

GHOSTED

A short horror dramedy by
Dylan Schifrin

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANUSHA, 16, female, high school sophomore. Obsessive, but mature.

TY, 18, male, high school senior. Cynical, but wants to help his cousin Anusha.

GHOST (Gwen), 18, Ty's friend and an actor dressed as a ghost in the haunted corn maze. May be changed to Ben.

PHANTASM, 15, another actor in the maze.

SPECTRE, 14, another actor in the maze.

SETTING

A haunted corn maze at a Halloween festival in Fulton, Iowa.

NOTES

A slash (/) denotes overlapping dialogue.

(Just past sunset. TY and ANUSHA, cousins, are lost in a haunted corn maze at a Halloween festival. Ty sits on a hay bale, exhausted, lost in thought, rubbing his eyes, his temples. Anusha fidgets, paces, checks her phone. They've been here for a while.)

TY: We could eat our way out. *(Beat.)* I'm just saying we could eat / our way out—

ANUSHA: *(Staring at her phone:)* Three dots.

TY: It's corn.

ANUSHA: No dots. *(Beat.)* Three dots.

TY: You're not listening.

ANUSHA: *(Eyes glued to her phone:)* Your ideas haven't exactly been realistic since the one about us cawing like crows until a flock of crows comes and flies us to safety.

TY: Technically, it's a "murder," not a flock. *(Then:)* Which is also what Gram's gonna do to us if we don't get out of here soon.

ANUSHA: *(Back to her phone:)* No dots.

(Ty sighs with frustration.)

TY: Could you at least stop obsessing over Julian?

ANUSHA: You're being really insensitive right now.

TY: It's a little less important than finding a way out of here. You know, without yelling for help like babies. Gram said be back by eight or Uber home, remember—

ANUSHA: It was your idea to do the haunted corn maze. Besides, Gram's probably still "chunkin' punkins" and hasn't even noticed we left

TY: She really did go to town on those punkins.

ANUSHA: There's a lot of rage in that woman. *(Checks her phone and groans:)* He's supposed to be my boyfriend—

TY: You've been together for a month—

ANUSHA: He's *supposed* to be my boyfriend but this is like the hundredth time he's left me on read. All I sent was "wanna hang on Halloween."

TY: He's probably just taking a leak or maybe dropped his phone in that crevice between the passenger seat and car door that's like just too narrow to reach into—

ANUSHA: You've clearly never been ghosted before.

TY: No one is ghosting you.

(Suddenly, GHOST appears from the shadows.)

GHOST: YOUR SOUL...IS MINE!!!!!!

(Ghost cackles maniacally. A long and awkward pause. Ty and Anusha do not react.)

TY: Hey, Gwen.

GHOST: *(Removing her mask:)* Oh. Hey, Ty! Anusha! You made it.

ANUSHA: Hi, Gwen.

GHOST: So! Is this maze sick or what?

TY: *(Sarcastic:)* It's so sick we've been around it like five times.

GHOST: You guys stuck?

ANUSHA: *(Embarrassed:)* We're...going at our own pace.

GHOST: I'd help you, but I'm not supposed to break character, so... *(Beat. Ty and Anusha exchange looks.)* Oh crap. Don't tell my boss. She's the one dressed like Billie Eilish [or another currently relevant celebrity].

TY: We won't.

GHOST: I mean...Zombie Billie Eilish [or alternate celebrity]. You know, there really isn't much of a difference...

ANUSHA: *(To her phone:)* No dots...

(Beat.)

GHOST: Well. I'd better get back to...scaring.

TY: We won't keep you.

(Ghost stares out into the dark, lonely maze.)

GHOST: Just...like...yell out if you need anything.

(Ty and Anusha look at each other.)

TY: *(Lying:)* We will.

ANUSHA: Bye, Gwen.

(Ghost exits. Anusha looks back at her phone.)

ANUSHA: It's not just this. It's the whole pattern of behavior. He never picks up. He goes days without responding to texts. And when he does it's with a meme that doesn't actually make sense in context.

TY: *(Sarcastic:)* So he likes memes. What are some of his other personality traits?

(Anusha shoots him a look.)

ANUSHA: It's like he doesn't even care about our whole...investment.

TY: Investment.

ANUSHA: We went exclusive. That means he committed to dates and couple's costumes, and junior semiformal next year and then prom and cute graduation pics –

TY: And then what?

(Beat. Ty thinks something over. He fidgets, distracts himself by taking a rock and beginning to chisel a hole in the ground next to the wall of corn.)

Did you actually, like, talk to him about any of this?

ANUSHA: I would if he'd stop shutting me down with uninspired memes / from *The Office* –

TY: I mean in person.

ANUSHA: I've tried to...think about...possibly...okay maybe not yet, but I mean we haven't found the right moment –

TY: *(Chipping away at the dirt:)* Nush. I know we're two grades apart, and don't hang much at school, and don't talk a lot outside holiday dinners and under-the-table text exchanges whenever Pop Pop says something racist. I don't know what you're looking for, but if things aren't as mutual as you want them to be, there's no point in –

(He hits something hard in the ground.)

Obsessively –

(Hits it again.)

Chipping –

(Hits it again.)

Away at this guy –

(Hits it again.)

Like he's made of –

(Hits it again.)

Yep, that's stone.

ANUSHA: What are you doing?

TY: *(Looks at the tiny hole he's made:)* Digging...a tunnel...

(Anusha looks at him.)

ANUSHA: Ugh...I'm being obnoxious.

TY: You're fine. Or you would be, if we weren't gonna starve to death in here surrounded by literal food.

ANUSHA: *(Vulnerable:)* It's just, whenever I try to rationalize why he's like this, my mind explodes into a ton of scenarios like what if he's mad at me because I'm pressuring him into something he doesn't want, or what if he just wants someone to pool chem notes with, and it's like I'm bouncing between all these possibilities and it's honestly all really stressful and overwhelming and...scary.

(Beat. Ghost and PHANTASM enter.)

GHOST: YOUR SOUL IS MINE!!!!!!

(Ghost cackles maniacally and Phantasm chops off Ghost's head – a dummy head – with a prop axe. It's all very gory and horrifying. Another long, awkward beat passes.)

TY: Hi, Gwen.

(Ghost pulls her real head out of her shirt and recognizes Ty and Anusha.)

GHOST: I could've sworn you were...over...

(Ghost points off into the distance.)

TY: No, we were here.

ANUSHA: Yeah we haven't moved.

GHOST: Oh.

(Phantasm hands something to Ty and Anusha.)

TY: What is this?

PHANTASM: Tickets to the Fulton High production of *Chess* the musical. I play a Civil Servant.

GHOST: Don't give them those. They don't want those.

PHANTASM: The *Fulton Weekly* called it a "knight to remember." (*Beat.*) Knight spelled with a "k" —

GHOST: They get it.

PHANTASM: (*Small:*) I have a life outside of this.

(Ghost exits with Phantasm. Beat. Ty begins collecting some dry twigs and leaves.)

ANUSHA: Ironic, I know. (*Re: her phone and Julian:*) This is the ghost that scares me.

TY: Ironic, yes. Invalid, no.

ANUSHA: You think?

TY: (*Rubbing sticks together:*) This is your first real relationship, right? It makes sense you'd feel this way. And it's probably best to handle things safely and sensitively —

ANUSHA: Says the one trying to start a fire.

TY: To send smoke signals. I was a Boy Scout, you know.

ANUSHA: Yeah. When you were like nine.

(Ty drops the sticks, realizing he has no idea what he's doing.)

I could follow up, but I don't want to seem emotionally dependent, because I'm not. I could just ignore him, but then I'm like rewarding his avoidance, which is bad for both of us. You don't understand that I'm going around and around in circles and not getting anywhere —

TY: What do you think we spent the last two hours doing?

ANUSHA: I'm feeling so...stuck...right now and it's like you can't even empathize —

TY: *You're* stuck? I'm the one trying to get us out —

ANUSHA: You don't know what it's like to go through something like this!!!

(Beat.)

TY: Yes. I do.

ANUSHA: I don't mean the maze.

TY: Me neither.

(Beat. Ghost, Phantasm and SPECTRE enter.)

GHOST: YOUR. SOUL. IS. MINE!!!!!!!!!

(Ghost cackles maniacally as Spectre pokes her head through Phantasm's stomach a la Alien. Fake ectoplasm flies everywhere. We're at the pinnacle of what haunted corn maze practical effects can accomplish. Another long, awkward beat passes.)

I know it's you guys. This time I just got lonely.

(Ghost turns and sees Spectre's head poking out of Phantasm's chest.)

What is...this?

PHANTASM: I brought Ellen.

SPECTRE: Hey, Gwen.

GHOST: Ellen's supposed to stay in the Ghoulish Glen.

SPECTRE: No, it's okay. I sent Charlie up there.

GHOST: Then who's covering the Nefarious Knoll?

(Silence. Spectre and Phantasm exchange looks. Ghost rubs her temples.)

PHANTASM: *(Whispered to Spectre:)* Billie Eilish [or alternate celebrity] isn't going to like this.

GHOST: *(To herself:)* Freshmen. Why am I always paired with freshmen?

(Ghost exits with Phantasm and Spectre. Beat.)

TY: Look...I don't know why you'd know this. But I have a boyfriend too. His name's Colin. We've been together since sophomore year. And recently I've been thinking a lot about the future.

ANUSHA: Is...is something happening between you...?

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