with it, and who knows what might happen? It's already turned lights on and off, set the microwave, flipped over a table and then started running a bath."

"Oh, my," he says. "A dirty ghost."

I smile, and glance over at him; his face is round, almost cherubic and his nose is a little red. But otherwise, he looks just like...well, *just like William Shatner*. My thoughts back on the ghost, I say, "I don't suppose you know how to get rid of it?"

"My grandmother called someone who came over and burned sage."

"I don't have any sage."

He patted his jacket as if to look for his personal sage that he carried. "Yeah, I don't have any on me, either."

We laugh again.

"She also just asked it to be nice. To go away."

"I tried that already."

"What happened?"

"That's when it ran the bath water."

"Well you do have a problem, then."



Before long, we arrive at my house, and step into the living room. He looks around.
"Okay, where is this ghost?"

"He's a ghost. I don't think we're supposed to be able to see him."

We both laugh.

While we're standing there, a little cat sculpture falls onto the carpet from its place on the bookshelf.

"See that?" I say.

"Yep. You have a ghost."

"So what do I do?"

He shrugs. "I wish I had my phaser."

"That weapon from Star Trek?"

"Yeah."

"Well, my understanding is that it's an Electro-Muscular Disruption Device. Do ghosts have muscles?"

"Good question. Probably not. But they are made of energy, apparently. So maybe it would disrupt that."

"It would, if you brought yours. I don't have one."

Just then, the television clicks on. The screen is fuzzy at first, then flips through channels, stopping on a rerun episode of Boston Legal. A scene where he and James Spader are lounging on the balcony, smoking cigars and having a drink.

William Shatner turns to me. "I guess your ghost is a fan of mine."

"Apparently," I say.

A DVD slides out of the book case and flies across the room, hitting William in the chest and falling to the floor. We look down and see it's a copy of Boston Legal.

"Or, maybe not," he says. Glancing down at the DVD, William says aloud to the room, "You might not be a fan of mine, but I love ghosts. Absolutely love them."

A moment goes by and then the television clicks off. A swooshing sensation, lifts both our hair and then there is silence again.

We blink, stand there, our eyes panning the room for any new disturbance, but all is quiet.

My cat saunters in and rubs across my legs, and then does the same to William. He bends down and picks her up, petting her, and she purrs.

"Coffee?" I say.

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If you enjoyed this little bit of craziness, perhaps you'd also enjoy my other speculative fiction works.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Indie Publisher and bestselling author of the Rain Falls series, AKA Investigations series, Throwing Caution, and Pitfall, Kelli Jae Baeli enjoys a sales position in the top 5% of lesbian authors. Her writing career began as a child, and that interest in expression through words on a page blossomed into full-length works, when she became frustrated with early examples of lesbian fiction, and decided to write something she would want to read. She's been doing that ever since, authoring and producing 48 books, both non-fiction and fiction, in a variety of genres, and for both gay and straight readers.

Constantly mining the world around her for literary tidbits, Baeli is always to be found with iPhone in hand, recording or thumbing in notes, a self-confessed story magpie who sees everywhere the fodder for her work. Creativity comes as easily as breathing to Baeli. A talented singer-songwriter with over 200 songs to her credit, she also loves mixed-media art, painting, pottery, and clay sculpture, as well. Living a life around words, books, art, and music not only fulfills her, but defines her.

Formerly a managing editor for two small presses, she founded Kindred Ink Writers Initiative, and Kind Red Ink Editing, and currently publishes under the imprints Indie Literati Press, and Lesbian Literati Press. Believing in mastering every aspect of the business, Baeli does her own book cover design, typography, and formatting, maintains an author newsletter and video journal series, and is also an editor, webmaster and blogger, all after eight years of University, to include pursuing a B.A. in Professional Writing & Editing.

A canny mix of businesswoman and artist, Kelli Jae Baeli is delighted to spend each day relentlessly polishing her skills and feeding her muse.

After three unfortunate years in New Zealand, she now makes her American home on Holiday Island, near the quaint village of Eureka Springs with her wife, Melissa.



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