

## Vigil for Pink Lady just a vapor of hope

by Renee Wallace

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For months I've been waiting for the night of the Pink Lady. I had told friends about it since I first saw the story in the files at work.

And instead of just writing up the old legend, I was going to stake out the cemetery and see the spirit.

When the day finally arrived, I called my boyfriend and reminded him.

Ivan insisted that before we left we pick up his friend, Peter Skotnica. So Pete became an honorary Ghostbuster and the three of us set out for Yorba Linda.

We arrived at the tiny, atmospheric graveyard about 8 p.m. Darkness wasn't quite settled into place. The three of us were alone, except for some insects. In the distance, we could hear the soft hum of post-rush hour traffic.

The willows of the graveyard hung dark and heavy, the twisted, gnarled trunks sitting atop unadorned earth. Nothing but the trees grow within the gates that separate the living from the dead, or maybe not-so-dead.

"This is getting pretty boring," Ivan informed us about 30 minutes into the adventure.

Soon he and Pete were concocting ways to get inside the locked gates and take a look around.

As the evening wore on, we were joined by about six fellow ghost chasers. No, they hadn't seen it yet. No, they've never seen it before.

Still, the company was encouraging.

As I peered intently for a sign of "life" among the tombstones, a small patch of gray mist captured my attention. It was almost silver and almost transparent.

Could it be?

"Hey guys," as I turned my head to call to them, I could see in my peripheral vision that my mysterious "mist" actually was a dangling tree branch.

Oh well.

Pete and Ivan still wanted to break into the cemetery.

"How do we know where to look if we don't know where she's buried?" Ivan persisted.

"If you break in, the cemetery cops will get you," I offered.

"If there's cops in the cemetery, they're dead anyway. How can they arrest us?" Ivan countered.

The subject rolled around to whether ghosts exist.

Ivan insisted he didn't believe in ghosts, he wasn't afraid of ghosts and the only ghosts he would be afraid of are the ones with knives.

I told him about my grandfather's house, which many people claim is haunted.

I, myself, have heard the unexplained foot falls and the rattle of dishes from the empty kitchen.

We noticed a new group of ghost hunters had arrived and walked around to meet them.

Nancy, the unofficial leader of the group, told us that they wer [sic] there, not so much to ghost hunt as to ghost toast.

She and the others spoke of the Pink Lady as a long-lost friend, although they've never seen her on previous trips to the graveyard.

We talked for a while, swapping versions of the legend, eyes always scanning the width of the plot.

Ivan had had enough. It was time to go in.

Now, he will deny this, or say the crowd coerced him into hopping the gate, but he did go over.

With a flashlight supplied by another member of the group, he went from headstone to headstone, reading names looking for Alvina De Los Reyes, the Pink Lady.

He found two De Los Reyes markers, Juana at one end and Vicente at another. Next to Vicente is a headstone knocked over so the name is facing the barren earth.

That, Ivan said confidently, is probably her.

Our original lookout, by eerie coincidence, was almost exactly opposite Vicente and his unknown partner.

We walked back to Nancy's party and had been there a few minutes then the cemetery cop did arrive, very alive, driving the truck of an Orange County Park Ranger.

Mike Meniachi, whose job is to protect the Yorba Cemetery and the Peralta Adobe, informed us that the park we were standing in closed at 10 p.m. While he politely answered our eager questions, he just as politely told us to leave.

Besides, he said confidently, you're a day late.

The ghost is alleged to show up between midnight and 3 a.m. on even-numbered years.

By showing up in the evening of June 15, we were 19 hours late.

Does the Pink Lady exist? I think so, in part because legends are usually based on some truth and in part because of the mystery and romance she inspires. Anybody capable of that deserves to exist.

To be continued in two years.