A Conversation With a Ghost

by Gita M. Smith

This must never get out in the press, for it would cause widespread panic. The priests would surround my house, not to mention the police and possibly the army. Castor Desayuno has come back from the dead! Yes, the butcher himself!

You are saying to yourself right now, or possibly to your beloved who sits beside you in the morning sun with her hair down and a cup of café con leche in her sleepy grasp, 'Castor Desayuno cannot possibly be walking the earth. You must be mad!'

You are protesting, ‘But we saw his head on the end of a bayonet, paraded through the streets of San Cristobal. We saw his body lowered, headless, into a grave over which no priest said the holy words.'

But as surely as I stand before you at this moment, I saw Castor in the flesh, last night. He was a hungry ghost, desperate for conversation. He beckoned to me to sit beside him on the steps to the Shrine of the Eternal Madonna, the very one where he was cut down in the middle of fornicating with a girl the age of his daughter. Some later said it *was* his daughter.

He begged me for news of his old enemies.

Was General Fuentes still in power?

Where had the chief of police of San Cristobal hidden the gold looted from Castor's villa?

Did I know if his faithless mistress had married some anemic, hairless dog of a Socialist?

To tell the truth, Castor looked healthier than you do, right now, my friend, as I tell you this. Ha! You are shaking, I see. Your face has gone as white as a glass of milk. Perhaps you had some dealings with the butcher, in his day? Well, of course. Who didn't?

Now, you are thinking I must have been drunk, or asleep and

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dreaming this encounter with a vapor.
But no, I was walking in the night streets as sober as the cobblestones. The moon was descending, and the cafes had already closed. There were no rattling chains or bloody fangs, such as you see in children's books.

I am telling you that the gate of Hell has opened wide, and the bastard has taken back his corporeal form. Nothing you have ever seen will compare with the horrors ahead.
Castor Desayuno, if you can imagine it, is not the worst of those yet to come. God, no. He is just the messenger!