

Ghost Month

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In China, in August, ghosts are released
from hell for a month of fun. Late July
behind the gates, ghosts start queuing up,
raising their hands and swearing to the guards
they won't cause too much trouble.
From new moon to new moon while ghosts play,
one can't marry, move, or start a business,
one can only wait; and so each hot week
of Ghost Month drags by, an endless sweaty sigh.

In America, we banish ghosts to dank smelly
crevices and expect them to stay there.
When they do escape, who can impose
a September First curfew?
So many things we see or do—the search
for car insurance, the getting up and
lying down between damp sheets, the heat
and no mail—are not events, are only
malevolent presences, loud obnoxious
poltergeists, impossible to ignore.
How much better to burn a couple sticks
of incense in a chicken or an orange,
a way to tell hungry ancestors,
Look, I adore you, soon my life goes on.