A True Ghost Story

I'll start things off with an incident that happened to me in the early part of 1995.

I've heard of people seeing ghosts, or hearing and feeling ghosts, but I've never heard of anyone else hugging a ghost. This is a ghost hugging story.

I was, as per the thread ground rules, fully sober, wide-awake, and this really happened.

We'd rented the third floor of a Victorian Brownstone in Oak Park, Illinois -- near Chicago. We were about a block away from the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District. One of the rooms over-looking Ontario Street was our toddler-free, home office.

It was around three in the morning. Ellen and the boys were fast asleep. I was in our office working on a cover design for what would become my first novel, Glamour Job. The office was being lit by a halogen floor lamp. When I realized what time it was, I shut down the computer, and turned off the bright lamp. Now, it takes a while for your eyes to adjust to sudden darkness and I carefully felt my way over to the baby-gate that separated the office from the rest of the apartment. As I stepped over the gate and as my foot touched the floor of the hallway in total darkness, I heard an unfamiliar woman's voice say in my left ear, "Hi!"

Instant panic mode. I bolted down the dark hallway and locked the bathroom door shut thinking that would *somehow* protect me from what could only be a ghost who had shown up in our apartment! No sooner had I locked the door, I became angry at myself for that reaction. Dang it! Here a ghost **merely said hello** to me and I **ran away** like a character in a *Casper The Friendly Ghost* cartoon. What a missed opportunity! I was mentally beating myself up as I walked to our bedroom. I looked for any sign of the ghost. Nothing.

I got into bed next to my sleeping wife, Ellen, when I realized I had another reason to be mad at myself. I’d forgotten to go to the bathroom. I grumbled to myself, got back out of bed and walked toward the bedroom door to revisit the bathroom. Then I saw her. There was a young woman standing in the hall. She was back!

She had blonde hair in a 1960's flip cut. She was wearing a blue flannel shirt, worn blue jeans and had bare feet. She looked to be in her early twenties, and was pretty without any trace of make-up.

I gathered my thoughts. I'd been given a second chance, and I didn't want to blow this again. I asked quietly, "What's your name?"

She answered, but this time I couldn't hear her. Her lips looked like she'd said, "Debbie." It was as though she'd put all her strength into making herself visible to me and didn't have enough left over to be heard. I even wondered if it was an "either-or" situation -- where you had to choose between being seen or being heard. My mind raced for a way to tell her I was sorry that I'd run away, and that I was glad to have the chance to meet her. I needed a way to communicate with her non-verbally that I wasn't afraid of her. That's was when I thought of author and motivational speaker, Leo Buscaglia.

Leo Buscaglia was known as "Dr. Love" and often appeared on Public Television. He was a bearded, bear of a man who I'd seen on TV a few times telling audiences, "Come on people, HUG each other!"

That was my answer to perfect, non-verbal communication -- a simple non-sexual hug! Now while she was pretty, I swear there wasn't an ounce of lust in my heart when I thought of hugging her. I was **only** thinking of a simple Leo Buscaglia hug. I put my arms out in a non-threatening way, thinking I'd go through the motions of the hug. It would be a gesture only, I certainly didn't think I would feel anything. If anything, I thought it would feel like hugging air or hugging a cloud. I was wrong...

As my arms came around her and my fingers touched the sleeves of her shirt, I felt the texture of flannel. She didn't feel cold like a corpse. She felt warm like a living person! She gently hugged back.

This did not compute. Ghosts shouldn't feel that way. Warning sign!

This is not a ghost, I thought. The only other explanation was that, "Some strange woman HAS BROKEN INTO OUR APARTMENT!! **Danger! Danger Will Robinson!**

I stepped back from our embrace, once again in full fear and panic mode!

That's when she gave me a sad look and slowly disappeared. Gone into thin air, in the time it takes to count to five. Turns out she was a ghost after all, and that was the last time I ever saw her.