

Notes of a Mad Girl #5 - Mr. Murphy

Part I: Mr. Murphy

I went to bed around mid-night. My two roommates were already asleep. Seton Hill College in Greensburg, Pennsylvania was pretty much closed down for the night and all the freshmen slept on the upper two floors of the Admin Building. My roommate Pat slept near the door while Janet's bed was directly across from mine.

Our dorm room was long and narrow but had enormously high ceilings. A rough guess would be around fourteen feet. This was the oldest building on campus and ranked high on the creep factor.

The moonlight shining into the room was bright so it was easy to maneuver my way in the dark into bed. It must have been only a few minutes after the sound of my sheet and bedcovers stopped rustling when I heard the breathing. It wasn't coming from low in the room but up high near the ceiling. It was quiet and soft but magnified like from a microphone. I got out of bed and looked down to the Virgin Mary statue in the courtyard below but no movement was visible.

I tried to see if Janet was doing anything prank-like since the breathing was coming slightly to the left of her bed. Although I thought of her as a pretty good friend, she was the usual source of trouble for a number of us. I wasn't scared but I was annoyed that anyone would spend any time trying to weird me out.

The next morning our room had some problems. My small, decorated bank shaped like a pig was lying broken on the floor and Janet's poster of Bobby Kennedy had dropped off the wall. I questioned everyone near our room if they had heard any breathing sounds and asked if anyone had asthma. Janet looked innocent; Patricia stared at me like I was mad; and my fourth floor dorm mates thought I was nuts. But when you're an art major you get a nice bit of leeway in the crazy department. That night around seven o'clock while all three of us were studying there was an incredible amount of noise on the floor directly above us. I simply looked up and said "shut-up Mr. Murphy". The noise

instantly stopped. NOW I had Pat and Janet's attention. Why "Mr. Murphy"? Because it seemed that Murphy's Law applied here.

For the next two weeks we heard loud sliding, skating, or bumping sounds above our heads. But all three of us had to be present. On the cool side we were getting loads of attention from our fellow classmates.

Curiosity sent us searching for answers. Janet suggested we find those students who were responsible and extract some revenge. We borrowed a Helium, birthday balloon and raised it out of our single window to give us a location marker. A group of us then raced up to floor above us with Pat remaining below. It was dead quiet upstairs yet Pat said that the noise continued loudly above our room. We searched for the balloon from the upper floor marking our room and I really can't remember who noticed the problem first. I've been taking credit for this for years but it may actually have been Janet. We were stopped in our tracks by the realization that although the long Admin corridors were stacked parallel on each floor, our room was basically perpendicular to the corridor. So when we searched for our balloon from the upper floor we could only see it to the left of us or to the right of us. Why not directly below? It became clear that there was a small hallway above our room to a very narrow bathroom where we could then see the balloon. But what took up the majority of space directly over our room?

The next day we went to the facilities office to ask for the floor plans for Admin. We told the guy that we were doing a project for our classes on the building and had a problem area. When we described the section, his look kind of froze. One minute he's happy to have some young pretty girls crammed into his office and the next he is reminded of some complaints by veiled nuns. He said that there was a room directly above ours that used to be the infirmary for the nuns. Those nuns became fearful of the space after hearing unexplained noises and a lot of crying in the room. The infirmary was then moved to a new location and the doorways were boarded up. We left that cramped little office feeling like a bunch of Nancy Drew characters.

The Dean of Women, Sister Jacinta, called the three of us into her office the next day to talk about our little visit to facilities. She offered to have

our room exorcised by a priest to rid us of our "disturbances". Since I felt ownership of this noisy spirit I declined her offer and said that this ghost seemed friendly, none of us were actually scared and in fact it kind of made me feel safe. We lived with Mr. Murphy for the remainder of our freshmen year and every time the noise seemed to interfere with our studies, Mr. Murphy responded quite nicely to our request for quiet. Our popularity increased among our peers and even my family frequently asked about him.

Part II: Mr. Murphy

I moved to the sophomore wing of the Admin Building my second year. We all lived in small "cells" that used to be individual rooms for the Catholic nuns. My cell was next to Janet's. I had initially enjoyed Janet's wildness. This trait quickly became, however, something darker when she picked up a stray cat on campus and whirled it around her head by the cat's tail. That act alone was bad but the look on her face and the laughing crossed some sort of line for me.

I re-visited my old freshman dorm room that semester and had to laugh when it was made into a study room. The old tower study room next door was converted into a new dorm room.

Part III: Bill

All juniors moved out of the Administration Building to a multi-floored building on campus across from a small nuns' cemetery. I believe I may have the distinction of being the first and only junior who chose to remain in the old Admin building with the sophomores. I requested a former nun's cell on the fourth floor directly above the art studios. This permitted me constant access to those studios since every building on campus was locked down around 10 p.m.

The small room was beautiful. It was a simple rectangular room with a stained glass window on the door and a built in closet and dresser. The wood was dark and well cared for and the best deal was that it was the last room at the end of the corridor with the stairwell directly across from it. It was quiet. My art studio (another small nun's cell) was two floors below and all the other art rooms on the floor below that. I was

able to work undisturbed twenty-four hours a day and to be honest, the older architecture with its wonderful smells and creaks were more in line with my newly developing tastes than the modern building housing the Juniors. The only draw back was that I was living with the sophomores. They were OK but just seemed young and in my new status as an upperclassman, juvenile.

Late one night I headed into the small kitchenette to get something and found the room occupied by five chattering sophomores. They were circled around a Formica kitchen table where they had placed cut pieces of paper with the letters of the alphabet arching around a "yes" and a "no". A common clear dining hall glass was upside down and weirdly zipping from letter to letter as another student hurriedly kept pace writing down the letters. They were working a homemade ouija board. No one paid any attention to me until the person jotting down the letters said "tell Karin to stay". There was shock on everyone's faces with dumbfounded shock on mine. I responded in a really mean tone "what are you guys doing"? One of the two girls with their fingers on the moving glass said that her mother was writing a book with her dead father and they were trying to communicate with him. No shock on anyone's faces at that being said but the excitement level rose quickly when those letters spelled out my name. It continued with "Mr. Murphy wants to talk to her". That pretty much stopped me dead in my tracks. Every girl was now asking "who's Mr. Murphy?" It seemed impossible for any of those students to have known about my freshman ghost.

I didn't sit down and I didn't put my hands on that glass. Mr. Murphy said he had a message for me. He said that I was now safe. He then said that his name was NOT Mr. Murphy but was Bill. In a very quiet kitchen I said that this information just wasn't enough to keep me in that room and if this ghost wanted me to stay then I wanted to know why I was now "safe". It must have seemed odd and eerie to those girls to see a serious conversation between a moving glass and an intensely private art student from down the hall. I didn't take my eyes off the glass nor did I answer or speak to anyone else. Bill finally gave up his message. He said that Janet was evil and that since I was no longer considered to be her friend I was truly safe. I said "thanks" and walked out.

I immediately headed for my former freshman dorm room. I doubt that many colleges other than religious oriented schools have buildings like Seton Hill where you can scurry around in your nightclothes undisturbed. Within minutes of dark hallways, down steps, past the cafeteria, the post office, through the auditorium and up through the Chapel and another stairwell....I was able to reach that room within six to eight minutes. My room that was converted into a study room was now gone. The door had been sheet rocked over as if it had never existed.