

Dates & nuts

To boo or not to boo: The not-so-friendly ghost

By Stacey Rowe



Thirteen years ago, Jack Berger appalled *Sex and the City* fans when he broke up with Carrie Bradshaw via Post-it note. While that move was certainly uncouth, today's Berger would likely be ghosting: ceasing all communication with Carrie without any explanation. Many ghosts argue that they have good intentions and disappear to avoid hurting the ghostee's feelings. But those who have been ghosted report feeling confused—preferring more honest communication and less selfishness—even if it means the relationship has to end.

Our "brofriend" Chad* (from a previous article) gives us some male perspective: "Ghosting is a spooky dating trend and a natural evolution that social media gave us," he says. Chad described the use of social sites as generally passive and a place where it's just as easy to engage as it is to ignore. "With all the communication options, it's hard to know if a Facebook interaction, email, or actual date means anything to anyone." To Chad's knowledge, he has never ghosted another because he knows how it feels to be on the receiving end. He recalls one particular example with a woman he dated briefly: "I didn't pick up any hints, but she stopped communicating. Within a few months, I found out that she was getting married in Vegas to a guy she met at a New Year's party. She had bailed on our plans that evening. Judging by the speed of her new relationship, I think I dodged a bullet."

Annie's ghostly encounters started in her teens. Boys would appear interested, spend time with her, and then refuse to talk to her afterward. She would eventually find out that exes had reappeared in their lives and recalls

a particular guy who vanished on her, saying: "Ex-girlfriends seem to have a sixth sense when things are going well." Upon meeting him, things moved rather quickly with frequent dates and even meeting each other's parents. After an awkward New Year's Eve dinner where he discussed his ex, he stopped returning her texts and disappeared. Six months later, he left CDs on her doorstep with an apology that his ex-girlfriend re-emerged and confused him. Annie tried rekindling the relationship but ultimately ended it due to lack of trust, "You can't be that intense with a person and just fall off the planet," she says.

Annie encountered similar men in her online pursuits and recently found herself on the other side of the proverbial ghost fence. After a suitor offered up an evening of "sweatpants and chill" (minus the Netflix) at his abode—complete with a broken oven and plastic bottle of three-dollar whiskey—she chose not to participate. "I felt bad about not responding, but sometimes it's just the only option," she says. "After that scene, I didn't feel like I owed him an explanation."

After a stint on OKCupid, Melissa exchanged digits with a financial guy who seemed very interested in her work as a copywriter. He then coyly admitted to moonlighting as writer, but his work was of the erotic fiction variety. "At the time, I felt like I needed to be better about giving guys more of a chance," she says. "With the encouragement of a friend and some rosé, I agreed to meet him out. We ended up having a good time. Even though he liked guns and still lived at home, I decided to go out with him again."

Before the next date, Melissa noted he was texting her a little too frequently. When he picked her up, she observed he had a CD changer in his car that was very hard to operate, "I think it held twenty discs of really bad music. You couldn't pick one song." Upon arrival at the restaurant, her date was already making allusions to their future and taking trips together. She settled on a spicy curry dish and explains, "The conversation was excessive for a second date. At that point, I knew I did not want to make out with him." At the end of the evening, she tried to make a quick getaway. Unfortunately, she was not fast enough. Blaring sound escaped from her suitor's car windows. "I made the mistake of telling him I liked Elvis Presley," she elaborated, "So he had the stereo cued up with 'I Can't Help Falling in Love with You' as he creepily rolled by me, smiling through the open car window. My neighbors were outside. It was mortifying." Within minutes he texted her about not giving him a good night kiss. "I told him I had to use the bathroom," she further explains about her post-date ghosting behavior. "I was not attracted to him. At that point, anything I said would have come off as being mean."

After hearing both the ghost and ghostee angles, it appears the ghosts truly were trying to spare the feelings of people with whom they had not invested too much time (one or two dates). Today's online interactions, snaps, and texts can cause people to misconstrue flirtation with something more. But ultimately, it seems ghostees just want some form of closure, even if that means scrawling, "I'm sorry. I can't. Don't hate me." on a Post-it. (SBS)

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*All names have been changed.

Illustration by Lissa Mathis