

The Ghosts in the Meeting

by amy shearn

It was the night of the annual co-op meeting, and the lobby was filled with the souls of the shareholders: the new people still shiny from Park Slope (whose babies were sleeping in rehabbed apartments upstairs) brimming with plans for happy gentrification; the 30-year-vets of the building, who were secretly glad that most of the old Russians had been bought out or died and had their apartments decarpeted and rehandelied by the Park Slope families, but who still retained their right to bitterness. The super, conspicuously inconspicuous in a middle-of-the-road polo and friendly grin, as if there had been no proxy-vote-grab-scandal at all. The lawyer, the guy from the building management office. And the dead.

No one had told the newer tenants that the dead would be given votes, and they were in an uproar: it wasn't legal; it wasn't fair; it was creepy. The dead lurked near the elevators, ghostly and grumpy. But hey weren't shareholders any longer! And yet no one could find a thing in the bylaws to prevent it. The dead had issues too, after all. They waited until the living had discussed the gutter-cleaning, the Number 6 oil tank conversion, and buying out the rent-control lady in 4C, before they clanged and moaned and murmured their way onto the agenda: their secret passages throughout the building were being obstructed by all the Park Slope people's renovations; their spirit shoes and time capsules and hidden marbles and treasure troves were getting jammed up by the Direct TV wires. It was a damn shame, muttered the guy with the pipe leaning against the No Smoking sign, that the dead had to come and make the meeting a million hours long.

But hey, didn't they still have a stake? Hey, hadn't they put in their time? Hadn't they cold-chill-shimmied past prospective buyers with bad credit? Hadn't they rattled in the walls when in-laws were

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visiting? They were citizens too. And another thing, they wanted to say: Halloween. The decorations were offensive. Now were voices really raised.

