

## **A Story is Born**

by **Susan Lynn Solomon**

Before I speak of the odd things that happened in my house, I must explain how I first encountered the spirit.

A number of years ago I was the in-house lawyer at a small company in Niagara Falls. Charlie Ganim, my employer, also owned a bed and breakfast in Niagara-on-the-Lake, a small Canadian town across the river from where I lived. A block off Queen Street, the house stood two stories above an ancient brick foundation. Yellow clapboard with brown shutters and trim, the Blake House was one of many inns dotting that quaint historic town. That ancient brick foundation was set in place soon after the town was set afire by American forces during the War of 1812. Zackery Myerson laid the foundation on the site where a retreating British officer was killed. He built what today might be considered a small cottage on that plot of land and established a bakery in it. Over the years subsequent owners extended the cottage, and in 1859 Horace Blake purchased the building as a residence for his aging mother. Since then, the house became the residence of at least ten different families before Charlie purchased it in 2003 and turned it into an inn.

I've described the history of the Blake House, because its age had given a ghost ample time to take up residence there. At least, that was the legend attached to the house.

I learned of this from a Frederica Jones, the resident innkeeper. She told me of the ghost late on a snowy January afternoon when I drove across the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge and into Niagara-on-the-Lake to gather documents Charlie needed. I expected this would be a quick roundtrip, but when I came through the front door of the Blake House, I saw Frederica standing in the hall. Petite with a mop of red hair, her green eyes were wide and her hand covered her mouth as if to mute a scream.

Startled by her expression, I asked, "Freddie, are you okay?"

She didn't answer.

I wiped snow from my boots on a mat near the door and rushed across the polished wood floor to where she now held onto the ornate newel post at the bottom of the stairs. Those stairs rose to a landing, then turned and rose again to the second floor.

"What's the matter?" I said.

We were in a hall lined with wallpaper reminiscent of that which might have hung there in the Victorian age. To the right of the staircase was the room Charlie referred to as the Gentleman's Parlor; to our left a door opened on the dining room and the kitchen beyond.

Freddie pointed to the ceiling. "Don't you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Listen."

I tilted my head and held my breath. The floor creaked. Then I heard what sounded like footsteps. "So?" I said. "One of your guests is walking around his room."

She bit her lip and shuddered. "Susan, we don't have any guests."

Again I heard the floor creak overhead. As an attorney, I had been trained to believe that everything, regardless of how strange it might seem, had a logical explanation. A ghost walking around the Blake House? Ghosts only existed in stories designed to spook children.

"This place is built of wood, right?" I told her. "So what we're hearing is just the sound an old wood house makes from time-to-time. Perfectly normal."

She stared at me.

Though the sun had begun to set and I wanted to get home, I couldn't let her face her fear alone. "Come on, Freddie," I said. "Let's put up coffee and talk this out. You'll see there's nothing haunting this house."

Taking her hand, I led her toward the kitchen. As we passed through the door, I glanced at the dinette table. On it I saw a copy of Shirley Jackson's novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*. A creaking old house and a novel about a ghost—clearly the combination of these two things had stirred Freddie's imagination.

I smiled at her and pointed to the book.

Shaking her head, she pulled away from me. “Susan, you know me better than that. I only picked up that book because of what I’ve been hearing in here.”

“Uh-huh, right,” I said. “Coffee and talk will exorcise your ghost.”

An hour or so sitting together over coffee should have eased Freddie’s fear. The problem was that, as if to prove her right and me wrong, just when we finished our coffee the footsteps on the second floor became more pronounced. She covered her ears.

Now I shuddered. This wasn’t just the sound made by an old house.

She turned to me “You heard that. Something *is* walking up there!” She sounded desperate.

My stomach quivered.

Sighing deeply, she said, “The first time I heard it I ran upstairs to see what was going on. I mean, someone I didn’t invite in walking around the front bedroom? But when I got to the door...” her words faded into footsteps that grew still louder now that we were talking about them.

“Yeah?” I encouraged.

She shook her head.

“Come on, Freddie. You can’t start this then leave me hanging.”

Her green eyes darted as if she feared the ghost might come downstairs and join us for coffee. At last she said, “It was suddenly very quiet, like someone held their breath on the other side of the bedroom door... When I opened it ...” She shrugged. “Nobody was there. Except ...”

“Except?”

“I-I could swear I saw someone dart past the window seat.” She began to cry. “Please tell me I haven’t lost my mind.”

If hearing what we both heard meant that Freddie had lost her mind then, logically speaking, my mind had also bought a ticket for a train ride to insanity. But this wasn’t an insane imagining. Somebody *was* pacing around an unoccupied room on the second floor.

I rushed from the dining room and tore up the stairs. In my haste I almost skidded into the wall as I rounded the banister. Panting, my palm on the wall I listened to

footsteps in the room at the far end of the hall. Tiptoeing across the carpeted floor I approached the closed door then stopped and leaned my ear against it. The pacing continued. Now I heard a sigh.

My breath caught in my throat. *That's just the wind leaking through an old window*, I thought. *Yeah. That's what it has to be*. But the windows in the Blake House weren't old and leaky—I'd reviewed the contract with the company that replaced the windows last April. And the footsteps ... It sounded like leather-soled shoes on a wood floor. *No. Can't be! This room is carpeted...* I'd seen and approved the invoice from the company that laid the carpet!

My hand shaking, I reached for the brass door knob. Turned it. Threw open the door...

The room was empty, the floor carpeted—no bare wood that could produce the sound of footsteps. The curtain over the window hung motionless. The only sound in the room was my gasp.

My logic fled like a rabbit escaping a stew pot. A ghost *did* inhabit this room! I turned and closed the door behind me. Looking over my shoulder, I ran for the stairs.

Freddie stood on the bottom step. Her face pale, she grasped the banister's newel post with both hands like she might topple over if she let go. "Y-you see?" she said.

I looked up to the landing at the top of the stairs and nodded.

I should have stayed with Freddy, helped her find an explanation for what we'd heard—an explanation that would erase the fear we both felt. I couldn't. In minutes I gathered the documents Charlie needed and left. That was the last time I set foot in the Blake House.

I didn't tell Charlie about what Freddie and I had experienced. Not the next day. Not until the middle of February. Even then I didn't say it aloud.

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In images from my earliest memories I see myself sitting in bed, writing. As a child I rose with the sun so I could grab a piece of scrap paper and print a dream I'd had the night before (I printed since I hadn't yet mastered cursive writing). In high school I

learned to play the guitar and by the time I entered college I had gotten good enough to play songs I'd written in Greenwich Village coffee houses. Later I worked for a quarterly magazine, writing three or four articles for each issue. While in law school and after graduation I wrote short stories that reflected my life and the people around me. Charlie knew my history, which was why early in February he asked for a favor.

In a small office with stark white walls and the shades drawn across the single window, I was at my desk, typing a contract when he approached.

"I'm almost done here," I said. "I'll have this for you by this afternoon."

He touched my shoulder. "That's not what I want to ask about."

I turned in my chair and glanced up at him. "Oh?"

"No. See, we're going to open the Blake House for a long Valentine's Day weekend."

I gave him a half-smile. Did he want to ask me to help Freddie in the Blake House that weekend? He never hesitated to assign me non-legal chores—customer relations, drafting promotional material. Most times I would gladly help out, but spending a weekend at that house ...

"Sounds good, Charlie," I said. "I hope you have a full house." I swiveled back to face my computer. "My sister's coming up from Florida that weekend, and ..."

His eyes narrowed and he tilted his head. "That's nice. Have a good time." He thought for a moment. "You could take her across to Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm sure she'd enjoy that. Before she comes, I want you to write a short romantic story set in the Blake House. I want to put a copy of it in each of the rooms. I think it would be something the guests would remember ... and maybe come back again."

I nodded.

As Charlie walked away, he added, "Of course, you'll have to write that on your own time. I have a lot for you to do here the next couple of weeks."

Why wasn't I surprised? I'd known the man almost twenty years. "I could be more creative if you turn up the heat a bit?" I called after him. Thirty degrees outside, the office thermostat was set as sixty-four.

"Can't," he called back. "Gotta save money where I can."

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A favor for the man who signed my pay check. A short romance set in the Blake House. But what did I know of that house—other than that I now believed a ghost lived there?

I thought about this the rest of the day. That night my sleeping mind must have continued to seek an underpinning for Charlie's story. I say this, because in the morning I awoke with a place to begin. The ghost. The sigh sounded as though it came from a female, and I wondered if she haunted the Blake House because she died there. And that sigh—it might have been the sound of longing. Yes, that could be it! The ghost died longing for a lost love.

But, did she? The pacing footsteps and the sigh were all I knew about the ghost—that, and Freddie Jones's fear of it. This should not have presented a problem. Research. I often researched legal issues. Research also resolved issues in my creative writing. Okay, then, I would start my research into the Blake House ghost.

Saturday morning I slid from bed. My imagination stirred by the thought of a new story to write, I poured a large mug of coffee and carried it to my computer. To begin my search for the ghost, I Googled Zackery Myerson, the man who had constructed the first building on the site. I learned only one new fact about him: he had been among a group of British loyalists that fled to Canada after the American Revolution. I had the approximate years of his birth and death, but nothing about his dying in his house. Next, I tried Horace Blake, but learned nothing more than that he had come to Niagara-on-the-Lake from the California gold fields. He had mined enough gold to buy a number of properties and start several businesses in his new hometown. Yes, he had bought the Blake House for his mother. No, there was nothing about her dying in the house. Finding not even a rumor of ghost, I printed the articles I'd read. Perhaps those would provide fodder for some later story.

In the afternoon I again crossed the river, this time to visit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Historical Society's museum. Located in a brick building behind a white picket fence on Castlereagh Street, it housed displays of relics that told the town's history. It also housed a room stocked with documents and photos. One picture showed men at work on what appeared to be a military base. The caption told me that Canadian artisans had

helped to rebuild Fort Niagara during the Civil War. I found a drawing that depicted a black man being helped from a catketch on the Lake Ontario shore—the last stop on the Underground Railroad. I hadn't known any of this, but these facts didn't bring me closer to learning who the ghost had been in life. I continued to search through the files, learning more about the town, but nothing of a ghost in the Blake House. Another dead end. I gathered my notes, and climbed into my Saturn Ion.

I had spent an entire day on the project Charlie assigned me (when my employer asked favor it was never voluntary), and come up empty. At the customs booth on the bridge, the agent asked what I had been doing in Canada.

"Research for a story," I told the woman.

"You're a writer?" she asked.

"I am, though I haven't been published yet."

As she handed back my license and registration, she leaned from the booth and smiled. "Did you find the information you wanted?"

I sighed.

"Guess not," she said. "Well, good luck.

Grumbling, I decided I would tell Charlie I couldn't come up with the story. I had done everything I could, I would say, but ... I took a deep breath. Actually, there was one more place I could look.

Exiting the highway, I raced to the office at more than a few miles-per-hour over the speed limit. That I didn't get stopped must have meant the police on patrol had gone to dinner. My dinner would have to wait. Inside the office, I pulled open one of the file draws and searched through folders until I found the contract that sold the Blake House to Charlie Ganim. The seller was a woman named Margaret Dragone. She had lived in the house for years. She would surely have heard the ghost and would know of its origin. Just prior to the sale, Mrs. Dragone had moved to Toronto. Her new address and phone number were on the sheet I carried to the phone.

"Mrs. Dragone?" I asked when my call was answered.

"Who?" the woman on the other end said.

"Was it you who sold Charles Ganim the Blake House?" I looked again at the page I held. "This is the name and phone number she gave us during the sale of the property."

After a brief hesitation I heard a man's voice on the line. "I'm sorry, young woman," he said. "We have no idea what you're talking about or who this Mrs. Dragone is. You have the wrong number."

"But, it says in the contract—"

"Wrong number!"

When he hung up I held the receiver away and stared at it. What the hell was going on?

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I find it interesting how the brain works. When I climbed into bed that night, aggravated about the brick wall I'd banged my head against all day, I felt torn between telling Charlie I couldn't find a story and desperately wanting to write it. When sunshine from our western New York February thaw knocked on my bedroom window, I realized that while I slept my mind had continued the argument. Rolling over in bed I saw the remnants of that battle: my quilt bunched on the left side of my bed, my pillow on the floor, my nightgown damp with perspiration. I can't/I want to, had apparently battled like the gray of surrender and the blue of annoyed stubbornness.

I abruptly sat up, thinking, *Like in the Civil War!*

This thought brought me back to my research. Men from Niagara-on-the-Lake helping to rebuild Fort Niagara; runaway slaves brought to Niagara-in-the-Lake. When I attached this to the longing sigh I'd heard in the Blake House, the story I sought blossomed.

Still in my nightgown, coffee in hand I parked at my computer and began to type. When the sun set just past five o'clock I clicked on Save. The story was finished ... at least, as a first draft. In just over 1,500 words I'd told of the ghost—Abigail Bender, I named her—falling in love with a man who worked the Underground Railroad and helped at Ft. Niagara. They married and moved into the Blake House. When the Civil War began the man—Will Bender—enlisted in the Union Army, and perished at Gettysburg. Pacing her bedroom, Abigail pined for the loss of her one true love until one day, sitting near her bedroom window she overdosed on laudanum and joined him in

death.

I didn't give Charlie the story on Monday, nor did I show it to him on Tuesday. Both evenings when I returned home after work, I sat at my desk. Late into both nights I continued to rewrite and tighten the text. With each new draft, Abigail Bender became more real to me; became ... a friend. I printed the draft and carried my friend's story with me to work. Once or twice I pulled it from my shoulder bag. Reading what I'd written of Abigail's life and death, it was almost as if I spoke to her, and in each word she spoke to me.

Wednesday evening as I shut down my office computer and prepared to leave, Charlie opened the door. "So, did you write my story yet?" he asked.

*His story? No!* The story was mine. And Abigail's.

"We're getting close to Valentine's Day," he said.

I sighed, sat down on my desk chair and pulled the pages from my shoulder bag. I could give him Abbie—Abbie is what I had been calling her—and still keep her for myself.

Charlie pulled over a chair and read. When he finished, he read the story again then looked at me. His eyes moist, he said, "I, uh ... didn't expect ... It's sad, but still ..." He stood up. "Yes, this will be just fine. Thank you."

Shaking his head, he walked away.

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I had no idea what the Blake House guests thought of Abbie's story. I know what my sister thought of it, though.

Early the next Saturday morning I attached Abbie's story to an email that said, *Robin, this is the result of all that research I told you about. What do you think of it?*

That afternoon she phoned me. "I like the story, Sue," she said.

I heard a slight hesitation in her voice. "You don't sound convinced."

"Well ..."

Glancing over my shoulder like Abbie might be standing behind me, as if to apologize for making her story less than perfect, I said, "I could do another rewrite."

“No. It’s good.”

“But?”

I heard Robin take a deep breath. “It should be much longer.”

“You mean ... like a novel?”

“Uh-huh.”

“But Charlie didn’t want a novel,” I said. “He just wanted—”

“Yeah. And you gave him what he asked for. Now you could make it the story *you* wanna write.”

Considering this, I glanced out my window. I didn’t see children playing on the grassy common behind my condo, though. Through my mind’s eyes I saw Niagara-on-the-Lake as it had been: billowed sails of ships out on Lake Ontario, and horse carts on narrow streets that wound down to the shore. As the images became sharper, I heard the same sigh I’d heard that January day in the Blake House. In my house. I jumped back, startled. This time, though, the sound didn’t frighten me.

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Except for the hours I spent at the office, then rushing through the market to buy prepared meals, during the next three months I spent all of my time turning Abbie’s short story into a novel. Weekends found me combing through bookshelves at the library or searching online for people and places—those small details that would bring life to her time and the town in which she lived (foolish as it might sound, Abigail Bender had become entirely real to me). The thin manila folder that held the information I gathered grew fat then fatter, then became two folders, then three. The tableau of Abbie’s life filled my computer screen. She was a fisherman’s daughter. She had a brother named Brian, who ferried runaway slaves to freedom in Canada. Will Bender worked the Underground Railroad with Brian. I saw—no, I *knew*—the bank of the Niagara River below the town of Lewiston where they gathered the runaways. I saw Abbie walking on the gently sloping town common, saw her meet and fall in love with Will. I saw her lose him to a war ...

A month into this project my sister phoned me.

“Where have you been?” she scolded. “I’ve been trying to reach you for week.”

“I’ve ... been writing. You know, Robin, turning Abbie’s short story into a novel.”

“All this time?”

I carried the receiver to my computer desk. “You told me to do it. See? I do listen to you sometimes.”

“Why haven’t you answered your phone?”

“I, uh ... Sorry. I ...” The phone tucked against my neck, I typed while I spoke. “I’ve gotta get this ...”

“Stop it!” Robin said. “You’re obsessed with that story.”

I shifted the receiver to my other ear. “I’m not,” I said. “I, uh ... I’ll call you back after dinner.”

I didn’t call her back.

The next evening while I sat at my computer struggling to develop the scene in which Will Bender tells Abbie he’s going to join a regiment of the Union army, I heard what sounded like pacing in my room. I lived in attached duplex and often heard the children next door running up and down the stairs.

I looked over to the wall. *That’s what I hear*, I thought. *Just the kids next door.*

But it wasn’t. The footsteps went behind my chair from one side of the room to the other.

“C’mon, Abbie, tell me what happened next,” I said to the footsteps. I received no answer. I didn’t need one. In a moment I knew what the story needed.

I now entered Abbie’s story. I met her ghost at the Blake House, and during a long snowy weekend she told me her story. When I scrolled to the beginning and began to reorganize the scenes, the footsteps stopped behind my chair and I heard a sigh. It seemed Abbie approved of what I’d done.

I heard the sighs and footsteps several times over the next few months. I spoke to them. Though whoever was there didn’t answer, between writing and speaking I felt as though we were having a conversation, and that conversation led to more sentences that filled my computer screen. Then, at last the novel was written. Abbie’s complete story. I phoned Robin.

“It’s finished,” I told her. “I just emailed it to you. Let me know what you think.”

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In June the process of tightening the new novel began. Week-after-week I brought chapters to my writers' group. The comments I received were encouraging and the suggestions group members made sent me back to my computer.

When I brought the first two chapters, one group member asked, "What do you call this story?"

"I, um ..." I bit my lip. In the months I'd been writing, I hadn't considered a title.

Another member said, "If you give it a title it'll help you focus your characters and what they're doing."

That night I sat at my computer staring at the screen. Then I stared out my window at children playing in the common area. Leaves on the trees fluttered. Months earlier when I stared through this window I imagined fluttering leaves on the common in Niagara-on-the-Lake the day Abbie met Will.

*It was like she showed me her life though this window,* I thought.

I heard a sigh so soft I might have imagined it. A moment later I knew what to call the novel. *Abigail's Window*. The group members had been right. With that title in mind I knew Abbie's ghost would be showing me—the narrator—her life in scenes flashing on the panes of the window in her Blake House bedroom.

At a writers' group meeting in August, a member said, "Your story's moving along well, Susan. I like the ghost's voice and the narrator's, but I'm not seeing why they're interacting."

"Yes," another member said. "There has to be a reason the ghost chose to tell your narrator her story."

"And a reason you're telling the story to us," the first member added. "Is there a lesson your characters learn as a result of their interaction?"

Each comment sent me back to my computer to bend scenes so that they inevitably moved toward an ultimate purpose. The story line now arched upward to the crisis.

On a Wednesday afternoon in late September I tried to calm an upset customer on the phone. Charlie opened my door and stood with his hands in his pockets.

When I hung up the phone, Charlie pulled over a chair. He tilted his head. “What I came in here for ... uh, that ghost you wrote that story about ... is it real?”

I took a deep breath. “Well, there *is* a ghost in the Blake House. Freddie keeps hearing it walk around ...” I looked at him. “I ... heard it, too.”

His elbows on the arms of his chair, he leaned toward me. “And that person you said the ghost is—Abigail? Is that ghost really her?”

I sat back. “Is there a problem?”

He smiled. “No. Not at all. Our guests liked your story.”

“And?” I asked.

“I heard about a ghost walk a group that’ll be touring Niagara-on-the-Lake on Halloween is planning. It’d be great if they stop by so Frederica can tell them about a ghost in the Blake House. If your story is true ...” He let the word hang suggestively.

I grinned. “Leave it to me, Charlie.”

At home that evening I threw together a tuna sandwich for dinner and carried it to my computer. “Looks like we’re not done with your story yet, Abbie,” I said.

That evening I worked at breaking *Abigail’s Window* down to a new short story, about 3,500 words. On Saturday morning I emailed the Niagara-on-the-Lake ghost tour group the new story. In this version I was a woman who’d just lost my boyfriend. The night I slept at the inn, while I sobbed about my lost love, the ghost appeared near the window. Seeming to sense my broken heart, she must have thought I was a kindred spirit and told me her own story of loss. In my email I swore to the ghost tour group that the story was true. After I pushed the *Send* button, I sat back and laughed.

At that moment a strange thing happened. I felt something bump my chair.

I gasped. “Was that you, Abbie?” I whispered.

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Weeks passed into months. In all this time I heard no footsteps or sighs in my room, and felt nothing bump my desk chair. On Tuesday evenings I brought chapters of *Abigail’s Window* to my writers’ group. On Wednesday evenings I sat at my computer adjusting scenes. In early December I completed the final rewrite of the novel. My

writers' group was satisfied; I was satisfied. Apparently, though, the ghost wasn't satisfied. I sensed this after I set the story aside and began to write something new.

On an evening away from my computer, I sat in the overstuffed chair in my living room watching a movie. When I leaned over for handful of popcorn, the channel changed. I groaned and switched back to the proper channel. I placed the remote on the lamp table and the channel again changed.

I groaned. "Is that you doing this, Abbie?" I asked.

In the past months I had become accustomed to speaking to what I believed to be a ghost inhabiting my house. Sometimes I asked it—*her*—for advice. Though I never received a response, I felt her hovering nearby. The strictly logical portion of my brain called me a fool. Now in my sixties, I sensed death creeping closer, so my belief in the ghost was a prayer that a conscious life would continue past my body's end. I told my logic to shut up. What I had seen and heard could be explained only if I credited that it emanated from a ghost. My ghost. So I continued to speak to her.

Switching back to the channel with the movie, I said, "I know you're here, Abbie. What do you want?"

I heard footsteps scamper up the stairs and across the hall into my bedroom.

"I'm not done with your story?" I called up to her.

Without knowing why, I knew what she wanted. At the last writers' group meeting we had discussed submitting our novels to literary agents. It seemed that writing Abbie's story wasn't sufficient. She wanted it out in the world where others would read it.

On Saturday I made a trip to the Barnes & Noble bookstore on Niagara Falls Boulevard and purchased a book that had agents' listings and what they required. At home, I emailed query letters to five agents. Within a week I received three responses—all rejections. I sent out more emails about *Abigail's Window*, and while I was about it, sent out emails to online literary journals asking them to publish short stories I had written. Same result. Rejections. When after months of this I checked my emails one evening I felt as if rejections were the only messages I received.

Frustrated, I shouted to my bedroom walls, "Enough! I've had it!"

I reached to turn off my computer. When I touched the mouse, my finger twitched and I accidentally clicked on a site. Now, spread across my screen I saw the homepage

of *The Writers Journal*. At the top of the page, flashing, was a button for competitions.

I took a deep breath. “Is this what you want me to do, Abbie?” I said.

My hand shaking, I clicked the *Competition* button. Now on my screen I saw a call for submissions of short romance stories. 2,500 to 3,500 words. The short story I had sent to the ghost tour group was the right length and it had elements of romance: a true love found then lost, a lesson for a brokenhearted woman who lived a century later. I submitted “The Blake House Ghost”.

Hope again alive in my chest, I waited. A month later I found a notification of the competition winners among my emails. “The Blake House Ghost” had won an honorable mention. It would be my first published story.

In my bedroom I heard a disembodied sigh.

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In the ensuing eleven years Abbie has periodically let me know she’s still around. Most recently my reading glasses disappeared. I searched for those glasses upstairs and downstairs. I burrowed through the garbage can in my kitchen, thinking maybe I’d dropped them in there without realizing I’d done it—I’ve reached an age at which I do a number of things I don’t recall doing. An hour of hunting through my house produced no result. My glasses were gone. I had spare reading glasses, yet I was annoyed. Certain the ghost had swiped my glasses, I hollered at her. I demanded she give them back. I pleaded with her. At last, I asked her politely to return them. When I came downstairs a week later I saw my reading glasses in the middle of my kitchen floor.

I still have no idea who the ghost I call Abbie was or anything about her. My only thought is that this was the ghost I first heard walking and sighing in that Niagara-on-the-Lake Bed and Breakfast, and for some reason she adopted me. Periodically I’ve returned to my research about a ghost that haunted the Blake House. Nothing in the files I’ve built up has given me a clue. Maybe one day the ghost who now lives in *my* house will tell me. Until then I can only wonder.



Over the past eleven years, **Susan Lynn Solomon's** short stories have regularly been published in online journals and in print. Most recently she has written the Emlyn Goode Mysteries (Solstice Publishing), a series of three novels and four novelettes. Publishing each of her endeavors has been a thrill, but none has compared to learning of the acceptance of her first published piece, a short story called "The Burke House Ghost." "A Story Is Born" describes what led Solomon to write that story. The facts and events related in "A Story Is Born" are true, though historic names have been changed because the bed and breakfast where the story is set has been sold and is now a private residence.