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-Amy Tan
Two Minutes About Ghosts
BY AMY TAN

Ghosts are among us. I am one of the 42% of Americans who think so. Then again, even if 100% believe something, that doesn’t make it true, does it? Like people who think they’re superior to others. Or voters who believe their candidate is best. Or those who say an invisible predator is pounding up the stairs and making the sound of chandeliers crashing onto their bedroom floor. One of my ghosts used to do that. I thought it was my husband, a member of the 56% who did not believe in ghosts. But then he heard the tune to Jeopardy whistled behind his back—off-key, twice, and once when he was naked in the shower. Naked with a ghost. My husband now believes, sort of.

I bet many of the 56% have never heard a whistling ghost. They think ghosts are merely grief inflated by wishful thinking. Would they change their minds if the ghost named his murderer? One of mine did that, and the murderer was sentenced to life in prison. He also told me I would one day be a writer.

Defying science and reason, my mother sailed into my bedroom the night after she died, looking like a statically charged hologram of light. I was punched breathless with the strongest emotions I have ever felt and they are now stored in my intuition as a writer. From time to time, she brings me gifts—uncanny coincidences in the form of particular books, photographs, music, paintings, and people—at precisely that moment when I’m falling in my writing. She helps me observe that happenstance can have meaning, that grief is beautiful, and percentages are nonsense. There are things you feel because they are true. Like love, like loss, like ghosts.