

THE UNSCARY GHOST

A one-act comedy by
Matt Buchanan

Loosely based on *The Canterville Ghost* by Oscar Wilde

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

MRS. DOLORES UMNEY, a nosy neighbor.

MRS. BETSY OTIS, a professional mother.

MR. HAROLD OTIS, a salesman with a salesman's heart.

GEORGE OTIS, twelve.

GINNY OTIS, eleven.

COREY OTIS, eight.

FRANKIE OTIS, his twin.

THE GHOST, a ghost.

ALEX, JAMIE and CHRIS, school friends of the twins.

GLORIA GOSHEN, a television producer.

A CAMERAPERSON

One or more T.V. TECHNICIANS

VARIOUS NEIGHBORS (optional)

ALICIA SILVERHOOK, a television personality.

Her PERSONAL ASSISTANT

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

The roles of Corey Otis, Frankie Otis, Alex, Jamie and Chris have been deliberately written gender-neutral (though the male pronoun is used for convenience) and can be played as boys or girls. (Should you decide to use some of each, you will have to decide whether your community will accept a coed slumber party, but given that they're eight, it shouldn't

be an issue.) Similarly, the Cameraperson, Technician(s), Personal Assistant, and neighbors can be men or women.

It is not an accident that everyone except Ginny refers to the Ghost as "it," rather than "he," throughout the play.

While the play takes place over a considerable length of time in the story, there is really no need for elaborate costume changes unless you want them. As long as the Family is dressed in fairly generic clothes, the audience will accept the time passage without costume changes. (The exception, of course, is the Ghost, who dresses up in different ways to appear more frightening.)

If a smaller cast is desired, the actors playing Alex, Jamie and Chris could double as the Cameraperson, Technician, and Personal Assistant.

(Canterville, Ohio. The present. The central foyer and living room of a large, slightly ramshackle Victorian home. If resources allow, this could be quite elaborate, with a central staircase, but all that is really necessary are a front door, a few doors leading to other rooms, a few chairs, and a large area rug. A grandfather clock, stopped, sits in a corner. An elaborate fruit basket sits on one of the chairs. Enter at the front door MRS. UMNEY, backwards and talking a mile a minute, followed by MRS. OTIS, carrying a very large handbag, and MR. OTIS, struggling with several suitcases.)

MRS. UMNEY: Like I said before, it's a nice, decent, quiet neighborhood. Wonderful schools, not that my Charlie is in school anymore. Milk delivered on Wednesdays, and the town's own trash pickup on Fridays. I'm sure you'll love it here.

MRS. OTIS: *(Looking for a place to dump her handbag:)* Yes, I'm sure we will.

MRS. UMNEY: And it will be so nice to have young people around. Nobody's lived in this place in ages.

(Mrs. Otis finally deposits her handbag on a convenient chair and begins inspecting her new domain. Mr. Otis unceremoniously dumps his suitcases by the front door.)

MR. OTIS: That's probably why we got such a good deal. I really put one over on that realtor. An absolute steal.

MRS. UMNEY: *(A little uncomfortable:)* Yes, well, it really is a very nice house. A bit of a fixer-upper, perhaps, but...

MRS. OTIS: It was very good of you to meet us with the key, Mrs. ...

MRS. UMNEY: Umney, dear. Dolores Umney. My late husband, God rest his soul...

MR. OTIS: Where have those kids gotten to? (*Calling out the front door:*) George! Ginny! You two...whatever your names are! Stop messing around out there and come in and see our new house!

(*GEORGE enters at the front door, carrying a suitcase.*)

GEORGE: The twins are up a tree. Typical.

(*GINNY enters at the front door, carrying a suitcase.*)

GINNY: There's a sweet little swing in back. (*Noticing Mrs. Umney:*) Hello. I'm Ginny.

MRS. UMNEY: Dolores Umney, dear. Mrs. My late husband...

MR. OTIS: (*Calling out the door again:*) You two! Get your keesters in here!

GINNY: (*With a shy bow:*) Nice to meet you.

GEORGE: (*To Mrs. Otis:*) When do we get to pick our rooms?

MRS. OTIS: Not now, dear.

GEORGE: Because I get to pick first, right? Because I'm the oldest?

MR. OTIS: (*Still at the door:*) I'm warning you!

MRS. UMNEY: They'll be up that elm tree, I expect. My Charlie was always...

GEORGE: Can I go look, anyway?

MR. OTIS: (*Still at the door:*) Now!

MRS. OTIS: Fine, dear.

(*George exits up the stairs or through an interior door as COREY and FRANKIE tumble through the front door, twin bundles of energy.*)

COREY: That tree is killer!

FRANKIE: You can see for miles!

MRS. UMNEY: That's just what my Charlie always said. My late husband...

MRS. OTIS: Where are your suitcases?

FRANKIE: Oh...we left them out back.

COREY: I'll get 'em.

(The Twins race out the front door.)

MRS. UMNEY: Oh, before I forget. *(Indicating the fruit basket:)* A little housewarming gift from your new neighbors.

MRS. OTIS: How thoughtful!

GEORGE: *(Reentering where he exited:)* I want the room with the dormer window!

MRS. OTIS: Not now, dear...

MRS. UMNEY: My Charlie always loved that room. He used to visit...

FRANKIE: *(Entering at the front door with an exceedingly overstuffed suitcase:)* What's for dinner, Mom?

COREY: *(Right behind him with a similar suitcase:)* Can we have Fried Chicken?

GINNY: *(Who has not spoken in so long that everyone has forgotten she was there:)* You should be ashamed of yourselves. We've only just got here. Mother hasn't even seen the kitchen.

MR. OTIS: I thought we'd go out tonight.

COREY: Cool!

FRANKIE: Pizza?

COREY: Burgers?

MRS. OTIS: Just settle down for half a minute, you two. (*To Mrs. Umney:*) Mrs. Umney, thank you so much for letting us in. I'm sure we'll love it here.

MRS. UMNEY: (*Reluctant to leave but recognizing a dismissal when she meets it:*) I do hope so. Well, I must be off. I'll let you nice folks settle in. But I'm sure we'll be seeing lots of each other, what with me right next door.

MRS. OTIS: I'm sure we will.

MRS. UMNEY: I expect we'll always be popping in to borrow each other's teapots or a cup of sugar. It will be so nice to have neighbors again.

MRS. OTIS: Goodbye, now.

(And she ushers her out the front door. Corey and Frankie, who have been opening and closing doors and generally exploring, join their parents and siblings.)

MR. OTIS: (*Ruefully:*) I hope she'll have the decency to wait 'til I've gone to work before "popping in."

MRS. OTIS: Harold! I'm sure she's a perfectly nice woman!

MR. OTIS: I'm starting to understand why we got this place so cheap.

GEORGE: Why *did* we get it so cheap, Dad?

MR. OTIS: Oh, some nonsense about a ghost or something.

COREY: A ghost?

FRANKIE: Cool!

GEORGE: (*To the Twins:*) Don't be stupid. There's no such thing.

FRANKIE: Is too!

COREY: I saw one last Halloween.

FRANKIE: That was me.

COREY: Oh, yeah.

GINNY: I believe in ghosts, though. Poor, lost souls who can't rest.

MR. OTIS: Well, I'm sure there's no lost souls here.

MRS. OTIS: I hope not.

MR. OTIS: People always make up stories about old houses. Especially Victorians. Still, if it cut the price, I wasn't going to argue.

MRS. OTIS: Oh, dear!

MR. OTIS: What is it?

MRS. OTIS: Look at this ugly stain on the floor!

(She stares in dismay at a "spot" on the floor. (Unless you have a very steep auditorium, there is no need to have an actual stain on the floor, and not having one will make things much easier later on.)

MR. OTIS: *(Examining the "stain:")* Nasty. I wonder what could have made that?

MRS. OTIS: Never mind that. How are we going to get rid of it?

COREY: *(Who, with Frankie, has been examining the "stain" as well:)* It looks like blood.

FRANKIE: Blood? Cool!

MRS. OTIS: Nonsense. I'm sure it isn't.

FRANKIE: It looks like it, though.

GEORGE: Honestly, you two! You hear one silly word about ghosts...

COREY: I bet someone was murdered...

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FRANKIE: Horribly murdered...

COREY: Horribly murdered on this very spot!

MR. OTIS: Don't be absurd. It's an oil stain or something. No wonder I got the place cheap.

MRS. OTIS: It looks set in. I don't know what will clean that.

MR. OTIS: You'll find something.

MRS. OTIS: It's very upsetting. In our brand-new house...

GINNY: *(With the first twinge of pique she has shown:)* Oh, move over!

(She shoos everyone out of the way and pulls the rug a few feet over so that it covers the "stain.")

MR. OTIS: A brilliant solution, Ginny, my dear.

MRS. OTIS: Yes, but I'll still know it's there.

MR. OTIS: Never mind. We'll deal with it tomorrow.

GEORGE: *(Who has been tinkering with the clock:)* What is the point of a grandfather clock if it doesn't work?

MR. OTIS: Never mind that. Come on now. Let's go to supper. I saw a place as we came into town. Just leave your things where they are.

COREY AND FRANKIE: *(Together:)* Shotgun!

(And they all pile out the door. Mrs. Otis is last, and she looks back at the place where she knows the stain still is for a moment before exiting. The lights dim a bit, and the stage is quiet for a moment. Then an eerie sound is heard [perhaps faintly howling wind or rattling chains] and after a moment the GHOST enters. If possible, it would be fun if he could appear to enter through a solid wall or hidden doorway. What exactly a ghost looks like is up to the costume designer, but it is important that he look at

least moderately convincing, yet not particularly frightening. He begins to cross the room, minding his own business, until he spots the luggage strewn about. This brings him up short. After a moment, he speaks.)

GHOST: At last!

(He inspects the luggage carefully, and then, with great method, he rearranges it. [Nothing really obvious, just a few subtle changes. He swaps Corey and Frankie's bags, turns a few suitcases over, etc.] When he's finished, he stands back to survey his work, nods to himself in satisfaction, and drifts off. Lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up, time has passed but nothing has changed. We hear the voices of the Otis family offstage.)

COREY: I still say we should have gone to McDonald's!

MRS. OTIS: But that place was much nicer, dear!

FRANKIE: If you like barf!

GEORGE: Can we pick our rooms now, Mom? I'm first, right?

MRS. OTIS: *(Entering through the front door:)* Yes, George, I haven't forgotten.

MR. OTIS: *(Entering and surveying the room:)* I still can't believe what a steal this place was.

(The four Children pile through the front door and head for their respective luggage. Corey and Frankie are the first to snatch up their bags and head for the stairs or door to the rest of the house, but they don't get far.)

COREY: Hey!

FRANKIE: Hey!

COREY: This isn't mine!

FRANKIE: That's because it's mine! This is yours.

COREY: But I left mine over here!

FRANKIE: I left *mine* over *here*! Something's up. Mom!

MRS. OTIS: Don't be silly, you two. How can you remember exactly where you dumped your bags?

FRANKIE: But I know it!

GINNY: Actually, I don't think I left my suitcase like this either.

MRS. OTIS: Well, you must have, dear, if that's the way it is. Who would have moved it?

COREY: That's what I want to know!

GEORGE: I thought I left mine the other way too.

MRS. OTIS: Maybe that Mrs. Umney came back.

MR. OTIS: Why should she?

MRS. OTIS: Maybe she wanted to surprise us by straightening up.

MR. OTIS: And how would she get in anyway? You don't suppose she kept a copy of the key?

MRS. OTIS: No, I suppose she wouldn't...

MR. OTIS: Because the last thing we need is that old biddy coming and going as she pleases.

MRS. OTIS: Now Harold...

MR. OTIS: First thing tomorrow I'm calling a locksmith and having the lock changed.

MRS. OTIS: Don't be silly. I'm sure we're all imagining things anyway.

FRANKIE: Wait a minute! What if it was the ghost?

COREY: Yeah! I bet it was!

GEORGE: Don't be stupid. There's no such thing.

MR. OTIS: *(Uneasily:)* Of course not. It's your imagination. Now, everyone out! Choose your rooms...there's plenty to pick from...and start unpacking. We've got a long day tomorrow. The furniture's coming.

GEORGE: I call the one with the dormer window!

(The Children disperse with much shouting back and forth. After a moment, Mr. Otis exits as well, but Mrs. Otis returns momentarily with a bucket and scrub brush. She moves the carpet away and begins scrubbing at the "stain.")

MRS. OTIS: *(To herself:)* I'll know it's there if I don't!

(The lights fade slowly to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up, it is obvious that the family has moved in. There is more and different furniture in the living room, including a couch and a television set. Perhaps there are family photos on the walls. Mr. and Mrs. Otis are standing looking down at the "stain" in some consternation. He holds a briefcase. [In the narrative, significant time has passed, so if lightning-fast costume changes are possible, they might be wearing different clothes. But if Mr. Otis is in a fairly plain business suit and Mrs. Otis in generic "housewife" gear, this isn't really necessary.]

MR. OTIS: Of course I see it.

MRS. OTIS: But it wasn't there last night! I scrubbed it off! I've scrubbed it off every night for a week! It's irritating! And it keeps changing color! On Tuesday it was bright green!

MR. OTIS: Well, don't worry. If you can't get rid of it we'll hire a carpenter to sand it off.

MRS. OTIS: Harold, I'm telling you, it comes back! Do you think I don't know how to...

GEORGE: *(Entering:)* 'Morning. What's for breakfast? *(Making "air quotes:)"* "Bloodstain" still there, I see.

MRS. OTIS: I'm sure it's not a bloodstain.

GEORGE: Of course it isn't.

COREY: *(Entering:)* Of course it is.

FRANKIE: *(Entering:)* Obviously it is.

COREY: From a murdered person.

FRANKIE: Probably a criminal.

MR. OTIS: Now, stop it, you two! You're upsetting your mother with your nonsense.

COREY: It isn't nonsense! How else does it keep coming back?

FRANKIE: And who keeps moving the rug?

GINNY: *(Entering:)* Oh, do stop it, Corey and Frankie. *(Winking at George:)* Of course it's a bloodstain. But do you have to keep reminding Mother?

(She moves the rug to cover the "stain.")

FRANKIE: *(Placated:)* Okay, Ginny. What's for breakfast?

MRS. OTIS: Come into the kitchen and see. Goodbye, dear.

(She kisses Mr. Otis and he exits through the front door as the rest of the family exits to the kitchen. The lights dim. After a moment, enter the Ghost. He peers out the door to be sure the family has left, then carefully moves the rug to expose the "stain." The lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come up again, the whole

Family is watching television. The rug has again been placed over the "stain.")

GEORGE: Shhh! There's no such thing as ghosts! And I'm trying to watch the program!

FRANKIE: So watch it!

COREY: We're not stopping you.

MRS. OTIS: Stop it, you two. We've heard all we want to about your silly ghost.

MR. OTIS: Most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

FRANKIE: Is not!

GEORGE: Is...

COREY: Not! Beat you!

GINNY: Corey, and Frankie, stop torturing George and let him watch his program.

GEORGE: Thank you!

(Everyone is quiet for a few moments, watching television. Suddenly a ferocious racket is heard offstage. Enter the Ghost. He has dressed himself up to look [and sound] more fearsome than he is, but obviously in whatever he could scrounge up in the kitchen or the cellar. Perhaps he has some rusty chains around him. He might have a cooking pot on his head like a helmet. Here is a chance for the costume designer to have some fun. He rattles around, making as much noise as possible.)

GHOST: Ooooooo! Aaaaauuggghh! Booga Booga!

(No one so much as looks up from the television. The Ghost steps in front of the screen.)

Ooooooo! Oingedy boingedy! Bleah!

GEORGE: Hey! You're blocking the screen!

GHOST: Booga booga! Ah-ooooo-ga!

COREY: Cool!

FRANKIE: Excellent!

COREY AND FRANKIE: *(To George:)* We told you there was a ghost!

MR. OTIS: Fascinating. It appears I was mistaken.

GEORGE: I still don't believe it.

GINNY: But George!

MRS. OTIS: I do hope he's clean.

GHOST: *(In obvious frustration, and swooping around to get in people's faces:)* Ooooooo! Aaaaauugghh! Booga Booga!

FRANKIE: I gotta get my camera!

COREY: Me too!

FRANKIE: Wait 'til the kids at school hear about this!

GHOST: *(One final try:)* BOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

(In frustration, the Ghost plucks at his hair and vanishes. Everyone sits silently for a moment, not in fear but just in astonishment. Then they all begin to talk at once.)

COREY: I can't believe it! A real ghost!

GEORGE: What do you mean, you don't believe it? You've been saying there's a ghost for weeks.

COREY: But I didn't really expect to *see* it.

GINNY: He looked sad.

GEORGE: *(Contemptuously:)* Sad?

GINNY: I wonder why he can't rest. And he seemed disappointed that we weren't scared.

MR. OTIS: There's money in this thing.

MRS. OTIS: Money?

MR. OTIS: I mean, an authentic ghost. It's bound to raise the property value.

GINNY: But you said the ghost was why we got the place so cheap.

MR. OTIS: But they don't know how to *sell*. I'm a salesman. I can sell this, I know I can. I just don't know how. Yet.

FRANKIE: Well, I think it's cool.

COREY: I wonder if it will come back.

GEORGE: (*Dismissively:*) I think it's noisy and obnoxious. And I really wanted to see that show. Now I've missed it.

GINNY: I still think he looked sad.

(Lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up, Corey, Frankie, and their friends, ALEX, JAMIE and CHRIS are in the living room, sitting on sleeping bags and sharing a bowl of popcorn. [Again, if lightning-fast costume changes are your thing, they could be dressed in pajamas.])

ALEX: I still think you're making it up. And don't hog the popcorn.

COREY: We are so not making it up!

FRANKIE: You'll see. It comes every night.

JAMIE: It's probably your brother playing a joke.

FRANKIE: You obviously don't know George.

COREY: He wouldn't know a joke if he fell in it.

CHRIS: I'm scared.

JAMIE: You're always scared.

CHRIS: Am not!

JAMIE: Are too!

CHRIS: Am not!

JAMIE: Are...

ALEX: Shhh! I think I hear something.

(Everyone listens silently in anticipation. At the strategic moment, Alex screws up his face and breaks wind loudly. Everyone but Corey and Frankie falls out laughing.)

FRANKIE: Very funny, Alex!

ALEX: *(Still laughing:)* It was! As funny as your ghost story.

COREY: It is real.

ALEX: I'm sure. Wait...there it is! Ooooooooooh! I'm a ghost! Ooooooooooh!

COREY: Is this funny?

(Corey and Frankie exchange glances, then, simultaneously pummel Alex with their pillows. Within moments all five Children are engaged in a furious pillow fight, with much shouting. [Hey! Ouch! Look out! No fair! Attack! Etc.] After a few moments of this, the Ghost enters unawares. He has again made an effort to appear frightening. Use your imagination.)

GHOST: Oooooooooohhhh! Woooo...oof!

(The Ghost takes a pillow to the face before anyone has even noticed him.)

Hey! How dare you? Oooooohhhh! Ooogedy boogedy! Wooooooooo!

(All the Children now begin attacking the Ghost with pillows. In the background, drawn by the noise, enter Ginny, in her nightgown.)

JAMIE: Take that, you dirty ghost!

CHRIS: You don't scare me!

GHOST: Stop! Oooooohhhh!

ALEX: Take that!

COREY: And that!

FRANKIE: And that!

GHOST: Stop it!

(He covers his head with his hands and cowers in the center of the room, moaning, as the Children continue their attack. Finally, Ginny can't take it anymore.)

GINNY: Stop it, all of you! Can't you see you're hurting him? Corey and Frankie, stop it!

(And she snatches a pillow from the nearest Child and uses it to beat the smaller Children away from the Ghost, who slinks away, a beaten man.)

COREY: Aw, Ginny, you're no fun!

FRANKIE: What are you doing down here anyway? This is our sleepover!

GINNY: You were making so much noise I couldn't sleep.

FRANKIE: Oh, mind your own business.

GINNY: Well, you were scaring him.

COREY: He tried to scare us.

FRANKIE: Tried.

GINNY: Well, never mind. He's gone now. And you'd all better get to sleep before you wake Mom. You know what will happen if she comes down here and sees this mess. Good night.

(Ginny exits with dignity, as the other Children calm down and sit on their sleeping bags.)

COREY: We told you so.

FRANKIE: Now do you believe us?

COREY: That was definitely a real ghost.

ALEX: It was real, all right. Real lame.

CHRIS: Yeah. I wasn't scared at all.

JAMIE: Who ever heard of a ghost that wasn't scary?

COREY: It was *kind of* scary.

CHRIS: No, it totally wasn't.

ALEX: That was the stupidest ghost in the world.

JAMIE: Totally un-scary.

FRANKIE: But still...a real ghost is pretty cool.

ALEX: Whatever.

JAMIE: Yeah...whatever.

CHRIS: I can't believe we slept over for that.

JAMIE: Totally lame.

COREY: Oh, shut up and eat your popcorn.

(The lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up the Ghost is sitting alone in the living room. Ginny enters quietly and sits.)

GINNY: Mr. Ghost?

GHOST: Wha...oh. It's you. What do you want from me?

GINNY: Oh, nothing. Maybe I just want to watch T.V. It's not always about you, you know.

GHOST: Point taken.

(They sit quietly for a few moments.)

GINNY: I'm sorry about Corey and Frankie. They don't mean any harm.

GHOST: Neither does an earthquake, but it does harm just the same.

GINNY: You know, to be fair, you *have* been trying to scare us ever since we moved in.

GHOST: I never hit anyone, though, did I?

GINNY: I suppose not. But what if you frightened my mother into a fit or something?

GHOST: *(Ruefully:)* Fat chance.

GINNY: I suppose.

(They sit quietly for a few moments.)

GHOST: I'm not...er...keeping you from anything, am I?

GINNY: What?

GHOST: I mean, you didn't actually want to watch television or something?

GINNY: *(Casually:)* No, no. I'm fine.

GHOST: Mmm.

(They sit quietly for a few moments. Finally the Ghost stands rather abruptly.)

(Curtly:) Well, I know when I'm not wanted. Good night.

(The Ghost disappears. Ginny looks sadly after him.)

GINNY: *(Not angry:)* Well, that was a bit rude.

(The lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up the stage is empty. Enter Corey and Frankie, carrying a bed sheet and various other paraphernalia.)

COREY: That was the worst school week ever.

FRANKIE: I know. Why'd those guys have to tell everyone how un-scary our ghost is?

COREY: We'll get the ghost back now, though.

FRANKIE: Totally. This is going to be great!

(They hide, perhaps behind a chair or couch, or else in a side room. Much giggling and struggle is heard. After a moment, enter the Ghost, not, this time, dressed up in any way. He seems surprised to find the room empty, but proceeds valiantly with the program.)

GHOST: Woooooo! Mooaaaaannn! *(Pause.)* Anyone? Googly moogly! Anyone there? Oh, well.

(He sits down resignedly. After a moment, Corey and Frankie emerge from their hiding place, dressed up as a scary ghost. [If possible, one should sit or stand on the other's shoulders to make the "ghost" unnaturally tall.]

COREY AND FRANKIE: BOOOOO!

GHOST: Augh! A real ghost!

(He leaps to his feet in terror, and falls over his own feet (or possibly over the couch or a chair) trying to escape from the "ghost," which pursues him ruthlessly, taking large steps and moaning convincingly.)

Leave me alone! I'll do better! I can be scary! Augh!

(The Ghost finally escapes and exits. The "ghost" collapses and Corey and Frankie emerge, laughing hysterically.)

FRANKIE: Score!

COREY: Double score!

(The Twins high-five each other as the lights fade to blackout. Music may play to indicate the passage of time. When the lights come back up, the Ghost is alone in the living room, sitting dejectedly with his head in his hands. He sighs loudly. After a moment, Ginny tiptoes into the room.)

GINNY: Mr. Ghost?

GHOST: *(Startled:)* Wha...oh, fine. Come to scare me again, huh?

GINNY: What?

GHOST: Really funny joke. Scare the scary ghost! Nice.

GINNY: I don't want to scare you.

GHOST: Oh. *(Pause.)* Sorry.

(They sit together in silence for a few moments, the Ghost in utter dejection and Ginny with genuine concern. Finally she speaks.)

GINNY: I had a talk with Corey and Frankie. They won't do it again. There's two of them, but they're eight, and I'm bigger than they are.

GHOST: *(Dispiritedly:)* Thanks.

GINNY: In fairness, you did try to scare us.

GHOST: Well, of course I did! I'm a ghost! It's why I exist. I have no choice.

GINNY: Everyone has a choice.

GHOST: I don't! Scaring people is my job! (*Deflating:*) And I can't even do that.

GINNY: Yes you can!

GHOST: I'm the un-scariest ghost in the world. All the other ghosts make fun of me.

GINNY: I think you're very scary. Really.

GHOST: No you don't. But it's very nice of you to say so.

GINNY: Okay, I don't. But you have to understand...it's just that these days everyone has seen so many movies...well, the real thing just isn't as shocking.

GHOST: I suppose so. But I do wish I could scare *someone*. Just once. After all, it's what I'm for.

GINNY: Why are you a ghost, anyway, Mr. Ghost?

GHOST: Not by my choice, I assure you. And you can call me Simon. You're much nicer than your brothers.

GINNY: Simon. Oh, George is a bit of a pill, but Corey and Frankie are little dears...just a little bit energetic and mischievous. Why are you a ghost, Simon? Were you a bad man?

GHOST: Pretty bad.

GINNY: (*With a little gasp:*) You didn't murder someone, did you? Is that what that silly bloodstain is about?

GHOST: (*Laughing:*) No, no...that's my blood.

GINNY: Oooh...were you murdered, then?

GHOST: I wish. Those are the best ghosts. No, it's much more boring. I tried to cut off my own head.

GINNY: (*Shocked:*) Why?

GHOST: I thought it would make me scarier.

GINNY: I guess it probably would have.

GHOST: But apparently you can't cut off your own head if you're already dead. Anyway, it's not really blood at all, anymore.

GINNY: Anymore?

GHOST: It *was* real blood. For more than a hundred years it was real. But then your mother scrubbed it away. Since then I've been touching it up every night with paint. That's why it keeps changing color.

GINNY: I wondered what happened to my old paint set!

GHOST: I'm sorry to have stolen it, but I didn't know what else to do.

GINNY: Oh, you're welcome to it...I never use it anymore anyway.

GHOST: Thank you very much.

GINNY: Well, it's very late...well, it would be, you being a ghost and all...and I should really be getting to bed.

GHOST: No, please...don't go yet! I've been so lonely.

GINNY: (*With genuine sympathy:*) Poor ghost! But I really do need to go to sleep.

GHOST: (*Sighing:*) Ah, sleep. How I wish I could sleep! I'm so tired.

GINNY: What do you mean? If you're tired, you sleep. It's staying awake that's hard.

GHOST: Not for me.

GINNY: Sometimes I can't sleep when Mom tells me to, but it's because I'm not tired.

GHOST: I haven't slept in over a hundred years, and I'm so, so tired.

GINNY: Oh, you poor ghost! Isn't there anyplace for you to sleep?

GHOST: There's one place. A beautiful garden. So peaceful.

GINNY: (*With a gasp:*) You mean the Garden of Death?

GHOST: Yes. How I long for the peace of death.

GINNY: How can you long for death? I love life!

GHOST: And you should. But when you're stuck here on earth forever, it's not really life.

GINNY: It isn't?

GHOST: At best it's a sort of half-life. There's no peace in it. That's all I want. Peace.

GINNY: Oooh.

GHOST: But I'm doomed to stay here on earth, scaring people silly. Only I can't even scare them anymore.

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