

'MAY'

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BY JIM BLYTHE

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Characters

Bruce DeLoy	an American TV Producer
Mr Weston	a Theatre Manager
Karen Meadows	a TV Director
Neil	the Sound Engineer
Jake	a Cameraman
Sophie	a Camerawoman
Kim Daniels	a TV Presenter
Bill Saunders	a Psychic
May	a little girl

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ACT 1

*THE STAGE IS SEMI-LIT AND GLOOMY. IT IS BARE AND LOOKS A BIT RUN DOWN. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BUZZER, OFF. THERE IS SILENCE. THE BUZZER GOES AGAIN. AFTER ANOTHER SILENCE THERE IS THE SOUND OF SOMEONE KNOCKING ON A DOOR. WE THEN HEAR **BRUCE DELOY** CALLING, OFF, AND GETTING CLOSER.*

BRUCE. (OFF) Hello? Hello? Hey, anyone around?

THE SOUND OF ANGRY DISTORTED WHISPERING IS HEARD.

BRUCE. (OFF) Who's that? Anyone here?

***BRUCE DELOY** A BRASH AMERICAN TV PRODUCER ENTERS. HE LOOKS AROUND THE STAGE AND AUDITORIUM WITH DISGUST.*

BRUCE. Jeez, what a dump. (CALLS) Hey, anybody about?

SILENCE.

BRUCE. (MUTTERING) Dammit. Pain in the ass.

***BRUCE** TAKES HIS MOBILE PHONE FROM HIS POCKET. HE GLANCES AT IT BUT THERE IS NO SIGNAL.*

BRUCE. Oh for Christ's sake.

***BRUCE** REACHES INTO ANOTHER POCKET AND PULLS OUT A LETTER WHICH HE SKIMS.*

BRUCE. (CALLING) Hey. Anyone here? Anyone at all? Mr Weston, you about?

***BRUCE** MOVES TO THE SIDE OF THE STAGE LOOKING OUT INTO THE WINGS. THE DISTORTED WHISPERING IS BRIEFLY HEARD. **BRUCE** SWINGS AROUND UNSURE WHAT HE HAS HEARD AND FROM WHERE.*

BRUCE. (CALLING) Hello? Who's there?

SILENCE.

BRUCE. (CALLING) Look, I ain't in the mood to be jerked about; who's there?

*THE SOUND OF A CHILD LAUGHING CAN BE FAINTLY HEARD, OFF. **BRUCE** MOVES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE LAUGHTER.*

BRUCE. (PUZZLED) What the...? Hello? Who is that?

*THE SOUND OF A LITTLE GIRL SINGING IS FAINTLY HEARD, OFF TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. **BRUCE** SWINGS ROUND TO FACE THAT WAY.*

BRUCE. Right, I've had enough of this bullshit - who's there?

***BRUCE** WALKS TOWARDS THE SIDE OF THE STAGE. AFTER HE HAS MOVED A FEW STEPS THE LIGHTS GO OUT.*

BRUCE. Shit. Ok, who's messing about with the lights?

SILENCE.

BRUCE. I gotta warn you, I am not a patient man.

*THE SOUND OF ANGRY DISTORTED WHISPERING IS HEARD. **BRUCE** IS SUDDENLY A LOT LESS SURE OF HIMSELF.*

BRUCE. Hello?

*THE LIGHTS SNAP SUDDENLY BACK UP AGAIN. **MR WESTON** IS STOOD TO THE SIDE OF **BRUCE**.*

WESTON. Hello.

***BRUCE** SHOUTS OUT IN SUPRISE.*

WESTON. Mr DeLoy is it?

BRUCE. Jesus Christ, you scared the crap out of me.

WESTON. My apologies. It is Mr DeLoy, I presume.

BRUCE. (REGAINING HIS COMPOSURE AND SWAGGER) Yeah that's me. You Weston?

WESTON. Mr Weston. Yes indeed. It's a pleasure to finally meet you face to face.

***WESTON** HOLDS OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE BUT **BRUCE** IS IGNORING HIM AND LOOKING CONTEMPTUOUSLY AROUND THE THEATRE.*

BRUCE. Sure, sure. And this is it, is it?

WESTON. This is, as you say, it. Welcome to the Royal Theatre.

BRUCE. The Royal Theatre, eh?

BRUCE SURVEYS THE THEATRE, UNIMPRESSED.

BRUCE. Sheesh! I knew your royal family wasn't what it used to be but...

HE SHAKES HIS HEAD.

WESTON. Yes, I'm afraid you're not seeing the place quite at its best.

BRUCE. You don't say. It looked a little bigger in the photos.

WESTON. Really?

BRUCE. Really.

WESTON. No this is it. It's a small theatre but wonderfully intimate. All the greats have performed here you know.

BRUCE. *(UNINTERESTED)* Have they?

WESTON. Ah yes. This stage has seen Gielgud, Olivier, Schofield...

BRUCE. Shakespeare types, eh? Not really my bag.

WESTON. No, I can imagine not.

BRUCE. What about Peter O'Toole? I like Peter O'Toole. Peter O'Toole ever play here?

WESTON. Now it's interesting you should ask; it's rumoured that Peter O'Toole once urinated in that corner of the stage.

BRUCE. Really? Neat! What play was that in?

WESTON. Oh no, that wasn't in a play. I'm not sure why Mr O'Toole was here if I'm honest.

BRUCE. But he took a leak right here?

WESTON. So I'm told. It was my night off.

BRUCE. Now that's theatrical history right there. So what happened?

WESTON. Well, as I say I wasn't actually here on the night in question but I imagine he just sort of...

BRUCE. Not with the urine; I guess I can work that out for myself. What happened with your theatre? Why aren't the greats playing here these days?

WESTON. Because of May.

BRUCE. Really? May? That's the kid we talked about on the phone, right?

WESTON. That's right.

BRUCE. And is she the only one you got?

WESTON. As far as I'm aware. Is that not sufficient?

BRUCE. I guess it'll have to do.

WESTON. I realise that a man with your esteemed background is probably used to better...

BRUCE. Damn right. Never mind, this'll have to do. So, fill me on the detail.

WESTON. The detail?

BRUCE. Sure. So we've got this kid, May. Who is she Mr Weston? Where'd she come from? What's she doing here?

WESTON. I'm afraid I don't know Mr DeLoy...

BRUCE. Bruce.

WESTON. Ah, yes, Bruce.

BRUCE. You don't know? Well what do you know about her?

WESTON. Very little I'm afraid, other than her name and the fact that she has been haunting this theatre for at least 100 years.

BRUCE. I see. So tell me, how'd you know that if you don't know anything else about her?

WESTON. Oh, she's been talked about by the staff here for years. I suppose I inherited her.

BRUCE. And how long have you worked here?

WESTON. Oh, I've been here a great many years. I expect I shall be here forever.

BRUCE. And have you ever seen her?

WESTON. No, no, never. I have felt her presence though on many occasions. It's never anything tangible but I know she's here, if you know what I mean?

BRUCE. Sure. We get that that sort of crap with hauntings.

WESTON. It is not crap Mr DeLoy, May is really here; I promise you that.

BRUCE. Sure, sure. So, she ever damage anyone or anything?

WESTON. Oh no. She's a very gentle spirit. Or at least, that's the way she's always seemed to me.

BRUCE. OK. But if nobody will play this theatre because of her, she must be doing something.

WESTON. Actors are a superstitious breed. I fear they just don't like being here with her.

BRUCE. (*DISDAINFUL*) Actors! Huh, don't get me started.

WESTON. Gradually, over the years, word got round about May and slowly the bookings dried up.

BRUCE. Gee, that's too bad.

WESTON. Yes. Yes, it is. I miss it all a great deal. I think May does too.

BRUCE. So how come this place is still here. How come you're still here?

WESTON. I beg your pardon?

BRUCE. Well, if there are no plays then what's the point of keeping the theatre going?

WESTON. The point? The point is the history. The point is maintaining something wonderful, something special. I realise that your country hasn't always shown the greatest respect to its history but in this country we pride ourselves on our past.

BRUCE. I guess when the present doesn't offer all that much, you gotta hang on to something.

WESTON. (*ICELY*) I suppose so.

BRUCE. Please don't get me wrong Mr Weston; I love these old British buildings – they fascinate me, they really do. But this a prime piece of real estate – you could get a stack of cash for this place.

WESTON. I dare say. But it's immaterial; the theatre is not for sale. Not at any price.

BRUCE. Your loss. So what's your job in this disused theatre?

WESTON. I am the theatre manager.

BRUCE. Sure you are. But what is there to manage in a theatre that no one acts in.

WESTON. Oh there are still a great many tasks to be completed.

BRUCE. Such as?

WESTON. Oh I wouldn't want to bore you with the details.

BRUCE. Why not?

WESTON. Because they would probably bore you. Now if we may move on to your requirements during your work here Mr DeLoy?

BRUCE. Yeah, let's do that. My crew is just unpacking outside and then they'll be doing some external shots. We'll use them at the start of the show just to establish the venue to our viewers. You ever watch the show?

WESTON. No, never.

BRUCE. That's a shame, I sure you'd love it.

WESTON. I'm not. I live with a haunting every day so other peoples hold little interest to me.

BRUCE. You should give it a watch. It's called 'The Spirit Level', it's on 'Seriously Scary TV' at 10.00 on Wednesdays... you've got cable right?

WESTON. No. I don't watch much television.

BRUCE. (*SHOCKED*) Really? Well anyway, we like to start the show with a look at the building from the outside. Once they're done making that bit we'll move the filming into the theatre itself. Now you know we're going to film right through the night, yeah?

WESTON. I am aware of that.

BRUCE. So, are you gonna be hanging around all that time?

WESTON. I shall be in my office working.

BRUCE. Well ok but you realise we're going to need total quiet and no interruptions, yeah?

WESTON. Have no concerns Mr DeLoy, I shall keep well out of your way.

BRUCE. Thank you.

WESTON. I shall merely be on hand should you need anything or if you encounter any problems.

BRUCE. That's real decent of you, thanks. We ok to film anywhere we like?

WESTON. Quite so. Are there many of you?

BRUCE. Only seven.

WESTON. Only seven? A very small crew.

BRUCE. Plenty for what we need. I try to keep a tight crew for shoots like this.

WESTON. *(TO HIMSELF)* Only seven. Still... *(BREAKS OUT OF HIS TRAIN OF THOUGHT)* I'm sure you know what you're doing.

BRUCE. Oh, only too well Mr Weston. This is our sixth series you know. Not many shows last to a sixth series.

WESTON. *(A LITTLE SARCASTIC)* You must be very proud.

BRUCE. Oh but I am Mr Weston. When I pitched this idea most of the networks just laughed at me. Why is it they always laugh at the visionaries, eh? They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright Brothers...

WESTON. They laughed at Bozo the clown.

BRUCE. What?

WESTON. Not everyone who is laughed at is a visionary.

BRUCE. Well since then, I've sold the concept to thirty countries and we're in to our sixth year. There's no one laughing now. I'd say in TV terms, that makes me a visionary.

WESTON. Jolly good.

BRUCE. Now then, tonight we're going to be working with just two cameras and a boom. They're all fully charged so we won't have to touch your electrics, recharging aside, ok?

WESTON. Very well.

BRUCE. We run fully under our own power. The cameras are equipped for night filming so after a while we'll be hitting the lights.

WESTON. As you wish.

BRUCE. All the lights.

WESTON. Yes.

BRUCE. You're ok with that? You can work alright in the dark?

WESTON. I do some of my very best work in the dark.

BRUCE. Fair enough. Oh and as far as lights and sound effects and all that side of things goes, we'll be handling all that ourselves too. So if you could avoid any more fooling around with that stuff we'll get on a whole lot quicker.

WESTON. I'm sorry?

BRUCE. The lights and the sound when I came in. Oh very atmospheric but really Mr Weston, it doesn't impress a man with my background.

WESTON. I can assure you I didn't touch...

BRUCE. I've been faking hauntings for five seasons and I'm half way through a sixth so really, I can manage just fine.

WESTON. Faking?

BRUCE. Sure. You don't believe in all that crap do you?

WESTON. (*ANGRY*) Actually, yes I do Mr DeLoy. I know this theatre to be haunted by a very lonely little girl and I was under the impression that you people would be able to help me to find out a little more about her.

BRUCE. And we'll do our very best Mr Weston but in my experience ghosts don't just appear when you get the camera out.

WESTON. Yes but...

BRUCE. Rest assured that if May is here, our psychic will be able to make contact with her.

WESTON. But you just said you fake hauntings...

BRUCE. (*SOOTHING*) Just my little joke Mr Weston, of course I don't fake hauntings. However, on rare occasions we find that when we arrive at a venue the ghost doesn't put in an appearance for us. Now that creates an issue for me because I have to get a programme out.

WESTON. So you fake the haunting.

BRUCE. Well, the team and I, we have to suggest a haunting if you see what I mean. It's never meant disrespectfully; there are just certain financial realities to the world of TV Production.

WESTON. That's terrible.

BRUCE. We avoid it whenever possible, I assure you. I was just trying to make the point that your little theatricals when I first walked in aren't going to help proceedings none too much.

WESTON. And I assure you, Mr DeLoy, that I did nothing when you came in. I merely switched on the lights as I joined you here. Quite why you were blundering around in the dark in the first place is beyond me.

BRUCE. Now look here...

THEY ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE SOUND OF THE DOOR BANGING OPEN NOISILY OFFSTAGE AND EQUIPMENT BEING CARRIED IN. KAREN MEADOWS CAN BE HEARD CALLING, OFF, AND GETTING CLOSER.

KAREN. (OFF) Bruce? Bruce? Where are you?

BRUCE. (CALLING) I'm on the stage. (TO WESTON) This'll be my crew. Swell bunch, you're gonna love 'em.

KAREN. (SHOUTING AT SOMEONE, OFF) For crying out loud, be careful with that you halfwit. Get some general shots of backstage and anything else you can find. And no cocking about.

KAREN ENTERS.

KAREN. Ah, there you are. (EYES WESTON DISAPPROVINGLY) And this is?

BRUCE. This is Mr Weston, the manager of the theatre.

KAREN. Manager? Of a run down little hole like this? Ha! That must be a taxing job!

WESTON EYES HER WITH COLD FURY.

BRUCE. Mr Weston, this is Karen Meadows, our director.

WESTON. (COLDLY) Delighted to meet you.

KAREN. I'm sure. Well, please don't let us keep you from... whatever it is you do.

WESTON. (COLDLY) I beg your pardon.

KAREN. Run along, there's a good chap; we've got a lot to do.

WESTON. Miss Meadows, I...

KAREN. (SNAPS) Ms!

WESTON. Ms Meadows then. I assume you...

KAREN COMPLETELY IGNORES HIM AND TURNS HER BACK TO TALK TO BRUCE. WESTON IS LEFT SEETHING IN THE BACKGROUND.

KAREN. I've got Jake and Sophie having a look around and testing light levels...

BRUCE. Those two wandering around backstage on their own – don't think they'll get much work done!

KAREN. And they think we haven't noticed. Bless them! I sent Neil with them to do some sound tests.

BRUCE. That'll upset them.

KAREN. Kim's just doing some background reading in the van.

BRUCE. Good, good. Any sign of Bill yet?

WESTON GLARES AT THEM BOTH ONE LAST TIME AND STALKS FROM THE STAGE.

KAREN. Don't get me started - he was supposed to be here half an hour ago.

BRUCE. Relax Karen; he'll be in the nearest pub.

KAREN. I'm sure he will be. It's the state he'll be in when he leaves it that bothers me.

BRUCE. We'll give him another half hour; that'll give me time to tell you how we're going to play this one.

KAREN. I know exactly how we're going to play it – we've done a tonne of these.

BRUCE. First one in a theatre though.

KAREN LOOKS AROUND THE THEATRE.

KAREN. A fairly crappy theatre.

BRUCE. It's fine for our purposes. I think we'll film most of it from here; get plenty of views of the empty auditorium. There's something about an empty theatre which is kinda creepy anyway.

KAREN. Is that funny little man going to be hanging around the whole time?

BRUCE. Funny little man?

KAREN. Watson or whatever he's called.

BRUCE. Oh Weston. Yeah, reckons he's going to work through the night.

KAREN. Well he'd better be quiet. And he'd better keep out of the way.

BRUCE. I already told him, don't worry.

KAREN. Well he'd better. I'm really not on the mood for his sort.

BRUCE. His sort?

KAREN. Officious little men running around as if they own the place.

BRUCE. Well I guess he can lay some claim to it.

KAREN. Not tonight he can't. And I'm surprised at you.

BRUCE. At me?

KAREN. Taking his side.

BRUCE. His side?

KAREN. Against me.

BRUCE. I wasn't aware that you two were having an argument.

KAREN. We're not. Yet.

BRUCE. Well let's hope it stays that way. We really don't have the time and I'm sure poor Mr Weston wants be as intact in the morning as he is now. Did we get all the external shots we needed?

KAREN. Of course.

BRUCE. Good.

NEIL WANDERS IN LOOKING A BIT LOST.

BRUCE. Those sound level checks coming on ok Neil?

NEIL. Yes Mr DeLoy.

BRUCE. Despite you not having any equipment with you?

NEIL. Oh. I left it with the others.

BRUCE. The others?

NEIL. Jake and Sophie. They're checking sound and pictures at the same time.

BRUCE. (*AMUSED*) Sure they are. I hate to think how they're doing that!

KAREN. Neil; it is your job to check the sound and their job to check the pictures.

NEIL. Yes but they said they could do that and sent me to get some other equipment.

KAREN. What other equipment?

NEIL. They said... hang on I wrote it down.

***NEIL FISHES IN HIS POCKET FOR A PIECE OF PAPER.
KAREN LOOKS ON IN SILENT ANGER WHILST BRUCE
CONTINUES TO LOOK AMUSED.***

NEIL. They said we need an omniophonic gunge faucet for the light in here so they sent me to get one.

KAREN. A what?

NEIL. An omniophonic gunge faucet.

NEIL SHOWS KAREN AND BRUCE THE PIECE OF PAPER.

BRUCE. I see. Well now, let's break this down shall we Neil? In the first place, a faucet is a tap.

NEIL. A tap?

BRUCE. Yes, you may have seen them. They're very popular in the plumbing industry. Gunge is a particularly non-technical phrase but is, I believe, also popular in the plumbing industry. And omniophonic is a phrase commonly used in audio circles, which I would expect my sound engineer to know, and not in lighting as you have been misinformed.

NEIL. Ah!

BRUCE. I think we can therefore conclude young Neil that not only is there no such thing as an omniophonic gunge faucet but also that you are an idiot.

NEIL. Yes Mr DeLoy.

BRUCE. And even if such a thing as an omniophonic gunge faucet existed, why would you expect to find one lying around in a disused theatre?

NEIL. Well, the others said...

BRUCE. Ah yes, the others.

KAREN. Neil, go and find the camera crew and finish your checks. I want the three of you back on this stage in 5 minutes and no excuses.

NEIL. Yes Ms Meadows.

***NEIL EXITS HURRIDLY. BRUCE BURSTS OUT LAUGHING
KAREN GLARES AT HIM.***

KAREN. Look at him – living proof that care in the community doesn't work! It's not funny Bruce.

BRUCE. Sure it is. You gotta make the new boy look like a dick now and again.

KAREN. But we're against the clock. And Sophie and Jake should both know better than to let their libidos get the better of them.

BRUCE. Hey come on cut 'em some slack; how many chances do they get.

KAREN. Sophie can leave her husband whenever she likes and then they'd have all the time they need.

BRUCE. And we both know it's not that simple.

KAREN. It is that simple.

BRUCE. It wasn't for us.

KAREN. That was different. And if I'd realised what a total bastard you are I wouldn't have got involved with you in the first place.

BRUCE. Don't knock it; it was great for your career.

KAREN. And terrible for everything else. (*BITTERLY*) You learn your lessons in time.

BRUCE. Oh sure, time's a great teacher. Unfortunately it kills all its pupils in the end.

KAREN. Anyway, this isn't about you and me; this is about getting this bloody awful show of yours made so I can get on with better things.

BRUCE. Got another celebrity dancing show lined up have you darling?

KAREN. It pays the bills.

BRUCE. Ah, I love artistic integrity.

KAREN. Shut up Bruce.

BRUCE. It's so rare in the industry.

KAREN. You're a fine one to talk about integrity. You've spent the last six years faking hauntings for cheap entertainment.

BRUCE. Cheap?

KAREN. Yes, cheap. You don't even pay the money to have a full film crew on location.

BRUCE. Maybe I like working with a small crew.

KAREN. Everything's small with you, isn't it Bruce!

BRUCE. The smaller the crew, the bigger the profit. As you say, it pays the bills.

KAREN. Yes, but...

BRUCE. *All our bills.* So there's really no need for you to get on your high horse.

KAREN GLARES AT HIM.

BRUCE. So what have we got up our sleeves for tonight's show?

KAREN. All the usual stuff. We'll start with Kim building the place up, straight to the camera.

BRUCE. She's done her swotting up on the place I hope?

KAREN. As best she can with the so-called 'research' she's been given.

BRUCE. What's wrong with the research?

KAREN. What's right with it? There's nothing there.

BRUCE. Hey, Joe made an exhaustive search on the subject...

KAREN. Exhaustive search?

BRUCE. Yeah.

KAREN. Bruce, he sat in his room all day smoking weed and looking on Wikipedia.

BRUCE. It's an excellent source of information.

KAREN. Provided you don't care if it's accurate or not.

BRUCE. It doesn't matter whether it's accurate or not; not with our viewers. This is the only show I've ever done where we have to dumb up the material for them.

KAREN. You should put more time and money into the research.

BRUCE. Why bother?

KAREN. We've got 1 A4 sheet Bruce.

BRUCE. Plenty enough.

KAREN. Half of it's full of a drawing of Yogi Bear with an erection.

BRUCE. No shit? He's quite the artist is Joe.

KAREN. He's an idiot. And so are you for using him.

BRUCE. That'll do with the insults thank you. There's only so much crap I'll take, even from you.

KAREN. The fact is that Kim's got to stand up and talk about this place with next to no knowledge at all.

BRUCE. Hell that's no challenge for Kim. She spends hours every day talking with next to no knowledge at all and it hasn't held her back.

KAREN. But look...

BRUCE. No, you look. All she's got to do is spout some crap about this place being hundreds of years old and one of the most haunted buildings in the UK. The fact we don't know shit about it could be a good thing – get her to play up to the mystery.

KAREN. (*THINKS*) That could work.

BRUCE. Course it'll work. The whole thing can be about the riddle of who this kid, May, was and what happened to her. Even Kim should be able to manage that. Plus it'll be great fun for Bill.

KAREN. He could do whatever he wants.

BRUCE. Exactly. He can make up as much of a backstory as his pissed little mind can cope with while he's playing around in that whole "possession" bit of the show.

KAREN. And meanwhile we play about with the lights, chuck a few objects about...

BRUCE. Now you're getting the feel for it.

KAREN. Could be quite atmospheric.

BRUCE. Very atmospheric.

KAREN. Alright, let's give it a go.

BRUCE. Just watch it if you bump into the Weston geezer; he only thinks this May kid is real.

KAREN. Don't they all.

BRUCE. Yeah but he seems a bit tetchy about it. Seems to think we're gonna help him find out the truth about her.

KAREN SHAKES HER HEAD SADLY.

KAREN. Shame really, when they get like that.

BRUCE. Oh and watch him – he tried to pull a trick on me when I first came in.

KAREN. A trick?

BRUCE. Yeah, messing around with the lights and shit like that, trying to freak me out.

KAREN. He'd better not try any of that crap while we're filming.

BRUCE. I don't think he will; I've had a word with him. Just watch him, nonetheless.

KAREN. OK.

KAREN GLANCES AT HER WATCH.

KAREN. Where the hell is everyone?

BRUCE. I'll give 'em a shout.

BRUCE MOVES TO THE EDGE OF THE STAGE AND CALLS OFF.

BRUCE. (*SHOUTING*) Anyone who doesn't want their ass kicked, get it to the stage now.
(*PAUSE*) And I mean now!

AFTER A MOMENT WE HERE MOVEMENT OFFSTAGE AS VARIOUS PEOPLE HEAD FOR THE STAGE AREA. KIM ENTERS HURRIDLY FROM THE REAR OF THE STAGE CLUTCHING A CLIPBOARD AND LOOKING WORRIED.

KIM. Sorry Bruce, I was just doing some research.

NEIL ENTERS NEXT LOOKING BEMUSED.

KIM. Well, when I say I was doing some research I mean I was looking at the research Joe did for us.

KAREN. *(IGNORING KIM)* Neil, where are the camera crew?

NEIL. Oh, they're just, er...

NEIL TRAILS OFF LOOKING EMBARRASSED. .

KIM. Well, when I say Joe's research it's really more of a drawing of Yogi Bear...

KAREN. *(TO NEIL, STILL IGNORING KIM)* Well?

KIM. ...with an erection.

NEIL. They'll be right here.

BRUCE. I thought I said I wanted everyone here now!

KIM. At least I think it's Yogi Bear.

KIM STARES AT THE CLIPBOARD FOR A MOMENT.

KIM. It could be Charlie Chaplin I suppose.

BRUCE. Kim, do yourself a favour; when you speak, have a point.

KIM. *(FLUSTERED)* Oh, yes. Sorry Bruce.

BRUCE. Don't be sorry, be silent.

KIM. *(FLUSTERED)* Right, yes, silent, right. Sorry. The thing is I started to do some extra research on my laptop and...

BRUCE GLARES AT KIM.

BRUCE. *(SHOUTING)* I want the goddam camera crew on the goddam stage in the next goddam minute or I will kick their goddam asses all the way to the goddam job centre.

KIM. ... the thing is, I found something really weird.

WE HEAR HURRIED FOOTSTEPS, OFF. JAKE AND SOPHIE ENTER, BOTH LOOKING FLUSTERED.

BRUCE. Ah, there you are. Thank you so much for joining us.

JAKE. Sorry Mr DeLoy, there was a technical issue that needed some hands on attention.

KAREN. Oh please!

BRUCE. I trust you've seen to it?

SOPHIE. Very satisfactorily.

BRUCE. Good. Then maybe we can get on.

SOPHIE. Ready when you are.

KIM. Don't you want to hear what I found out?

KAREN. No.

KIM. Oh, but...

BRUCE. If we say yes, will you shut up afterwards?

KIM. I just thought it was interesting.

BRUCE. Well?

KIM. Well, I Googled the Royal Theatre and found out a bit of background. There was nothing about a little girl called May...

BRUCE. Surprise me!

KIM. ...but it did say that this theatre was demolished about 60 years ago.

BRUCE. So?

KIM. Well if it was demolished, surely it shouldn't be here.

KAREN. It's obviously been rebuilt.

KIM. Not according to all the sites I looked at.

BRUCE. So what are you trying to say Kim; that this theatre doesn't exist?

KIM. Apparently not.

JAKE. What, this theatre that we're standing in at the moment? It doesn't exist?

KIM. I'm just telling you what I found out when I was doing some research.

KAREN. Then you did it wrong. Bruce, I apologise – I thought using Joe was a stupid idea but clearly there are more useless researchers out there.

KIM. Hey!

BRUCE. Kim, I'm sure we all appreciate you setting aside this time in your busy schedule to humiliate yourself in public but we really need to get on. Over to you then Karen.

KAREN. Alright everyone, it's the standard shoot tonight in terms of structure. The external shootings already completed so Mr DeLoy will look over what we've got whilst we get on in the theatre itself. We'll start with the introductory gumph from Kim which we'll film here on the stage with the empty auditorium as the backdrop.

KIM. Umm, yes, sorry to interrupt...

KAREN. (SNAPS) What?

KIM. Sorry. It's just I'm not sure what to say in the introductory gumph. There's not much to go on...

KIM TAILS OFF GESTURING WITH THE CLIPBOARD.

KAREN. Then make something up, for Gods sake. The situation at this venue people is that we have the alleged spirit of a young girl by the name of Mary...

BRUCE. May!

KAREN. Whatever! We have no information about who she was, where she came from, why she's here or why we've even bothering to come here to film. So, the focus of this show is to answer those questions. It is not, and I want to make this really clear, about telling our audience all about how we're in a theatre that doesn't exist. Now does that, Kim, give you some idea of what to do in your introductory gumph?

KIM. Erm, yes I think so.

KAREN. You think so?

KIM. No. I mean, yes. It does, yes. Thank you.

KAREN. Good. We'll do the vast majority of the filming on and around the stage tonight. It has the best lighting and appears to be the most atmospheric area of the theatre. So, Jake, Sophie, Neil – you get your stuff set up on the stage here. Kim, get yourself made up...

KIM. I am made up Ms Meadows.

KAREN STARES AT KIM FOR A MOMENT, THOUGHTFUL.

KAREN. No; not tarty enough. Do it again and get a move on.

KIM. Oh. Really? Ok then.

KAREN. Well go on girl.

KIM DITHERS HER WAY OFF. KAREN ROLLS HER EYES.

KAREN. Right; you three – get set up.

JAKE. Yes boss.

DURING THE FOLLOWING, NEIL, JAKE AND SOPHIE EXIT AND ENTER WITH CAMERAS, BOOM MIC AND CONNECTING LEADS.

KAREN. We'd better go and find Bill I suppose.

BRUCE. You go. I've got something to attend to here.

KAREN. What?

BRUCE. Since you ask, none of your damn business

KAREN. Well if you want my opinion...

BRUCE. I don't.

KAREN. ...getting another one of your presenters pregnant isn't good for business.

BRUCE. As I said, none of your damn business.

KAREN. Charming as always.

BRUCE. Charm will only get you so far. And anyway, bastards have more fun.

KAREN. Well be careful not to shag her brains out; she's got precious little to start with.

KAREN TURNS ON HEEL AND STALKS OFF THE STAGE, ANGRY. **BRUCE** BLOWS A KISS AFTER HER AND EXITS AFTER **KIM** WITH A GRIN ON HIS FACE.

NEIL. What do you s'pose all that was about?

SOPHIE. I'd have thought it was pretty obvious what all that was about.

NEIL. Oh right.

NEIL THINKS FOR A BIT WHILST HE, **JAKE** AND **SOPHIE** SET UP THE CAMERAS AND MIC.

NEIL. So are they a couple?

SOPHIE. Are who a couple?

NEIL. Mr DeLoy and Ms Meadows.

SOPHIE. What?

JAKE. Well obviously not, dumbass.

NEIL. Oh! But I thought...

JAKE. Look, it pans out like this. Brucey's been making crap TV shows like this one for years. He gives it a lot of this (*MIMES TALK WITH BOTH HANDS*) about artistic integrity but he's only in this game for the money and the women.

SOPHIE. (*AIMED AT JAKE, PLAYFULLY*) Disgraceful!

JAKE. Isn't it though! So, a good few years back he and Karen started working together. In more ways than one.

NEIL. But they're still working together.

JAKE. Yeah but only in one way now.

NEIL. So they were shagging, but now they're not.

JAKE. Well done mate, knew you'd get there in the end.

NEIL. What happened?

JAKE. Dunno. Does it matter? Fact is she hates him now.

NEIL. So why does she keep working with him?

JAKE. Good question. No idea.

SOPHIE. But while she hangs around being bitter and twisted Bruceys still shagging anything he can get his hands on.

NEIL. Really? At his age?

SOPHIE. He's not that old! Anyway, you ought to be grateful really.

NEIL. Me? Why?

SOPHIE. How do you think the sound engineers job came up?

NEIL. Eh?

JAKE. Bruce doesn't tend to keep his conquests about. Not if they get too demanding for his liking at any rate. Shame though, Tasha was a damn good sound engineer.

NEIL. He sacked her?

JAKE. Never heard it called that before but basically, yes he did.

SOPHIE. And now it's little Kimmys turn.

NEIL. Kim? He's shagging Kim.

SOPHIE. Probably in her contract.

NEIL. Yeah but he's old enough to be her dad.

JAKE. Good point. I'm sure if you want to raise that moral objection with him, he'll be happy to listen.

NEIL. Yeah but...

SOPHIE. Don't worry about it Neil, you'll soon get used to it.

NEIL. Used to it?

SOPHIE. It's like this on all TV shows – it's an industry thing.

NEIL. It wasn't like this on Blue Peter.

SOPHIE. Really? It was in my day.

NEIL. You worked on Blue Peter?

SOPHIE. It was my first job. And you had to be careful where you went and with who or you could end up with sticky back plastic in places where it's painful to remove it from.

NEIL LOOKS SHOCKED. JAKE AND SOPHIE LAUGH GOOD NATUREDLY AT HIM. JAKE IS SUDDENLY AWARE THAT A SMALL CHILDS LAUGHTER HAS JOINED THEM.

JAKE. Shhh! Did you hear that?

SOPHIE. Hear what?

JAKE. I could've sworn I heard someone else laughing.

THEY ALL LISTEN.

SOPHIE. I don't hear anything.

JAKE. (CALLING) Anyone there?

THEY ALL LISTEN AGAIN. AFTER A FEW SECONDS SILENCE NEIL GOES TO SPEAK WHEN THERE IS THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ON THE GANTRY ABOVE THE STAGE. THEY ALL LOOK UP.

JAKE. (CALLING) Hello. Who's up there? Bruce, is that you.

SHORT SILENCE. THEY LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER.

SOPHIE. (CALLING) Hello up there.

THEY HEAR THE LAUGHTER OF A SMALL CHILD FROM THE GANTRY.

JAKE. (CALLING) Who is that?

SOPHIE. What's a child doing up there? (CALLING) Is anyone up there with you?

THE CHILDS LAUGHTER IS HEARD AGAIN.

SOPHIE. We'd better go and look; it's dangerous up in those lighting gantrys.

JAKE. I don't know Soph, it's not our child and anyway we've got to get set up.

SOPHIE. What if she falls?

JAKE. She won't fall.

SOPHIE. She might.

JAKE LOOKS DOUBTFUL FOR A MOMENT. HE CATCHES SOPHIE'S EYE AND RELENTS.

JAKE. Oh alright. I'll go up there. Sophie, you go and find that theatre manager bloke and find out why there's a kid running around in his lighting gantry.

NEIL. What should I do?

JAKE. You'd better carry on setting up mate. Heaven help us if we're not ready when the lotollah gets back. Come on Soph.

JAKE AND SOPHIE EXIT. NEIL, LEFT ALONE ON THE STAGE, GLANCES ABOUT, UNCERTAIN WHAT TO DO FOR THE BEST.

NEIL. (CALLING UP INTO GANTRY) Just stay where you are, someone's coming up to get you.

NEIL LOOKS VAGUELY ABOUT AND THEN CONTINUES TO SET UP THE EQUIPMENT. HE WHISTLES A FEW BARS OF TUNELESS NOISE AS HE WORKS. AS HE DOES SO THE DISTORTED, ANGRY WHISPERING IS BRIEFLY HEARD, ALBEIT QUITE QUIETLY. NEIL GLANCES ABOUT UNCERTAINLY, NOT SURE WHAT HE HAS JUST HEARD.

NEIL. Hello? Anyone about?

THE WHISPERING STARTS AGAIN, LOUDER THIS TIME AND FOR SLIGHTLY LONGER. NEIL LOOKS AROUND, SUDDENLY QUITE SCARED.

NEIL. Who's there? Who's doing that? Jake, is that you messing around?

NEIL PEERS OUT INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE AUDITORIUM WHERE HE THINKS HE SEES SOMEONE.

NEIL. Who's out there? Sophie, is that you?

THE WHISPERING STARTS AGAIN, EVEN LOUDER AND CONTINUES. NEIL'S EYES DART ALL THE PLACE AS HE TRIES TO WORK OUT WHAT'S GOING ON, THE LIGHTS VERY SLOWLY BEGIN TO DIM. NEIL SHIVERS SUDDENLY PUTTING HIS ARMS AROUND HIMSELF AS THE THEATRE SEEMS TO GET COLDER. THE CHILDS LAUGHTER IS HEARD AGAIN, OVER THE WHISPERING.

NEIL. What's going on? (*SHOUTS*) Who are you? What are you doing?

THE LIGHTS CONTINUE TO DIM AS THE WHISPERING CONTINUES. THE CHILD VOICE BEGINS SINGING. NEIL BACKS AWAY TOWARDS THE REAR OF THE STAGE ALL THE TIME GLANCING ROUND HIM AND SHIVERING.

NEIL. Alright, that's enough – stop mucking around.

A PIECE OF WOOD DROPS FROM THE GANTRY ONLY JUST MISSING NEIL. HE SCREAMS OUT IN SHOCK. THE WHISPERING AND SINGING STOP ABRUPTLY AND THE LIGHTS RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL LEVEL. JAKE IS HEARD CALLING FORM THE GANTRY.

JAKE. Shit! Sorry mate, knocked that in the darkness. You ok?

NEIL PICKS UP THE WOOD STILL GLANCING ALL AROUND HIM, TERRIFIED.

NEIL. Jake, is that you?

JAKE. Course it's me you big twat; who else is it going to be?

NEIL. Where have you been?

JAKE. What do you mean, where have I been? I've been climbing up into this bloody gantry to look for a bloody child who, incidentally, isn't bloody here.

NEIL. Are you sure?

JAKE. (*IRRITATED*) Yes I'm sure.

NEIL. But I heard it. I heard a child.

JAKE. I know, I was there, I heard it too. In fact I heard it first. Anyway, there's no child here now – they must've found a way down. Any sign of Sophie?

NEIL. No. Well I don't think so.

JAKE. You don't think so?

NEIL. I saw someone in the auditorium.

JAKE. Who?

NEIL. I don't bloody know do I? That's why I said someone rather than specifying a name.

JAKE FINALLY NOTICES THE PANIC IN NEIL'S VOICE.

JAKE. You ok down there mate.

NEIL. I don't know; something really weird just happened.

JAKE. What?

NEIL. I don't know, I... I saw something. And I heard something.

JAKE. What sort of something?

NEIL. I don't know. But it was angry.

JAKE. Angry?

NEIL. Definitely angry. It felt... angry.

JAKE. (*UNSURE HOW TO TAKE THIS*) OK. I'm coming down, wait there.

NEIL. Alright.

NEIL CONTINUES TO GLANCE AROUND ALL OVER THE PLACE, SCARED AND UNSETTLED. HE HEARS A MOVEMENT OFF.

NEIL. (*SCARED*) Who's there?

SOPHIE. (*OFF*) It's only me.

SOPHIE ENTERS.

SOPHIE. I can't find that theatre manager guy anywhere. Has Jake found the little girl?

NEIL. No, no, there's no one up there.

SOPHIE. That's strange; wonder where she got to. Are you ok Neil, you look a bit shaken up?

NEIL DROPS TO HIS HAUNCHES PUTTING HIS ARMS BACK ROUND HIMSELF. SOPHIE MOVES TO HIM, CONCERNED.

SOPHIE. Hey, what's up?

NEIL. I felt something Sophie, something terrible.

SOPHIE. What do you mean, you felt something?

NEIL. There's something here in the theatre; something terrible and angry.

SOPHIE. What?

NEIL. I'm telling you Sophie, I felt it.

SOPHIE PUTS AN ARM AROUND NEIL AS HE BEGINS TO SHAKE.

SOPHIE. Shhhh. Whatever it was, it's not here now.

NEIL. We should get out of here. Now!

SOPHIE. Yeah, not sure that Bruce is going to go for that plan somehow.

NEIL. I've got a bad feeling. It's not safe in here.

SOPHIE. It's just an old theatre Neil, there's nothing here except us and the manager.

JAKE ENTRES HURRIDLY.

JAKE. Everything ok?

SOPHIE. I'm not sure, Neil seems a bit...

NEIL. We've got to get out of here Jake, there's something here.

JAKE. Insane?

SOPHIE. Shaken up.

JAKE. You say tomato...

SOPHIE. Shut up Jake. Can't you see he's clearly in a bad way!

NEIL HAS LAPSED INTO SILENCE BUT CONTINUES TO STARE AROUND WITH HIS ARMS WRAPPED AROUND HIMSELF FOR WARMTH AND COMFORT.

JAKE. What do you supposed happened to him?

SOPHIE. I don't know. Whatever it was happened pretty quickly. What should we do?

JAKE. (*SHRUGS*) No idea. Get him a cup of tea?

SOPHIE. That is so rubbish. Is that the best suggestion you can make?

JAKE. Hey, I'm open to ideas.

SOPHIE. (*THINKS*) OK, we'll give the cup of tea a go. Give me a hand with him.

JAKE AND SOPHIE LIFT NEIL BETWEEN THEM AND LEAD HIM FROM THE STAGE. AS THEY LEAVE, MR WESTON ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE WATCHING THEM, WITH A CRUEL SMILE ON HIS FACE. HE MOVES TO THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE AND MUTTERS QUIETLY TO HIMSELF, UNDER HIS BREATH. THE WHISPERING STARTS, QUIETLY BUT GETTING LOUDER. WESTON THROWS BACK HIS HEAD, HIS LIPS MOVING SOUNDLESSLY AS THE WHISPERING GETS LOUDER.

BILL. (*OFF*) Hello? Where the bloody hell is everyone?

WESTON SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED, THROWS AN ANGRY GLANCE OFFSTAGE AND THE WHISPERING ABRUPTLY STOPS. BILL ENTERS WITH A CARRIER BAG CONTAINING VARIOUS BOTTLES OF ALCOHOL. HE IS A LITTLE TIPSY BUT IN GOOD SPIRITS.

BILL. Hello old chap. I say, don't s'pose you've seen any of my bunch about the place have you? Ghastly lot, work in TV.

WESTON. You're here with the TV Production company?

BILL. That's right; bit late I'm afraid. Got waylaid in the local pub. Rather a marvelous little place, 'The Slaughtered Lamb' it's called. Do you drink there?

WESTON. No, I've never been in.

BILL. You should, you really should. Lovely beer, lovely barmaids and lovely food. Really rather splendid food. Might have over-eaten a little, actually.

WESTON. Really?

BILL. Yes indeed.

BILL PATS HIS STOMACH AND BELCHES. HE GRINS STUPIDLY.

BILL. Might well have eaten all the pies, as they say.

WESTON. Is that so?

BILL. It is. It is so. You might want to have a check; if you find you're a pie or two down that was probably me. Ha!

WESTON. I see. You must be the one they've been swearing about; Bill?

BILL. That's me old boy, Bill Saunders. Nice to meet you.

***BILL ADVANCES ON WESTON, HAND OUTSTRETCHED.
WESTON STARES AT HIM IN DISGUST BUT BRIEFLY
SHAKES HIS HAND.***

WESTON. My name is Weston, I'm the theatre manager. And you are the (SARCASTIC) 'psychic' I believe.

BILL ROARS WITH LAUGHTER AT THIS.

BILL. Yes, that's me. Psychic Bill.

WESTON. And what do you sense in this theatre, psychic Bill?

BILL. Sense?

BILL LAUGHS AGAIN.

BILL. Nothing.

WESTON. Nothing?

BILL. No, no can't sense a thing my dear old chap; wouldn't know where to start.

WESTON. I beg your pardon?

BILL. Well it's a load of horseshit isn't it! Pardon by French!

WESTON. A load of old...

BILL. Ghosts and hauntings and all that old claptrap.

WESTON. You don't believe in such things?

BILL. Heavens, no. Never have. I've been working on this show for a few years now; been some rum old places and seen some darned strange things, but nothing that would convince me that there's any such things as ghosts.

WESTON. Doesn't that make being a psychic rather difficult?

BILL. Not for me it doesn't. Brucey-baby's normally got some backstory for me on whatever particular ghost I'm supposed to be contacting and I just sort of wing it from there.

WESTON. Wing it?

BILL. Rather. I'm pretty good at winging things you know.

WESTON. I see. So this whole show is just a fabrication – a series of lies to entertain the gullible.

BILL. Couldn't have put it better myself.

WESTON. Rather an immoral way to make a living wouldn't you say.

BILL LAUGHS AGAIN.

BILL. Not a bit of it old boy, no. There are worse ways to make your living. Just a bit of harmless fun isn't it, really. No one gets hurt.

WESTON. Oh but people will get hurt Mr Saunders, I promise you that.

BILL. What the...?

BRUCE. (*SHOUTING, OFF*) Bill! Where the hell have you been?

BILL. (*TO HIMSELF*) Oh Christ, here we go.

BRUCE ENTERS, KAREN TRAILING IN HIS WAKE.

BRUCE. What the hell time do you call this?

BILL. Haven't a clue old sport. 3ish?

BRUCE. 3ish!

BILL. Maybe 4ish?

BRUCE. Try 5ish!

BILL. OK, then. 5ish?

BRUCE. Bill, you are more than an hour late – where the hell have you been?

BILL. Sorry old boy; had all sorts of problems finding this place. Had to stop and ask directions. As luck would have it I found this rather charming little hostelry by the name of 'The Slaughtered Lamb' not 5 minutes walk from this venue.

BRUCE. Oh for Christ's sake!

BILL. So, as, as I was running a little ahead of schedule I thought to myself "Bill, old scout," I thought, "how's about popping in here and soaking up a little of the local atmosphere?" So I headed on in to chat to the locals, sample a few of the local ales and get a little bite to eat. Very pleasant it was too, very pleasant.

BRUCE. Well that's fascinating Bill, although I'm not sure what purpose that tale served other than to take us all a minute closer to our own deaths.

BILL. Well it did occur to me that I might find out a little about the spirit that haunts this place.

BRUCE. And did you?

BILL. Not really old boy, no. They didn't even know where the theatre was, never mind whether or not it was haunted! Found out a bit about some other local spirits mind.

BILL SHAKES THE CARRIER BAG GENTLY AND THE BOTTLES CLINK.

BRUCE. (SARCASTIC) Well that's just brilliant Bill.

BILL. Isn't it though! Perhaps we should take some time out to sample a couple now, eh?

BRUCE. I think perhaps you've had enough for now.

BILL. (DISAPPOINTED) Oh, really?

KAREN. Yes really. You know the old saying, "a healthy liver's a happy liver".

BILL. You just made that up.

KAREN. No I didn't. Now then, we're pretty well ready to start so if we can get you into costume and make up...

BILL. You going to dress me Karen?

BILL MAKES KISSING MOTIONS AT KAREN WHO GLARES BACK.

KAREN. Go. Now!

BILL. Yes, m'lady!

BILL EXITS, CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF.

BRUCE. I'd better go check the rushes from the external shooting. You ok to be getting on in here?

KAREN. I'm sure I'll find away to manage without you. God knows how.

BRUCE. Well you just do your best babe. I'll be back shortly.

BRUCE EXITS. KAREN GLARES AFTER HIM FOR A MOMENT. SHE THEN PRODUCES A WALKIE TALKIE FROM HER POCKET.

KAREN. (INTO WALKIE TALKIE) Crew and Kim to the stage please. Now.

THERE IS AN INAUDIBLE REPLY.

KAREN. (INTO WALKIE TALKIE) I don't give a stuff if he's feeling ill; get everyone to the stage now.

KAREN POCKETS THE WALKIE TALKIE. SHE SUDDENLY BECOMES AWARE THAT WESTON IS STILL ON THE STAGE, WATCHING HER. HIS DISLIKE FOR HER IS CLEAR FROM HIS FACE.

KAREN. Yes?

WESTON. Sorry?

KAREN. Can I help you?

WESTON. You? (THOUGHTFUL) No, I don't think *you* can.

KAREN. Well then, if you wouldn't mind...

KAREN GESTURES TOWARDS OFFSTAGE.

WESTON. Are you asking me to leave Ms Meadows?

KAREN. I'd no idea I'd been so subtle – I apologise for any confusion. Yes, I'm asking you to leave.

WESTON. Then maybe you could do me the courtesy...

KAREN. Now.

WESTON RAISES AN EYEBROW.

KAREN. (THROUGH GRITTED TEETH) Please.

WESTON. Very well.

WESTON EXITS AT A LEISURELY PACE. **KIM** ENTERS A MOMENT LATER FROM ONE SIDE, FOLLOWED SECONDS LATER BY **JAKE**, **SOPHIE** AND **NEIL** FROM THE OTHER.

KAREN. Ah there you all are, good. Are we ready to start?

KIM. I am Ms Meadows.

KAREN. Excellent. How about you lot?

JAKE. Pretty much I think.

KAREN. I'd prefer a slightly more definite answer.

JAKE. It's the best one you're getting.

JAKE TURNS HIS BACK ON HER AND STARTS ATTENDING TO THE EQUIPMENT ON THE STAGE.

KAREN. What?

SOPHIE. Sorry Ms Meadows, we got held up during the set up.

KAREN. What do you mean you got held up?

SOPHIE. Neil came over ill so we had to...

KAREN. Ill? What's the matter with him?

SOPHIE. He, erm...

NEIL. It was the ghost. It was horrible.

KAREN. What?

NEIL. I heard it and I felt it.

KAREN. (TO SOPHIE) What is he talking about?

NEIL. It's here, it's real and it's angry.

KAREN. (TO SOPHIE) Is he trying to be funny?

SOPHIE. I don't think so, no.

KAREN. I'm not having my shoot delayed while the crew messes around.

SOPHIE. Right. He is in a bit of a bad way though.

KAREN. Well tell him to pull himself together; we need to get on.

SOPHIE. Ok. (*TO NEIL*) Neil, pull yourself together; we need to get on. (*TO KAREN*) I'm not sure that helped.

KAREN IS IGNORING HER AND HAS TURNED HER ATTENTION TO JAKE INSTEAD.

KAREN. Well?

JAKE. Well, what?

KAREN. Are we ready?

JAKE. Yes, we're ready.

KAREN. Good. Then let's get on. You'll be shooting close ups, Sophie, you'll be shooting full length.

SOPHIE AND JAKE MAN THEIR CAMERAS. AIDED BY SOPHIE, NEIL GETS HIS BOOM MIC READY.

KAREN. We'll do the full introduction which will be the usual welcome spiel followed by the piece around the mystery of the little girl. (*TO KIM*) You, waste of space, come and stand here.

KAREN SIGNALS THE POINT ON THE STAGE WHERE SHE WANTS KIM. KIM GIVES HER A REPROACHFUL LOOK AND MOVES TO HER MARK.

KIM. Yes Ms Meadows.

KAREN. You've worked out what you're going to say?

KIM. Yes.

KAREN. Good. We'll go straight for a take then. Quiet please everyone.

JAKE. We're already quiet.

KAREN. Shhh!

BRUCE. (*SHOUTING, OFF*) Karen, what the hell is this crap?

KAREN. Oh great! (*SHOUTING*) What?

BRUCE ENTERS LOOKING ANNOYED.

BRUCE. Didn't it occur to any of you clowns to check the external footage before you decided to wrap?

KAREN. Of course we did. Sophie and I checked it; it's fine.

BRUCE. Fine? What the hell...

KAREN. What's wrong with it?

BRUCE. It's unusable is what's wrong with it. The picture quality is so poor you can hardly see what's going on. It's all going to have to be re-shot.

KAREN. It's not unusable, it's fine. Sophie?

SOPHIE. We viewed it Mr DeLoy; it's a clean shoot.

BRUCE. What the hell are you talking about? Come and see it.

KAREN. Bruce, we've got to get on...

BRUCE. Yeah we have, and the first thing we've got to get on with is shooting this external establishing montage of yours and quickly, before the light completely fails.

KAREN. I tell you, it doesn't need re-shooting.

BRUCE. And I'm telling you, it does. Crew, with me. Let's get this sorted out.

ALL MAKE TO EXIT, THE CREW CARRYING THEIR EQUIPMENT. KAREN STOPS KIM.

KAREN. No not you.

KIM. Oh. But...

KAREN. No buts; I don't need you hanging around, getting in the way. Stay here and rehearse your piece to camera – we don't have time for your normal amount of re-takes so try not to mess it up.

KAREN EXITS.

KIM. Bitch.

***KIM** WANDERS AROUND THE STAGE TRYING OUT A FEW LINES SHE IS IN DEEP THOUGHT AND ALL THESE LINES ARE TO HERSELF. SHE ENDS THIS SPEECH WITH HER BACK TO THE AUDIENCE.*

KIM. We have something a bit special for you on tonights...no, that's awful. On 'The Spirit Level' tonight we have a mystery to solve right here at the Royal Theatre in...hmmm, better. This building...no, no, this *fantastic* old building is shrouded in mystery... shrouded, hmmm. Steeped maybe? Steeped in mystery, shrouded in mystery? No, shrouded, shrouded's better. So... this fantastic old building is shrouded in mystery, the greatest of all being the mystery that surrounds a little girl by the name of May.

*THE DISTORTED, ANGRY WHISPERING IS BRIEFLY HEARD.
KIM SPINS ROUND, UNSURE WHAT SHE JUST HEARD.*

KIM. Hello?

***KIM** IS SILENT, LISTENING.*

KIM. Is anyone there?

*WE HEAR THE CHILDS LAUGHTER BUT IT'S NOT CLEAR WHERE FROM. **KIM** LOOKS AROUND, SURPRISED AND A LITTLE AFRAID.*

KIM. Hello? Who's that?

*THE CHILDS VOICE BEGINS SINGING. **KIM** TURNS LOOKING ALL AROUND HER. SHE SHIVERS, FEELING SUDDENLY COLD AND PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HERSELF.*

KIM. Is this someone messing around? Cos it's not funny!

*THE DISTORTED, ANGRY WHISPERING IS BRIEFLY HEARD AND THE LIGHTS GO OUT. **KIM** GASPS IN SHOCK.*

KIM. Shit. Look, whoever's doing this, it isn't funny. Put the lights back on. Now!

WE HEAR THE CHILD LAUGH AGAIN, ECHOEY AND GHOSTLY.

KIM. Oh shit, oh crap, oh shit.

***KIM** PULLS HER MOBILE PHONE FROM HER POCKET AND USES THE LIGHT FROM THAT TO TRY AND SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.*

KIM. Please. Is anyone there? (*TO HERSELF*) Oh crap, no signal.

*USING THE LIGHT FROM THE PHONE SCREEN **KIM** HEADS TO THE REAR OF THE STAGE WHERE THERE IS A LIGHT SWITCH. SHE HITS THE SWITCH AND SOME OF THE LIGHTS GO ON. THERE IS A LITTLE GIRL, **MAY**, STOOD NOT FAR FROM **KIM** ON THE STAGE LOOKING AT HER WITH A DEAD EXPRESSION ON HER FACE. A DISTORTED MALE VOICE SHOUTS "NO" AND THE LIGHTS GO OUT AGAIN. IN THE DARKNESS **KIM** SCREAMS.*

BILL. (CALLING, OFF) Kim, is that you? You alright? (PAUSE) Kim?

*THERE IS A BANG AS **BILL** TRIPS OVER SOMETHING OFFSTAGE IN THE DARKNESS.*

BILL. (OFF) Ow! Bugger it all. Who's been messing around with the bloody lights!

*THE LIGHTS COME UP AND SECONDS LATER **BILL** ENTERS. **KIM** IS CROUCHED ON THE FLOOR SHAKING. HER EYES DART AROUND IN TERROR. **BILL** MAKES HIS WAY OVER TO HER.*

BILL. Kimmy? You alright old thing?

*THERE IS NO REACTION FROM **KIM**. **BILL** CROUCHES BY THE SIDE OF HER.*

BILL. I say, Kim?

KIM. Bill?

BILL. What's the matter ole girl? No offence, but you look like shit. Or is that the style right now?

KIM. Oh, Bill.

***KIM** MOVES QUICKLY INTO **BILLS** ARMS FOR COMFORT. HE LOOKS SLIGHTLY AWKWARD, AND DOES A FAIRLY BAD JOB OF COMFORTING HER.*

BILL. There, there. Whatever's the matter?

KIM. Bill, it was horrible. Horrible.

BILL. What was?

KIM. I saw her. I saw the little girl.

BILL. What little girl; whatever are you on about?

KIM. The little girl; May.

BILL SHRUGS.

KIM. She's the one who haunts this theatre. The ghost.

BILL. Sorry, are you trying to tell me you saw a ghost?

KIM. She was right here Bill, on the stage with me.

BILL ROARS WITH LAUGHTER.

BILL. Nonsense, dear girl.

KIM. It's not funny!

BILL. I'm sorry but look, there's no such thing as ghosts.

KIM. But I saw her Bill.

BILL. I've been in this game a long time now – I was making the whole psychic thing sexy before you were even born. And I've never see, heard or experienced anything that would make me believe in ghosts.

KIM. She's was right there though.

KIM POINTS TO WHERE SHE SAW MAY AND SHUDDERS.

BILL. How could you know; it was pitch black?

KIM. No, I switched the lights back on; just for a moment. And there was this voice... this horrible mans voice.

BILL. Look Kim, come on, settle down...

KIM. We should get out of here Bill. It's not safe here; I can feel it.

BILL. You're just being silly. Now there's got to be some logical explanation.

KIM. Like what?

BILL. Oh, I don't know. Someone fooling around with the lights I expect, trying to give you a fright.

KIM. Who? There's nobody here.

BILL. Well obviously there is. Or there was.

KIM. Well what about the child?

BILL. Trick of the light.

KIM. Trick of the light?

BILL. Well... it could have been any old child.

KIM. You're not serious?

BILL. The doors aren't locked; anyone could wander in.

KIM. No, Bill that isn't the way it was.

BILL. Well it must have been something like that. Honestly Kim. Seen a ghost, indeed!

KIM. I suppose but... there was just this terrible feeling.

BILL. Feeling?

KIM. There was anger, terrible anger. And loneliness.

BILL. (*KINDLY*) Now you're just being silly again. Someone's played a bit of a prank on you, got you scared and your imagination's done the rest.

KIM. (*UNCONVINCED*) I don't know...

BILL. Trust me. Heck, it's what we do for a living. Wouldn't surprise me if someone working here thinks it a bit of a wheeze to turn the tables on us. And they've done a pretty good job by the looks of you, girl.

KIM. Well, maybe.

BILL. You know I'm right.

BILL GLANCES AROUND.

BILL. Now then, where are the others? We should be getting on really.

KIM. They went to re-shoot the external stuff.

BILL. Really? Cocked it up did they? Ha! That crew of ours are lovely bunch but they're a load of crap, they really are.

NEIL, JAKE, SOPHIE AND KAREN ENTER.

- BILL.** Ah, there you all are – we were just talking about you.
- JAKE.** Yes, we heard, thank you Bill.
- SOPHIE.** You alright Kim; you look a bit peaky.
- KIM.** Oh, I...
- BILL.** She's fine, just had a bit of a shock.
- SOPHIE.** A shock?
- BILL.** Someone just played a prank on her and gave her a bit of a fright, eh Kimmy?
- KIM.** I saw the ghost Sophie.
- SOPHIE.** What?
- NEIL.** You saw it too?
- KIM.** She was here on the stage with me. And there was this whispering, and a voice...
- KAREN.** Oh for goodness sake, pull yourself together girl. There are no ghosts in here.
- KIM.** But I saw it.
- NEIL.** And so did I.
- KAREN.** I don't care, alright. We've got a show to get made, we're considerably behind schedule and I don't need my team getting hysterical and jumping at shadows. Now you two are both quite new to this game and it's not unusual for people to get caught up in what we do so let me be quite clear – there are no ghosts. We invent the ghosts, we make all the mysterious noises and Bill pretends that he gets possessed. It's just us playing some silly childish tricks that with a bit of useful editing manage to look vaguely realistic on TV. I've been into god knows how many "haunted houses" in the last six years and there's been nothing – nothing at all. Isn't that right Bill?
- BILL.** Tried to tell them that myself Karen.
- KAREN.** You've both had a bit of a shock tonight but there is nothing in here to be frightened of except perhaps me and Mr DeLoy if we don't get on and get this episode made. Alright?

KIM AND NEIL NOD, A LITTLE RELUCTANTLY.

KAREN. Good. Let's get on then shall we? Places, everyone.

SOPHIE AND JAKE SHOULDERS THEIR CAMERAS TAKING POSITIONS NEXT TO EACH OTHER BUT SEPERATED BY SEVERAL FEET, FACING THE AUDIENCE. NEIL MOVES TO THE CENTRE OF THEM. KIM TAKES HER POSITION BETWEEN THE TWO CAMERAS FACING AWAY FROM THE AUDIENCE. THE ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN EVERYONE CHANGES AT THIS POINT – THE BITCHINESS AND UNPLEASANTNESS IS FORGOTTEN AS EVERYONE BECOMES PROFESSIONAL AND FOCUSED.

BILL. Do you need me for this bit old girl?

KAREN. Not immediately, but don't wander off. We'll bring you in after Kim's done the opening piece and the two of you can chat about the atmosphere of the place and the eerie feel and all that other bullshit that you're so good at making up. Alright?

BILL. Fair enough.

KIM NODS.

KAREN. Alright then – we're looking for no more than ten minutes footage here and as you know we're pushed for time so if we can get through this in no more than three takes that'll be perfect. Ready cameras?

JAKE. Check.

SOPHIE. Ready.

KAREN. And roll. Sound?

NEIL. Running.

KAREN. Good. Kim?

KIM. Ready.

KAREN. On my mark then. Three... two... one... action.

BRUCE. (OFF) You guys done yet?

KAREN. Oh, fu... cut!

BRUCE ENTERS.

BRUCE. Come on, come, time is money.

KAREN. For God's sake Bruce, we were just about to start.

BRUCE. Start? We should be finishing this bit by now, not starting.

KAREN. Well interrupting isn't helping.

BRUCE. (PAUSE) A word please Karen.

BRUCE AND KAREN MOVE TO THE REAR OF THE STAGE WHERE THEY BEGIN TO ARGUE IN HUSHED TONES. BRUCE GESTURES AT HIS WATCH A LOT WHILST KAREN POINTS TO BILL, KIM AND NEIL DURING THE ARGUMENT, RECOUNTING THE PROBLEMS THEY'VE HAD. KIM MOVES TO THE SIDE OF THE STAGE STILL SHAKEN FROM SEEING MAY. NEIL PUTS HIS STUFF DOWN AND GOES TO TALK TO HER. THEY DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES. BILL SHRUGS, PULLS A HIPFLASK FROM HIS POCKET, SWIGS DEEPLY FROM IT AND WANDERS OFF. JAKE AND SOPHIE LOWER THEIR CAMERAS AND MOVE FORWARD.

JAKE. Going well, isn't it! Honestly, what's the matter with everyone today?

SOPHIE. It's this place.

JAKE. This place?

SOPHIE. Yeah, there's something about it. Can't you feel it?

JAKE. Oh no, don't you start.

SOPHIE. There is though.

JAKE. It's just your imagination. Ok, so Bruce is being more impossible than normal...

SOPHIE. A bit? And what about Karen; she's in a foul mood.

JAKE. I hadn't noticed much difference.

SOPHIE. Neil and Kim are both acting weird.

JAKE. Oh everyone's just getting jumpy. I've seen this before when we do the haunted house gigs – one person gets silly and then everyone else starts. All bloody Neil's fault.

SOPHIE. I don't think so. There are some weird things going on.

JAKE. Like what?

SOPHIE. That child we heard.

JAKE. Oh so we heard a child; big wow.

SOPHIE. But where did it go?

JAKE. Who cares?

SOPHIE. Ok then, what about the film?

JAKE. (*THOUGHTFUL*) Yeah, ok, that was odd.

SOPHIE. Odd? It's more than odd? That film was fine when we shot it; I watched the playback.

JAKE. Maybe something happened to the camera?

SOPHIE. What can happen to a camera that makes a digital image deteriorate like that?

JAKE. I don't know. But there's got to be a reasonable explanation. (*MOCKING*) Unless you think the ghost did it.

SOPHIE. Don't take the piss. I think we ought to find out a bit more about this place.

JAKE. What? Why?

SOPHIE. Because there's something about it. It's creepy

JAKE TRIES TO PUT AN ARM AROUND SOPHIE BUT SHE SHRUGS HIM AWAY.

SOPHIE. Not here.

JAKE. Why not?

SOPHIE. Cos everyone's around.

JAKE. Like they don't already know.

SOPHIE. Let them think what they like - we agreed to keep it private. For now.

JAKE. (*BITTER*) For now – yeah, sure.

SOPHIE. Look you know I have to be careful; I could lose everything. It's ok for you.

JAKE. It's not ok for me. I hate all this sneaking about. I hate the fact that I only get to see you at work and the occasional Sunday. I hate that I know every inch of your body but I'm not allowed to know your phone number in case Gary picks up.

SOPHIE. If Gary finds out he will take me for everything I've got. Please be patient Jake; I'll get something sorted out. I promise.

JAKE. Yeah but when?

SOPHIE. God, I don't know. As soon as...

BRUCE AND KAREN HAVE FINISHED THEIR ARGUMENT AND MOVE TO THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE.

BRUCE. OK, can we get on again please!

JAKE AND SUSIE PART WITH TOO MANY THINGS LEFT UNSAID. ALL RESUME THEIR FILMING POSITIONS IN A SULLEN SILENCE.

KAREN. Alright, everybody ready?

JAKE, SOPHIE, NEIL AND KIM ALL NOD.

KAREN. Good. Same plan as before then. Three... two... one... action.

KIM. (TO CAMERA) On 'The Sprit Level' tonight we have a mystery to solve right here at the Royal Theatre in Dunbourne. This fantastic old building is shrouded in mystery, the greatest of all being the mystery that surrounds a little girl by the name of May. I can't think of another programme we've ever done where all we've known about the ghost is their name but that's the case tonight.

GUIDED BY KAREN, KIM TURNS SLOWLY SO SHE IS FACING THE AUDIENCE WITH THE CREW MOVING ROUND HER.

KIM. (TO CAMERA) We have no idea who May was, how she died and how her spirit came to end up here, in this theatre. We have no idea how she managed to drive away the hordes of theatrical companies who used to play here. We have no idea what further mysteries we'll uncover as we delve into May's past. But find them out we will aided as always by our resident psychic, Bill Saunders who will be getting on the Spirit Level very shortly. Bill...

KIM TURNS TO BRING BILL IN, ONLY TO REALISE THAT HE ISN'T THERE. KIM LOOKS AT THE CREW AND KAREN, THROWN.

KAREN. Cut! Where the hell is he?

BRUCE. Carry on, I'll go find him.

BRUCE EXITS CALLING.

BRUCE. (CALLING) Bill? Bill?

KAREN. Right, we'd better skip ahead. Well done Kim; that was very good.

KIM. Thank you Ms Meadows.

KAREN. By your standards. We'll get the lights dimmed down to minimum and go for a "scary" sequence.

SOPHIE WANDERS OFF WHILST JAKE PLAYS AROUND WITH THE CAMERAS. THE LIGHTS DIM AS KIM AND KAREN SPEAK.

KIM. Oh, but don't we usually have Bill on for those?

KAREN. Yes but Bill doesn't usually wander off somewhere and we're not usually running behind schedule. So tonight we'll make do with just you and the crew. I want big, scared reactions from all of you. I'll make the noises.

KAREN MOVES TO THE SIDE OF THE STAGE AS SOPHIE RE-ENTERS.

SOPHIE. Light levels alright?

KAREN. Look good to me. Jake?

JAKE IS LOOKING THROUGH THE CAMERA VIEWFINDER.

JAKE. Good to go.

KAREN TALKS INTO HER WALKIE TALKIE.

KAREN. Bruce, are you there? Bruce? (NO REPLY) Damn it! Look, if you can hear me we're about to go for a take so keep quiet and keep backstage until I tell you otherwise. Bruce? Bruce?

KAREN GIVES UP AND PUTS THE WALKIE TALKIE AWAY.

KAREN. Alright then, going in three... two... one... action.

KIM. (TO CAMERA) We're here on the stage of the Royal Theatre. It's gone midnight, there's no one about but us. We believe that this might be the area of the theatre where little May died all those years ago.

KAREN EXITS AND RE-ENTERS MOMENTS LATER WITH A PIECE OF WOOD.

KIM. (TO CAMERA) There's been no sightings of her yet tonight but Bill has felt her moving around so we know she's here somewhere. (RAISES VOICE) May, are you there? (PAUSE) If you're here in the theatre with us can you show yourself to us? (PAUSE) Can you give us some sort of a sign if you can hear me May?

***KAREN** THROWS THE PIECE OF WOOD MAKING SURE SHE MISSES EVERYONE ON STAGE. IT LANDS LOUDLY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. **KIM** SWINGS ROUND ACTING SCARED. COMPARED TO WHAT WE SAW FROM HER EARLIER IT SEEMS SLIGHTLY FALSE.*

KIM. What was that?

*THE CREW GETS IN ON THE ACT NOW. **JAKE** LOWERS HIS CAMERA TO LOOK WHERE THE NOISE WAS AND **NEIL** LOOKS THAT WAY WHILST **SOPHIE** KEEPS FILMING. THE CREW ARE ALL TERRIBLE ACTORS.*

JAKE. I think it came from over there.

NEIL. What was it?

JAKE. I don't know.

KIM. Is there anyone over there? May, is that you?

***SOPHIE** WALKS PAST THEM ALL NOW, FINDING HER WAY USING THE CAMERA. **JAKE** PICKS HIS CAMERA UP TO FILM HER, KEEPING **KIM** AND **NEIL** IN SHOT.*

SOPHIE. I can't see anyone. Hello?

KIM. Are you alright Sophie?

SOPHIE. Yeah, I'm fine I...

***SOPHIE** HAS HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE WOOD AND DOES A PRAT TRIP OVER IT. AS SHE DOES SO SHE CRIES OUT.*

KIM. Sophie, what's wrong?

SOPHIE. (PAUSE) Nothing, I just tripped over something.

***SOPHIE** PICKS UP THE WOOD AND BRINGS IT OVER TO **KIM**. **NEIL** AND **JAKE** GATHER ROUND.*

JAKE. What is it?

KIM. A piece of wood.

JAKE. Where did that come from?

JAKE SCANS HIS CAMERA ROUND AS IF TRYING TO FIND SOMEONE.

KIM. It wasn't there when we came in.

NEIL. Are you sure?

SOPHIE. Where would it have come from?

NEIL. (*CRYING OUT IN SUDDEN PAIN*) Argh!

EVERYONE JUMPS IN GENUINE FRIGHT AS **NEIL** WRENCHES HIS HEADPHONES OFF AND SHAKES HIS HEAD TRYING TO CLEAR IT.

NEIL. Shit!

SOPHIE. Jesus Christ, Neil.

JAKE. You scared the crap out of me.

KAREN. Cut!

JAKE. I am way ahead of you!

KAREN. What the hell is going on?

NEIL. The bloody feedback coming down the mic. Shit, that really hurt.

KAREN. Oh don't be such a crybaby.

NEIL. Seriously, it's blown all the levels.

KIM. We're not going to have to that whole sequence again, are we!

KAREN. We'd better not. Jake, set it to playback please; let's hear what we've got. Sophie, would you put the lights back up again please.

SOPHIE EXITS. **JAKE** AND **NEIL** PLAY AROUND WITH THE EQUIPMENT. **KAREN** GETS THE WALKIE TALKIE OUT.

KAREN. (*INTO WALKIE TALKIE*) Bruce, we've had to take a break; you and Bill can get back to the stage now. (*NO REPLY*) Bruce? Bruce, where are you? (*WE HEAR THE CHILD SINGING THROUGH THE WALKIE TALKIE*) What the...?

KIM GASPS IN HORROR, HER HAND GOING TO HER MOUTH. KAREN DROPS THE WALKIE TALKIE IN SURPRISE AND THE SINGING CUTS OUT. NEIL LOOKS TERRIFIED.

NEIL. Oh my god. That's what I heard; that's the child.

KIM. May!

KAREN. (*SHAKEN*) Don't be ridiculous.

NEIL. Well, what was it then?

KAREN. It was just a bit of random feedback.

NEIL. Random feedback? It was a child singing!

KAREN. It must just be a bit of cross-channel interference.

KIM. Where are Bruce and Bill? What's happened to them?

KAREN. They're probably round the back drinking some of Bills gutrot.

KIM. And where's Sophie? Shouldn't she be back by now?

THEY ALL TURN AND LOOK OFFSTAGE TO WHERE SOPHIE EXITED, SUDDENLY AWARE THAT SHE HASN'T RETURNED AND THE LIGHTS ARE STILL DIMMED.

JAKE. (*CALLING*) Sophie? Sophie, where are you?

THE LIGHTS SUDDENLY COME BACK UP.

SOPHIE. (*CALLING, OFF*) Sorry.

SOPHIE ENTERS, LAPTOP IN HAND.

SOPHIE. Got distracted; just went to grab Kim's laptop.

JAKE. Kim's laptop?

SOPHIE. Yeah, I just want to do a bit more research. Do you mind me using it Kim?

KIM. Not at all.

SOPHIE. Thanks.

SOPHIE PUTS THE LAPTOP DOWN AND SWITCHES IT ON.

JAKE. Research? At a time like this!

SOPHIE. Well...

JAKE. We were worried something had happened to you.

SOPHIE. I was just over there.

JAKE. Yeah but...

SOPHIE. What was going to happen to me over there?

NEIL. We can't get hold of Bill and Bruce.

KIM. And we heard the little girl again.

SOPHIE. What? Where?

KIM POINTS AT THE WALKIE TALKIE, LOOKING TERRIFIED OF IT.

KAREN. Rubbish. It was just a crossed channel Sophie; that was all.

SOPHIE. And Bill and Bruce?

KAREN. They'll be round the back somewhere getting drunk. Now Jake, are we ready with that playback yet?

JAKE. Ready.

THEY ALL GATHER ROUND JAKE'S CAMERA AS HE HOLDS IT. WE HEAR THE CREW GOING THROUGH THEIR TERRIBLE DIALOGUE WHEN THEY FIND THE PIECE OF WOOD. SUDDENLY, OVER THE TOP OF IT, DROWNING OUT EVERY WORD COMES THE DISTORTED BACKWARDS WHISPERING. NEIL AND KIM ARE TERRIFIED.

KAREN. What the hell is that?

JAKE. That's no feedback.

NEIL. That's the noise I heard earlier.

KIM. I heard it too. When I saw May.

KAREN. Stop it, both of you. This is ridiculous...

*FROM NOWHERE THE WHISPERING AND ALL THE DIALOGUE ON THE PLAYBACK IS DROWNED OUT BY A DISTORTED MALE VOICE BELLOWING "GET OUT". **JAKE** DROPS THE CAMERA IN SHOCK BUT **SOPHIE** CATCHES IT. THE PLAYBACK STOPS AND THERE IS SILENCE. **NEIL, KIM, JAKE, SOPHIE** AND **KAREN** STARE AT EACH OTHER IN FEAR AND CONFUSION.*

BLACKOUT. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE CHILD SINGING.

END OF ACT 1.

ACT 2

*THE LIGHTS COME UP TO SHOW THAT SOME CHAIRS HAVE BEEN DRAGGED ON TO THE STAGE. **BRUCE, BILL, KAREN, SOPHIE AND NEIL** ARE SAT AROUND THE STAGE THE EQUIPMENT LEFT WHERE IT WAS AT THE END OF ACT 1. **SOPHIE** IS ON THE LAPTOP, DEEP IN THOUGHT. **BILL** HAS A BOTTLE OF SOMETHING IN HIS HAND WHICH HE OCCASIONALLY SWIGS FROM.*

KAREN. ...and that's when the voice cuts in.

BRUCE. But you guys didn't hear any of that at the time?

NEIL. I did Mr DeLoy but in the headphones.

BRUCE. And only in the headphones?

NEIL. Yes.

BRUCE. I see. And you haven't all been on hard, hallucinogenic drugs whilst I was away?

KAREN. (*SNAPS*) No, of course not. Where the hell were you anyway?

BILL. My fault I'm afraid – was just showing Bruce some of the wonderful samples I got on the way here.

KAREN. (*TO BRUCE*) You were supposed to go and fetch Bill so we could get on with the shoot.

BRUCE. And you were supposed to be filming so we thought it best not to interrupt you.

KIM AND JAKE ENTER WITH 6 CUPS OF TEA AND COFFEE ON TRAYS.

JAKE. Brews up. Who was on tea?

SOPHIE, KAREN AND NEIL ALL SIGNAL. JAKE PASSES DRINKS OUT. KIM TAKES A CUP OVER TO BRUCE.

KIM. White coffee?

BRUCE. Black coffee.

KIM. Two sugars?

BRUCE. No sugar.

KIM. (FLUSTERED) Oh! I'm sorry; I've made you the wrong drink.

BRUCE. It's alright; don't worry about it.

KIM. Really?

BRUCE. Sure. You can go back and make me the right one.

KIM. Oh!

KIM LOOKS OFFSTAGE, FRIGHTENED.

KIM. On my own?

BRUCE. Yeah, why not?

KIM. I'd just rather...

KIM TAILS OFF LOOKING MISERABLE.

SOPHIE. I'll come with you.

KIM. Really?

SOPHIE. Course. Come on.

KIM. Thank you.

KIM AND SOPHIE EXIT.

JAKE. (TO BILL) Not having a cuppa?

BILL. Oh no, old boy – I'm fine with this.

BILL GESTURES WITH HIS BOTTLE.

JAKE. What is that?

BILL PASSES JAKE THE BOTTLE. JAKE READS FROM THE LABEL.

JAKE. "Throatripper... citrus liqueur... 65%... may contain nuts and cause blindness."

JAKE PASSES THE BOTTLE BACK TO BILL.

BILL. Cheers old darling. Will you join me?

JAKE. You know, I think I'll pass Bill, cheers.

BILL. Up to you old boy.

KAREN. (*TO BILL*) So, what do you want to do?

BRUCE. Do?

KAREN. Yes.

BRUCE. Carry on, of course.

KAREN. What, with all the problems we're having?

BRUCE. I don't see them as problems.

KAREN. What? What about the picture quality on the externals?

BRUCE. Well, ok, that was a problem.

KAREN. And the distortion on the soundtrack?

BRUCE. A minor issue.

KAREN. And the fact we're now over an hour behind schedule?

BRUCE. If you're going to keep on looking for problems...

KAREN. Add to that the fact that everyone's incredibly spooked.

BRUCE. So they should be – we're supposed to be filming in a haunted theatre.

NEIL. We are filming in a haunted theatre.

BRUCE. Well ain't that a bonus.

NEIL. Are you serious?

BRUCE. Hell, yeah, I'm serious.

NEIL. But...

BRUCE. Ain't no buts about it. Look here; all of you. We need to get our usual shoot done and we need to do it tonight. Now normally we wonder around haunted buildings and we don't see jack shit. But then we roll up here and weird stuff happens. Am I only the person here who thinks that brilliant?

EVERYONE EXCHANGES GLANCES AND SITS IN SILENCE.

BRUCE. Obviously I am. Guys, we have got so lucky here and I'm shocked and disappointed that I'm the only person who can see that.

JAKE. Lucky?

BRUCE. Damn right we're lucky. You know why? Cos either this is a real, genuine, bona fide haunted building and we're gonna get the chance to film it...

NEIL. But I don't want to film in a real, genuine bona fide haunted building.

BRUCE. Then maybe you shouldn't have taken a job on a programme that's about haunted buildings then, numb-nuts.

NEIL. What if it's not safe?

BRUCE. Of course it's safe.

KAREN. What if it's not really haunted and it's just someone messing around with us?

JAKE. Which it most likely is.

BRUCE. Thank you Jake. Well, in the first place it means it's definitely safe so little Neily-poo can stop worrying. And in the second place, if someone's jerking us about, then fine. Let 'em.

KAREN. Let them?

BRUCE. Why not? Usually we have to fake a haunting. If someone wants to do it for us it just saves us the job.

KIM AND SOPHIE ENTER. KIM TAKES THE TEA OVER TO BRUCE WHILST SOPHIE RETURNS TO THE LAPTOP. JAKE MOVES TO BE NEAR SOPHIE.

KAREN. But we won't know what they're going to do and when they're going to do it.

BRUCE. Well maybe that's a good thing.

BRUCE TAKES THE TEA FROM KIM, SLAPPING HER BUM AS SHE WALKS AWAY.

BRUCE. Thanks babe. Means we might get some convincing reactions from the cast and crew for once.

JAKE. Charming!

BRUCE. If I said anything to offend it was purely intentional.

KIM. Well I think we should get out of here.

BRUCE. (*ANNOYED*) When I want your opinion Kimmy, I'll give it to you.

KIM. You haven't seen this ghost; you haven't felt what it's like. It's angry and it's dangerous and it wants us to get out of here.

KAREN. What makes you think that?

KIM. You heard that voice on the recording – it told us to get out.

SOPHIE. I've been thinking about that voice.

KAREN. What about it?

SOPHIE. It was a man's voice.

KAREN. So?

SOPHIE. So I thought this theatre was supposed to be haunted by a little girl!

NEIL. So who's the man?

SOPHIE. And what's all that freaky whispering about?

KIM. Maybe there's more than one ghost.

JAKE. And maybe there's none. The fact that there's only supposed to be one ghost and yet we've supposedly heard at least two suggests the story's a load of rubbish.

BRUCE. Exactly. It's just that Weston guy messing with us. And I say let him carry on.

JAKE. He's doing a pretty good job after all.

NEIL. It's not someone messing around I tell you. Kim's right – you haven't experienced it. It's more than just some noises; it's the way the whole place feels. You can feel that there's someone here and they want to hurt you. And what if there's more than one ghost here? This place has been here a long time; who knows what might have happened? I tell you all, it's not safe and we should leave. We should leave now, Mr DeLoy.

BRUCE. Oh sorry, was that speech aimed at me? I'm sorry I if I looked interested in what you were saying. I'm not. And I want to be quite clear on this point. We are not leaving.

KIM. I am.

NEIL. And so am I. Anyone else?

SOPHIE LOOKS TEMPTED BUT THE OTHERS LOOK AWAY.

BRUCE. Oh so you're leaving are you?

KIM. Yes.

BRUCE. Well before you do I think I should remind you that you are under contract to this production and that to leave will be to directly break the terms of that contract. Now you really might want to think twice before you break your contract because, you know, word gets round about things like that and suddenly, getting jobs can become trickier. Particularly when you're a very inexperienced sound engineer just starting out. And pretty young TV presenters, well... they're ten a penny really aren't they. I guess what your kindly Uncle Bruce is trying to say is that if either of you leave this shoot before we wrap then I will make it my business to see that you find jobs extremely hard to come by in the future.

KIM. Bastard.

BRUCE. That's *Mr* Bastard to you. So, shall we get on?

KIM. (*QUIETLY, BEATEN*) Alright.

NEIL. No.

BRUCE. No?

NEIL. I don't take kindly to bullying Mr DeLoy so it won't stop me from leaving. I don't know how you think you can finish your shoot without a sound engineer but I wish you the best of luck. And if I find you've tried to block me from getting jobs in the future then I shall be on to my union, my lawyer and the press about it.

BRUCE. Gee, I can hardly contain my indifference. If you want to go then go you big girl. I've got a programme to make and believe me, I don't need you to do it.

NEIL. Fine. Are you coming Kim?

KIM. I can't.

NEIL. You can. Don't let him bully you.

KIM. I can't afford to lose my job Neil. I'm staying.

NEIL. OK fine.

*NEIL LOOKS AROUND THE CREW FOR MORAL SUPPORT
BUT NO ONE WILL MEET HIS EYE.*

NEIL. Fine.

*NEIL EXITS. THERE IS A BRIEF, EMBARRASSED SILENCE
WHERE NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TO SAY.*

BRUCE. Shall we get on then?

KAREN. How?

BRUCE. What?

KAREN. How are we going to get on? We haven't got a sound engineer.

BRUCE. Yes we do. Sophie started out as sound engineer; she can do it.

SOPHIE. Me? I haven't done sound work for years.

BRUCE. Then this is the exciting opportunity you've been waiting for to re-use those old skills.

SOPHIE. What about the union?

BRUCE. Well I guess we only have to worry about their opinion if anyone mentions anything to them. And as that isn't going to happen under any circumstances at all I really don't see it's a problem. What do you reckon Sophie?

SOPHIE. I don't think it'll be a problem Mr DeLoy.

BRUCE. Well that's just swell.

KAREN. I think it might be a problem though. It only leaves us one camera.

BRUCE. So we just make do with that. Jake's a capable lad; he'll manage. And think of all the time we'll save on editing.

KAREN. It's going to look crap.

BRUCE. You're the director honey; make sure it doesn't.

*KAREN GLARES AT BRUCE FOR A MOMENT. THEN SHE
GETS TO HER FEET.*

KAREN. Alright, up we get everyone; let's get back to it.

KIM, SOPHIE AND JAKE DON'T LOOK HAPPY ABOUT IT BUT GET UP. JAKE GETS HIS CAMERA WHILST SOPHIE GETS THE MIC. KIM STARTS PREPARING HERSELF. BILL TRIES TO RISE BUT IS CLEARLY DRUNK AND IS ALL OVER THE PLACE.

KAREN. (MUTTERS) Oh great! Bill, are you alright?

BILL. Champion, old thing. Just a bit tired...

KAREN. That's all I need.

JAKE. What are we going to do?

KAREN. Well we'd better hurry up and get the possession scene filmed whilst our esteemed psychic can still stand up. Let's clear these chairs away please. Sophie, could you dim the lights please.

KIM, KAREN, BRUCE AND JAKE CLEAR THE CHAIRS WHILST SOPHIE EXITS. THE LIGHTS DIM. BILL LEANS AGAINST THE WALL LOOKING A LITTLE UNSTEADY. ONCE THE STAGE IS CLEAR EVERYONE RETURNS AND SETS UP FOR THE SHOOT.

KIM. Where do you want to go from?

KAREN LOOKS THOUGHTFULLY AT BILL.

KAREN. Given the state of Bill I think we'd better leave ourselves an easy edit point. Tell you what; we'll start with you two entering the stage area. Sophie you get in shot behind them with the mic.

JAKE. You want a tracking shot?

KAREN. I think so. It'll look fine with the one camera. Bill, you can be talking your usual nonsense about what you feel and then go straight into possession.

BILL. Will do old girl. What's this ghosts name again?

KAREN. Mary.

BRUCE. May.

KAREN. May, then.

BILL. May it is then. Got it.

BILL SHAMBLES OFF THE STAGE. KIM AND SOPHIE FOLLOW. BRUCE WANDERS TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE TO WATCH.

KAREN. OK, so Jake; start with a shot of the empty stage then move to show the other walking out of the shadows and onto the stage.

KIM. (OFF) Are we talking as we come into shot?

KAREN. Yes please. Everyone ready?

NO ANSWER.

KAREN. I'll take that as a yes. Going in three...two...one...action.

JAKE INITIALLY FILMS THE EMPTY STAGE AND THEN MOVES SO HE IS FILMING INTO THE WINGS.

KIM. (OFF) And what have you picked up so far Bill?

BILL. (OFF) Well I'm picking up a lot of energy Kim...

KIM AND BILL ENTER, WALKING AND TALKING. SOPHIE FOLLOWS JUST BEHIND WITH THE BOOM MIC.

BILL. ... a lot of energy, particularly on the stage here. Something happened here.

KIM. What? What happened here?

BILL. I'm not sure, I can feel that... I know the name May walks around and there's this peace and calm of spiritual activity here with...

BILL TAILS OFF WITH A CHOKING NOISE. KIM LOOKS CONCERNED AND GOES TO HIM. SOPHIE TOO, ACTS CONCERNED. BRUCE GRINS TO HIMSELF, AMUSED.

KIM. Are you alright?

KIM TAKES BILLS HAND.

KIM. (REASSURING) You're alright.

BILL CLOSSES HIS EYES AND LOOKS LIKE HE IS STRUGGLING TO SPEAK. HE SWAYS A LITTLE.

SOPHIE. Where's he going? Is he alright?

KIM HOLDS UP A HAND AS IF ASKING FOR SILENCE. BILL CONTINUES TO SWAY AND SOUNDS LIKE HE IS TRYING TO FORCE WORDS OUT.

BILL. Scary.... dark... scary...

KIM. It's alright, it's ok.

BILL QUITE SUDDENLY RELAXES AND HIS BREATHING BECOMES EASIER. HIS EYES OPEN. WHEN HE SPEAKS IT IS NOT FORCED BUT IT IS A CHILDLIKE VOICE HE USES.

BILL. I don't like it here. It's dark and it's lonely and I'm scared.

JAKE. Who are you?

KIM. May? Is that May?

BILL. Who are you?

KIM. My name's Kim. What's your name?

BILL. I'm May.

KIM. Hello May. What's your surname?

BILL. Turner.

KIM. And how old are you?

BILL. I'm seven.

BRUCE STIFFLES A LAUGH AND NODS IN APPROVAL.

SOPHIE. Why are you here May? Why are you in the theatre?

BILL. I don't want to be. I don't want to be in the theatre. The bad man brought me here and now I can't get out.

KIM. It'll be alright May; we're here with you.

SOPHIE. The bad man? Who's the bad man?

BILL. (*PANIC*) The bad man. He made me come here.

KIM. Well the bad man's not here now May, there's only us here. You're perfectly safe.

BILL. No. The bad man's here too. He can't leave either.

KIM. What?

BILL. He can't leave and I can't leave.

KIM. Why can't you leave May?

BILL. I don't know. But I'm lonely and I'm scared.

KIM. Scared of the bad man?

BILL. Yes. I don't want to be left on my own with the bad man.

KIM. You poor frightened little girl.

BILL. You seem nice. Will you stay with me?

KIM. Stay with you?

BILL. Yes. You're nice. Will you stay with me and we can play games and you can keep the bad man away from me.

KIM. I'm really sorry May but I can't stay with you.

BILL. Please.

JAKE. May, none of us can help to protect you from the bad man – sorry.

BILL. Why not?

JAKE. We all have to leave here later on and we're not coming back.

BILL. (TO KIM) Are you leaving?

KIM. I have to.

BILL. But I don't want you to. Please stay with me.

**BRUCE SIGNALS A THUMBS UP TO THE CAST AND CREW.
KAREN LOOKS AT HER WATCH AND MAKES A 'WRAP IT UP'
SIGN TO BILL.**

KIM. I can't stay with you May, I'm so sorry. And I need to speak to Bill again now.

BILL. Who's Bill?

KIM. Bill's the man you're talking to me through.

BILL. I don't like him; he's nasty.

KIM. (*PUZZLED*) Bill? Bill's not nasty.

BILL. He has nasty thoughts. He can leave. I don't want him here.

***KIM** LOOKS TO THE OTHERS, PUZZLED. THIS ISN'T PART OF THE USUAL ROUTINE. **JAKE** AND **SOPHIE** LOOK EQUALLY PUZZLED. **KAREN** SIGNALS AT HER WATCH. **BRUCE** ROLLS HIS EYES.*

BRUCE. (*MUTTERS*) Oh for Christ's sake, stupid old ham.

KIM. No one here's nasty May; we're all here to help.

BILL. Will you stay with me? I want someone to look after me.

KIM. I can't stay, I'm so sorry.

KAREN. Alright, that's enough, cut it there.

***JAKE** AND **SOPHIE** LOWER THEIR EQUIPMENT. **KIM** BREAKS OUT OF ROUTINE. **KAREN** WALKS FORWARD TO JOIN THEM ALL. **BILL** DOESN'T CHANGE HIS POSTURE OR SPEECH PATTERN.*

KAREN. Bill that was great well done.

BRUCE. Over the top if you ask me.

KAREN. I didn't. Why didn't you stop when I told you to; didn't you see me signaling? Bill?

BILL. Don't leave me here, please.

KAREN. Bill?

BILL. I don't want to be left here alone with the bad man.

KAREN. Yes, yes, it was very good but we've wrapped now. It's going to be a pain in the arse to edit as it didn't end properly but...

BILL. (*TO KIM*) Please stay with me.

JAKE. What's he doing?

BRUCE. Bloody man, drunk out of his mind. You should never drink on an empty head.

BILL. (TO KIM) Please stay with me.

KIM. It's not him.

JAKE. What?

KIM. It's not Bill; it's the little girl.

JAKE. Don't be stupid.

KIM. Then why is he still acting possessed?

KAREN. I don't know. That's enough Bill, we need to get on.

BILL. Bill? He's the man I'm talking through?

KAREN. (SIGHS) This isn't funny.

BILL. You can't have him back.

SOPHIE. What?

BILL. You can't have him unless you stay with me.

SOPHIE. We can't stay with you.

BILL. Then you can't have your old man back.

KAREN. I've had enough of this.

KAREN MOVES TO STAND FACE TO FACE WITH BILL.

KAREN. You stop this right now Bill – I've had enough of people messing me about today.

BILL. I don't like you. I don't want you here either.

BILL SUDDENLY REACHES OUT A HAND AND GRABS KAREN BY THE THROAT AND STARTS THROTTLING HER. KAREN STRUGGLES BUT SHE CANNOT DISLodge BILLS HAND. KIM SCREAMS AND BACKS AWAY. JAKE AND SOPHIE GRAB AT BILL AND KAREN AND TRY TO SEPARATE THEM. BRUCE RUNS ACROSS THE STAGE TO HELP.

JAKE. Shit. Bill, what are you doing?

SOPHIE. Let her go. Bill, let her go.

BRUCE. Bill, what the hell is going on?

JAKE. I can't budge his hand.

SOPHIE TRIES HITTING BILLS ARM AT THE JOINT BUT IT IS LOCKED TIGHT. KARENS STRUGGLES GET WEAKER AND WEAKER UNTIL HER LEGS GO AND SHE DIES. BILL RELEASES KAREN AND HER BODY DROPS TO THE FLOOR.

KIM. (SCREAMS) No.

SOPHIE, JAKE AND BRUCE RELEASE BILL. SOPHIE KNEELS BY KAREN'S BODY CHECKING FOR ANY SIGN OF LIFE. BILL SUDDENLY SAGS AND RETURNS TO HIS USUAL STANCE. HE LOOKS AROUND IN TOTAL CONFUSION.

BILL. The strangest thing just happened.

BILL WINCES IN PAIN AND PUTS A HAND TO HIS CHEST. HE COLLAPSES.

JAKE. Jesus, what the...

JAKE KNEELS BY BILL CHECKING FOR A PULSE.

BRUCE. Well?

JAKE. No Bruce, he's not well. He's dead.

BRUCE. And Karen?

SOPHIE. The same.

BRUCE. Jesus Christ.

KIM SQUATS AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE AND STARTS TO CRY. BRUCE MOVES SLOWLY TO KAREN'S BODY AND KNEELS BESIDE HER.

JAKE. I'm not sure he's going to be much help right now. We should get the police.

BRUCE. The police?

JAKE. Yes. Two people have just died – I think we should get the police.

SOPHIE MOVES VACANTLY TO KIM AND PUTS AN ARM AROUND HER.

KIM. What just happened Sophie?

SOPHIE. I don't know.

JAKE MOVES OVER TO BRUCE AND PUTS A HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.

JAKE. Come on Bruce.

BRUCE. She really hated me you know.

JAKE. What?

BRUCE. She hated me. Hated my guts. I never stopped loving her.

JAKE. Erm.. are you sure this is the best time?

BRUCE. She wanted to keep our baby you see, and I wouldn't let her.

JAKE. (AWKWARD) Right.

BRUCE. I was married and I didn't need the scandal. I put a lot of pressure on her and she agreed. She was only just starting out and I kinda threatened her. Poor kid.

JAKE LOOKS AT BRUCE WITH A MIX OF DISGUST AND EMBARRASSMENT. THERE IS A PAUSE. JAKE HAS NO IDEA WHAT TO SAY.

BRUCE. I always felt responsible for her after that. Paid her well over the odds for working on this show so she'd be ok. And so she'd still be around me. I guess I always hoped that one day she might forgive me. Well, that'll never happen now.

BRUCE WIPES AWAY A TEAR. JAKE CLEARS HIS THROAT, STILL FEELING AWKWARD.

JAKE. Is that why she hated everyone so much?

BRUCE. Everyone? No, she hated me and, hated this show and she hated the money she earned for it. But she liked you all a great deal. I know she didn't always manage to show it too well. But she really did like you all. Well, apart from Kim. She hated Kim.

JAKE. Why? Kim's one of the nicest people you could ever meet.

BRUCE. I think Karen resented her. She saw a lot of herself in Kim and thought she was going to make the same mistakes. She was convinced I'm sleeping with Kim.

JAKE. Well you are, aren't you?

BRUCE. Oh don't think I haven't tried. But she won't let me touch her.

JAKE. I'm surprised you haven't sacked her!

BRUCE. I've thought about it but, you know, I'm kinda enjoying the challenge.

JAKE. (*GENTLY*) Bruce?

BRUCE. Yeah?

JAKE. You really are a total bastard.

THE SOUND OF MAY'S LAUGHTER IS HEARD THOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR FROM WHERE. KIM CRIES OUT. THE OTHERS LOOK FRIGHTENED.

BRUCE. What the...?

JAKE. (*SHOUTING*) If this is someone's idea of a joke then...

SOPHIE. It's not a joke Jake, for Christ's sake.

JAKE. Oh so what do you think is going on then?

KIM. It's the little girl; she's doing this.

JAKE. Don't be stupid.

SOPHIE. Why is that stupid?

JAKE. Why? I can't believe you're really asking me that.

SOPHIE. What do you think is going on then Jake?

JAKE. I think Bill drank too much and it's probably killed him.

SOPHIE. So why did he kill Karen first?

JAKE. Well, we've all thought about it...

SOPHIE. Jake!

JAKE. Look I don't know do I? Probably out of his mind.

SOPHIE. He wasn't out of his mind; he was fine until he was... possessed.

JAKE. Possessed? For crying out loud Soph, you've worked on this show long enough to know all that stuff is faked.

SOPHIE. Listen; there is something really weird going on. I've been checking up on this place and Kim is right – according to every record I can find online, this theatre doesn't exist.

BRUCE. How can that possibly be? We're in it.

SOPHIE. I don't know how; I'm just telling you what I've found out.

KIM. So if the theatres not here then where are we?

JAKE. Will you two just stop it – the theatre is obviously here.

SOPHIE. Oh this is just so typical of you.

JAKE. What is?

SOPHIE. This is! Something's happened that you can't accept and you won't listen to anyone else's /opinion

JAKE. Oh, here /we go

SOPHIE. you just keep on talking shit and try to make it match your /view of the world

JAKE. another Sophie lecture, aren't we/ lucky!

SOPHIE. even if what you're saying doesn't make /any sense

JAKE. What's it going to be about this time /I wonder

SOPHIE. and it makes you look like a total /prick!

JAKE. the fact I talk /too much

SOPHIE. There's obviously something going /on here

JAKE. or is it that I don't /listen?

SOPHIE. that none of us really /understand

JAKE. I wouldn't mind /but

SOPHIE. so why can't you just /accept that

JAKE. it's not like you ever bloody listen anyway.

SOPHIE. Yes I do.

JAKE. I hate it when you do that.

SOPHIE. Do what? Prove you wrong?

BRUCE. That's enough. This isn't the time or place for an argument.

JAKE. She started it.

SOPHIE. Oh don't be such a twat.

JAKE. I am not a twat.

SOPHIE. You're acting like one.

BRUCE. You both are. OK, we're all worked up right now but this is not appropriate behaviour. Now you two kiss and make up or whatever it is you like to do after an argument; I'm going to call the police.

BRUCE EXITS. JAKE AND SOPHIE LOOK AWKWARDLY AT EACH OTHER.

JAKE. Right, erm... sorry, yeah?

SOPHIE. You even apologise like a twat.

JAKE. What?

SOPHIE PUTS HER ARMS ROUND JAKE AND KISSES HIM.

SOPHIE. Sorry.

JAKE. Me too.

THEY KISS AGAIN. KIM LOOKS AWKWARD.

KIM. I think maybe I'll go see if Bruce needs a hand with...anything. (*CALLING*) Bruce, wait up.

KIM EXITS IN A HURRY. JAKE AND SOPHIE GRIN.

SOPHIE. Jake?

JAKE. Yeah?

SOPHIE. I'm really scared.

JAKE. Me too.

SOPHIE. (*STARTING TO PANIC*) There's something really dangerous in here. We should leave.

JAKE. We should wait for the police.

SOPHIE. Can't Bruce do that? And that theatre manager?

JAKE. I think the police might want to talk to us.

SOPHIE. I just want to get out of here.

JAKE. (*REASSURING*) I know. We'll get out soon. I promise.

***JAKE KISSES SOPHIE AGAIN AND HOLDS HER TIGHT.
WESTON ENTERS.***

WESTON. What is this?

***WESTON GESTURES TOWARDS THE BODIES WITHOUT
EMOTION.***

JAKE. Who are you?

WESTON. My name is Weston; I am the manager of this theatre.

JAKE. Where the hell have you been; we've been looking for you?

WESTON. Where I've been is none of your business. Now I ask you again, what is this?

SOPHIE. What do you mean "what is this?". They're dead.

WESTON. I see. How did they die?

SOPHIE. We're not sure.

WESTON. You weren't there at the time?

SOPHIE. No, we were there when...

WESTON. Then you must know how they died.

SOPHIE. Not really.

WESTON. What do you mean, not really? Tell me.

JAKE. Just back off, sunshine. We don't know what caused them to die alright! Now just leave it.

WESTON. The deaths were... mysterious then?

JAKE. They were a bit unusual, yes.

WESTON. Tell me what happened.

JAKE. Why are you so interested?

WESTON. I am the manager. It happened in my theatre on my watch. I think therefore I have some right to know.

JAKE. It was... strange.

SOPHIE. What does it matter how? Two people have died and you don't seem to care.

WESTON. Why should I care? Death is an inevitability.

SOPHIE. How can you be so heartless? They were friends of ours... sort of... and they're dead.

WESTON. Thousands of people die every day but they're just faceless statistics to you and I. In the short time we've been talking a hundred or more will have passed. We cannot mourn for them all.

SOPHIE. That's horrible.

WESTON. That's a matter of fact. Still, I suppose we should at least move your "sort of" friends to a more appropriate place.

JAKE. Move them?

WESTON. Indeed. We can't just leave them lying around on the stage can we?

JAKE. Can't we? Why not?

WESTON. Won't they be in the way?

JAKE. In the way of what – what are you talking about?

WESTON. I thought you were wanting to film here?

JAKE. With two of our people dead? No, we don't want to film here. And I don't think we should move, or even touch, the bodies until the police arrive.

WESTON. The police?

JAKE. Yes. Bruce and Kim have gone to contact the police.

WESTON. I don't think the police will be of much help, do you?

SOPHIE. Why not?

WESTON. Because whilst the deaths of your friends is, I'm sure, regrettable, it is not a matter that the police will be able to help with.

SOPHIE. Why do you say that? What's going on here?

WESTON. You've told me enough for me to know exactly how these deaths came about. And who caused them.

JAKE. Oh really?

WESTON. Oh yes.

JAKE. Who?

WESTON. Why, May of course.

SOPHIE. The little girl.

JAKE. The ghost? Don't be ridiculous.

SOPHIE. Jake, we've been through this – it's not ridiculous.

JAKE. Why would the ghost of some little kid be killing people? What's her reason for doing it?

WESTON. Her reason? Oh it's quite simple. She's lonely and she's scared.

JAKE. Lonely, scared and psychotic.

SOPHIE. Why is she killing people though? I don't understand.

WESTON. May cannot leave this theatre; her soul is tied to it for eternity. And she is alone. Can you imagine that? A poor, scared little girl stuck on her own for eternity.

JAKE. Are you saying it's driven her ghost mad? And now she's going psycho?

WESTON. No of course I'm not. I'm saying that to stop the loneliness, May needs other souls tied to the theatre to keep her company.

SOPHIE. So she kills people?

WESTON. Sometimes directly, sometimes not.

JAKE. How does a ghost kill someone?

SOPHIE. She possessed Bill. That's how she killed Karen.

JAKE. Maybe. But how about Bill?

WESTON. Possession can put a lot of strain on the host. Heart attacks are not uncommon.

SOPHIE. So Karen's soul is tied to this theatre? She's stuck here for eternity?

WESTON. Not necessarily. May has killed quite a number of people over the years but she hasn't found anyone suitable yet.

JAKE. Suitable? What do you mean suitable?

WESTON. She's a very fickle little girl looking for a playmate. If the soul is unsuitable she discards it.

JAKE. Discards it?

WESTON. Oh yes. Those poor lost souls drift around looking for escape. Surely you've heard them?

SOPHIE. The whispering.

JAKE. What?

SOPHIE. All those angry whispering voices we heard. Is that them?

WESTON. That's them. Stuck here.

SOPHIE. But not ghosts like May?

WESTON. Oh no. They are tethered to another.

SOPHIE. Another?

JAKE. Look, I like a good ghost story as much as anyone but I don't buy this. Why doesn't this May attack you?

WESTON. Attack me? Oh no, she keeps away from me whenever she can.

JAKE. But why?

WESTON. She's afraid of me. She calls me the bad man.

SOPHIE. The bad man? Jake, she mentioned the bad man when she was possessing Bill.

JAKE. Why does she call you the bad man?

WESTON. Because she considers this to be my fault, at least in part. When her soul was tied here, she made sure mine was too.

SOPHIE. But where is 'here'? I was researching this theatre and it doesn't appear to exist.

WESTON. No, there hasn't been a theatre on this site for many years.

JAKE. What? Then what is this?

JAKE GESTURES AROUND THEM.

WESTON. This is the site where the theatre used to stand but the building itself is an illusion – an echo created to attract the curious.

SOPHIE. Attract? Why? For what reason?

WESTON. To share the loneliness. Because she can never leave so I can never leave. And you can never leave either.

JAKE. We can leave anytime we like.

WESTON. I think not.

WESTON TIPS HIS HEAD BACK, HIS LIPS MOVING SOUNDLESSLY. THE WHISPERING IS BRIEFLY HEARD.

SOPHIE. (SCARED) Jake!

JAKE. Come on Sophie, let's find the others.

JAKE TAKES SOPHIE'S HAND AND THEY HURRY TO THE SIDE DOOR. IT IS LOCKED.

JAKE. It's locked!

SOPHIE. What?

JAKE. (TO WESTON) Did you lock this door?

WESTON STARES AT THEM WITH A GRIN ON HIS FACE.

WESTON. May needs playmates. Maybe once she has them my soul can go free.

JAKE. You what?

WESTON. You cannot leave. None of you can leave.

SOPHIE. Neil left.

WESTON. Neil?

WESTON THINKS FOR A MOMENT.

WESTON. No, Neil is still with us.

JAKE. What do you mean, he's still with us.

WESTON TIPS HIS HEAD BACK AGAIN, HIS LIPS MOVING SOUNDLESSLY. WE HEAR NEILS VOICE, DISTORTED AND ECHOEY.

NEIL. Sophie... Jake... help me.

SOPHIE STIFLES A SCREAM. JAKE BEGINS TO PANIC.

JAKE. How the hell did you do that? You're insane. Sophie, let's go.

JAKE TAKES SOPHIES HAND AND TRIES TO LEAD HER TOWARDS THE STAGE.

SOPHIE. No, not that way. I'm not going anywhere near him.

JAKE. Try the back door then.

SOPHIE RUNS UP THE STAIRS TO THE BACK DOOR. IT IS LOCKED TOO.

SOPHIE. This one's locked too.

JAKE. (TO WESTON) OK, this is enough now. You unlock one of these doors and let us out of here or...

WESTON. Or what? There's nothing you can do to me.

JAKE. I won't ask you again.

WESTON TIPS HIS HEAD BACK ONCE MORE, HIS LIPS MOVING SOUNDLESSLY. THE WHISPERING STARTS, GETTING SLOWLY LOUDER.

JAKE. (*SHOUTING*) Unlock this door.

*THE LIGHTS FLICKER FOR A MOMENT AND THEN GO HAYWIRE, DIFFERENT LIGHTS FLASHING ON AND OFF. THE WHISPERING GETS LOUDER. **JAKE** MOVES TO **WESTON** GRABBING HIM BY THE LAPELS.*

SOPHIE. Jake, be careful.

JAKE. Stop this, stop it now.

*IN AMONGST THE FLASHING LIGHTS, **MAY** ENTERS. SHE SLOWLY HEADS TOWARDS **JAKE**.*

SOPHIE. Oh my god. Jake, look out.

JAKE. Let us out of here.

WESTON GRABS JAKES ARMS AND PUSHES HIM AWAY, CLOSER TO **MAY** WHO IS STILL SLOWLY ADVANCING. **WESTON** GRINS.

SOPHIE. Jake, behind you.

JAKE SWINGS ROUND. **MAY** IS RIGHT BEHIND HIM.

JAKE. Oh shit.

THE LIGHTS GO OUT AND THE SOUNDS ALL STOP. THERE IS SILENCE FROM THE STAGE.

SOPHIE. Jake! Jake! Are you there?

*THERE IS SILENCE. **SOPHIE** BEGINS TO FEEL HER WAY BACK DOWN THE STAIRS TOWARDS THE STAGE, TRYING NOT TO PANIC.*

SOPHIE. Jake, where are you? Are you alright?

SOPHIE REACHES THE STAGE.

SOPHIE. (CALLING) Jake? (PAUSE) Anyone?

SOPHIE'S VOICE BREAKS AS SHE BECOMES HYSTERICAL.

SOPHIE. (CALLING) Where the hell is everyone?

BRUCE. (CALLING, OFF) Sophie? What's up?

SOPHIE. (CALLING) Bruce? Is that you?

THE LIGHTS COME ON. SOPHIE IS ALONE ON THE STAGE. EVEN KAREN AND BILL'S BODIES HAVE BEEN REMOVED. SOPHIE LOOKS AROUND, BEWILDERED AND SCARED. BRUCE AND KIM RUSH ON.

BRUCE. We heard you yelling; what the heck's the matter?

SOPHIE STARES AT HIM IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT AND THEN BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS. KIM MOVES TO CONSOLE HER.

BRUCE. Oh great, another hysterical bloody woman. Just what we need right now.

KIM. (FIERCLY) Shut up Bruce!

BRUCE TAKES A STEP BACK IN SUPRISE.

BRUCE. What?

KIM. Can't you see she's in a state! What's wrong Soph?

SOPHIE. The ghost was here. It was right here.

BRUCE GLANCES AROUND, UNSETTLED. KIM LOOKS SCARED BUT CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SOPHIE.

KIM. What happened?

SOPHIE. The theatre manager, he was here too. He's wrapped up in this. He locked us in; wouldn't let us leave.

BRUCE. What, that Weston character? He's the joker who's locked all the doors is he?

SOPHIE. All the doors?

KIM. All the theatre doors are locked.

SOPHIE. We're locked in?

BRUCE. Not once I get my hands on Weston we won't be.

SOPHIE. Have you seen Jake?

KIM. No. I thought he was with you.

SOPHIE. He was but...

SOPHIE CHOKES BACK A SOB.

KIM. But?

SOPHIE. He was on the stage and that little girl was going after him.

BRUCE. Going after him?

KIM. Then what happened?

SOPHIE. I don't know. All the lights went out and then there was silence. Then you guys arrived. What if she's taken him?

BRUCE. What?

SOPHIE. May. That's what she does. She kills people; takes their souls.

BRUCE. How the hell is the ghost of a little girl doing that?

SOPHIE. That man, Weston – He's helping her. I think they got Neil too.

KIM. No. He left.

SOPHIE. I heard his voice.

BRUCE. Well then he's fine, isn't he!

SOPHIE. No! You don't understand; it wasn't his normal voice, it was...

SOPHIE BREAKS OFF AND DROPS HER HEAD INTO HER HANDS.

KIM. (TO BRUCE) What are we going to do?

BRUCE. I suggest we go and find Weston; he seems to be behind all this.

SOPHIE. The bad man.

BRUCE. What?

SOPHIE. Weston. He's the bad man.

BRUCE. What are you talking about?

KIM. The one May talked about. She's scared of him.

BRUCE. No shit? Well I think we can handle any ghost that's frightened of a dweeb like Weston.

SOPHIE. Are the police on their way?

KIM. We can't find a phone anywhere. And there are no signals on our mobiles.

SOPHIE. So we're on our own.

BRUCE. Just the three of us.

SOPHIE. Four.

BRUCE. Eh?

SOPHIE. There are four of us. Jake's about somewhere. We should go and find him.

BRUCE. (*MOCKING*) I thought you said the ghost got him!

KIM. Bruce, stop it! We'll go and find Jake in a bit Sophie.

SOPHIE. We should go and look. He might be hurt.

BRUCE. And he might not be.

SOPHIE. We should go and look.

KIM. Whatever we do, we should all stay together.

BRUCE. Well I say we go and look for Weston.

SOPHIE. And I say we go and look for Jake.

BRUCE. Well I'm the boss. I'm *your* boss so you do what I say. OK?

SOPHIE. Well maybe I quit then.

BRUCE. So quit. It's not like we're going to be making any programmes for a while with the director, the sound man and the psychic all dead.

KIM. I'm not sure this is helping much.

BRUCE. And in steps Kimmy with a completely irrelevant point.

KIM. Look, whatever we decide to do, we're going to be wandering around this theatre looking for someone. I don't see it really matters whether we're looking for Jake or Weston; we're going to find someone.

SOPHIE. She's right.

BRUCE. Yeah well, as macho law forbids me from admitting I might be wrong let's just agree that was a mutual decision and go looking, ok?

SOPHIE PEERS OUT INTO THE AUDITORIUM, A SLIGHT FROWN ON HER FACE. VERY QUIETLY WE HEAR JAKE WHISPERING. IT IS DISTOTED AND WRONG, LIKE NEILS VOICE EARLIER. KIM AND BRUCE DON'T NOTICE.

JAKE. Sophie.

KIM. We should find a torch.

BRUCE. What for? The lights are on.

KIM. They are now but you might have noticed that they keep going out.

SOPHIE. Jake?

BRUCE. What?

SOPHIE. Shhhh!

KIM AND BRUCE NOTICE THAT SOPHIE IS STILL PEERING OUT INTO THE AUDITORIUM, AND IS LISTENING INTENTLY.

KIM. Are you ok, Soph?

SOPHIE. I saw someone moving. And I heard Jake.

KIM PEERS INTO THE AUDITORIUM. BRUCE ROLLS HIS EYES AND EXITS.

KIM. Are you sure?

SOPHIE. Course I'm sure. (*CALLING*) Jake, is that you?

KIM AND SOPHIE WAIT FOR A REPLY.

KIM. Sophie, he's not there honey, I'm sorry.

SOPHIE. I saw him. I heard him. (*CALLING*) Jake?

KIM. Where's Bruce gone?

SOPHIE. No idea.

KIM. I thought we agreed to stay together. (*CALLING*) Bruce?

SOPHIE. (*CALLING*) Jake?

KIM AND SOPHIE WAIT FOR A REPLY. WE HEAR MAY LAUGH.

KIM. Oh no.

SOPHIE. Kim!

KIM AND SOPHIE LOOK AROUND TERRIFIED AS MAY STARTS TO SING.

KIM. (*CALLING*) May, please listen to me. I know you're alone and you're frightened but we don't mean you any harm. Please stop this and let us go.

SOPHIE. Kim, that's not going to work – she's psychotic.

KIM. She's just a frightened little girl Sophie. Maybe if she can tell somehow that all I want to do is help, I might be able to get through to her.

THE LIGHTS GO OUT. KIM SCREAMS. THE SINGING STOPS.

BRUCE. (*OFF*) Hey, calm down will you, I'm just testing this torch.

A TORCHBEAM CAN BE SEEN FROM OFFSTAGE.

BRUCE. (*OFF*) Seems pretty good.

THE LIGHTS COME ON. BRUCE ENTERS CARRYING A TORCH.

KIM. Bruce, you dickweed.

BRUCE. What's up?

KIM. You scared the shit out of us.

BRUCE. It was your idea to get a torch.

KIM. Well while you were cocking about with the lights, May was playing with us.

BRUCE. You see her again?

SOPHIE. We heard her.

BRUCE. What did she say?

SOPHIE. Nothing. She was singing.

BRUCE. Singing?

SOPHIE. And laughing.

BRUCE. Singing and laughing? Wow, no wonder you were terrified!

KIM. This isn't a joke Bruce – people are dead.

SOPHIE. And we're in a lot of danger.

BRUCE. Then the sooner we find Weston the better.

KIM. But what are we going to do when we find him?

BRUCE. Get him to let us out of here.

SOPHIE. But he won't.

BRUCE. I can be very persuasive.

KIM. What if he won't though?

BRUCE. I dunno. But we're not going to get very far hanging around here waiting for the next one of us to die. I'm going to find Weston; are you two coming?

KIM. I suppose. Sophie?

SOPHIE. (*SHRUGS*) Might as well.

BRUCE. OK, let's go.

BRUCE EXITS FOLLOWED BY KIM. SOPHIE IS ABOUT TO FOLLOW WHEN SHE HEARS JAKE WHISPERING AGAIN.

JAKE. Sophie.

SOPHIE. Jake? Jake, is that you?

JAKES VOICE BECOMES A BIT STRONGER AND A BIT MORE SING-SONG.

JAKE. Sophie.

SOPHIE. Where are you? Stop messing around.

JAKE. I'm here.

A HAND APPEARS FROM AROUND A CURTAIN BEHIND SOPHIE.

SOPHIE. Where?

SOPHIE TURNS AROUND LOOKING FOR JAKE. SHE STOPS AND GASPS WHEN SHE SEES THE HAND.

SOPHIE. Jake?

THE HAND WAVES AND THEN DISAPPEARS BEHIND THE CURTAIN. SOPHIE TAKES A FEW STEPS TOWARDS THE CURTAIN.

SOPHIE. What are you doing?

JAKE. I'm hiding.

SOPHIE. Hiding?

JAKE. Hiding from the bad man.

SOPHIE. What?

JAKE. It's a game.

SOPHIE. What are you talking about?

JAKE. Will you play the game with us Sophie?

SOPHIE. Jake, what are you talking about? Are you alright?

JAKE. I'm alright. I'm happy now.

SOPHIE. Happy now?

JAKE. Will you come and be happy with me?

SOPHIE. I'm just happy you're alright. I was scared; I thought you might have been...

SOPHIE BREAKS OFF, UNABLE TO SAY THE WORD. SHE MOVES A LITTLE CLOSER TO THE CURTAIN AND THE SOUND OF JAKE'S VOICE.

SOPHIE. We're trying to find a way out. Bruce and Kim have gone ahead. We should catch them up. Jake? Are you there?

JAKE. Shhhh! I'm hiding.

SOPHIE. (*GETTING WORRIED AND SCARED*) Why are you hiding? Jake are you alright?

JAKE. Come here and hide too Sophie. We'll be safe here.

SOPHIE. We'll be safer out of here.

JAKE. Come and play with us Sophie. Come and play with us.

*THERE IS NO ANSWER. **SOPHIE CHEWS HER LIP FOR A MOMENT AND THEN MOVES TOWARDS THE CURTAIN MORE DEFINITELY, HER MIND MADE UP.***

SOPHIE. Jake, we have to get out of here. Come with me, I'll look after you.

*JUST AS **SOPHIE** IS ABOUT TO EXIT, **WESTON** STEPS ONTO THE STAGE WALKING INTO HER. **SOPHIE** DOUBLES OVER HIS FIST WHICH IS IN HER MIDRIF. **SOPHIE** GASPS AND LOOKS UP AT HIM IN SHOCK AND THEN DOWN AT HER STOMACH. **WESTON** PUSHES HER AWAY TO REVEAL THAT HE HAS STABBED HER IN THE STOMACH WITH A KNIFE. HE HOLDS THE BLOODY KNIFE IN HIS HANDS AS **SOPHIE** STAGGERS BACKWARDS HER HANDS HOLDING THE WOUND.*

WESTON. Come and play with us Sophie. We'll have lots of fun.

SOPHIE FALLS TO HER KNEES, GASPING FOR BREATH.

WESTON. Stay here and play with us. For ever.

SOPHIE FALLS ONTO HER SIDE.

SOPHIE. Someone... help me... please...

WESTON. I think she'll like you. You seem nice enough.

SOPHIE. You can't... don't just let me die...

SOPHIE BEGINS TO SOB, REALISING SHE IS ABOUT TO DIE.

WESTON. I'm sorry but I need someone to keep May company, someone she'll like and trust. I just hope that someone is you so we can all go. But to be sure, I need you dead.

SOPHIE. No...

WESTON. And this way, you can be with Jake forever. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

WESTON STEPS OVER SOPHIE AND THEN SQUATS BESIDE HER TO TALK.

WESTON. If I help her find a friend, maybe I can finally go. Maybe I can finally rest.

SOPHIE'S EYES ARE BEGINNING TO GLAZE OVER AND HER BREATHING IS BECOMING MORE LABOURED. SHE TRIES TO SPEAK BUT MAKES AN INARTICULATE SOUND. WESTON TAKES HER FACE IN ONE HAND MOVING IT SO SOPHIE IS LOOKING HIM IN THE EYE. SOPHIE CRIES WEAKLY IN PAIN.

WESTON. That's all I want you know. To rest. I did wrong, I know I did but I've suffered for it and now I deserve some peace.

WESTON LOOKS AT SOPHIE FOR A MOMENT.

WESTON. For what it's worth; I'm sorry.

WESTON RELEASES SOPHIE WHO DROPS BACK TO THE FLOOR LIFELESS.

WESTON. (CALLING) Take her then. Take her and let me go.

WESTON WAITS FOR SOME RESPONSE. WHEN NONE COMES HIS SHOULDERS SAG.

WESTON. Not her then. What a waste.

WESTON EXITS. SOPHIE DIES, HER HANDS FINALLY DROPPING FROM HER WOUNDED STOMACH. THE LIGHTS FLICKER AND WE HEAR MAY LAUGH. THERE IS A BLACKOUT. WE HEAR MAY SING A VERSE IN THE DARKNESS. THERE IS A SHORT SILENCE.

KIM. (CALLING, OFF) Sophie? Where are you?

BRUCE. (OFF) Where the hell's she wandered off to?

KIM. (CALLING, OFF) Sophie?

BRUCE. (OFF) It was her idea that we all stick together.

THE TORCHLIGHT IS NOW SEEN ON THE STAGE. KIM AND BRUCE ENTER.

KIM. (IRRITATED) No, that was my idea.

BRUCE. Really? It just seemed like such a good idea I assumed it was hers or mine.

KIM. (CALLING) Sophie? Jake? Anyone?

THE TORCHLIGHT IS SHONE AROUND AS BRUCE TRIES TO WORK OUT WHERE THEY ARE.

BRUCE. Looks like we found the stage again.

KIM. Then where's Sophie?

BRUCE. I don't think we're going to find her.

KIM. You think she's...

BRUCE. ...dead? I think that's a reasonable guess don't you!

KIM. Oh, Sophie.

BRUCE. I did say we should stick together.

KIM. No you didn't. I did!

BRUCE. Does it matter? There's only you and me left now and if we're going to get out of here, we're going to have to stick together.

KIM. You don't think any of the others are left?

BRUCE. Like who?

KIM. Jake. Sophie said she heard him.

BRUCE. We've all heard people in here. And they ain't all been alive.

KIM. I didn't think you believed the ghost was real!

BRUCE. I might have been persuaded to change my mind. It's made a good case.

KIM. Bruce, what are we going to do? How are we going to get out of here?

BRUCE. The first thing we're going to do is get some lights on. Then we're going to rip seats out, or the bars out the lighting gantry or whatever it takes and then we're going to smash the door down.

BRUCE HAS FOUND HIS WAY TO THE LIGHTSWITCH AT THE REAR OF THE STAGE. HE TRIES IT A COUPLE OF TIMES BUT THE LIGHTS WON'T COME ON.

BRUCE. Goddamn.

KIM. What's wrong?

*THE TORCHLIGHT SWINGS ROUND SO THAT **KIM** IS LIT.*

BRUCE. Stage one in the plan didn't work.

KIM. No lights?

BRUCE. No lights.

MAY. I can make the lights come on.

KIM STIFFLES A SCREAM.

KIM. Oh my God. It's her. Bruce, it's her.

BRUCE. Yeah, yeah, I hear her.

KIM. What do we do?

MAY. You have to say please.

KIM. May? This is May isn't it?

MAY. I can see you. Can you see me?

***KIM** LOOKS AROUND DESPERATELY BUT CAN'T SEE ANYTHING IN THE DARKNESS.*

KIM. Bruce, I can't see her – shine the torch around.

*THE TORCHLIGHT STAYS ON **KIM**.*

KIM. Bruce, move the goddam light. (*SILENCE*) Bruce? Bruce are you there?

MAY. Is he the shouty man?

KIM. The shouty man?

MAY. Bruce. Is he the shouty man?

KIM. Yes. Where is he? What have you done with him? What have you done with everyone?

MAY. Would you like the lights on?

KIM. Oh God, oh please. May, let me out of here, please.

MAY. You're nice. You say please. You were nice to all the others. I like you.

KIM. May, please put the lights on and let me out of here.

*THE LIGHTS COME BACK ON SUDDENLY. **BRUCE** IS LYING DEAD AT THE REAR OF THE STAGE. **WESTON** IS ON STAGE HOLDING THE TORCH. THERE IS NO SIGN OF MAY. **KIM** STARTS AT THE SIGHT OF WESTON, SUPRISED.*

KIM. You! What have you done to Bruce?

WESTON. I'm afraid that Mr DeLoy won't be completing his sixth season. Such a shame. High quality television is so hard to come by.

KIM. Why are you doing this?

WESTON. Because I want to be at rest. For a hundred years now, I've been tied to this place by that evil little bitch and I want my freedom.

KIM. Who are you? What are you?

WESTON. Who am I? I'm Weston, the theatre manager.

KIM. No, I mean...

WESTON. I know what you mean. Before I got stuck here I was a doctor. A psychiatric doctor. And May was one of my patients.

KIM. You said you'd been here a hundred years...

WESTON. Oh yes. My soul is stuck in this place, never able to leave. All because of May.

KIM. Are you a ghost?

WESTON. I don't know what I am. I'm stuck somewhere between life and death; never aging and never ending.

KIM. But why?

WESTON. May keeps me here. She won't let me go. It's her way of punishing me.

KIM. Because you killed her.

WESTON. Me? No, no. I didn't kill her. She was a patient trusted to my care by her parents who were at the end of their tether. In life, May was a dangerously unbalanced little girl who thought nothing of hurting any creature around her. One hundred years a prisoner here has made her even worse.

KIM. What happened?

WESTON. Her parents bought her to the hospital where I worked and May was put in my care. I quickly realised she couldn't be left around the other patients; even attended to she would attack them without thought or care as to the consequences. She spent many weeks with no one for company except me. And she came to hate me. (BITTER) "The bad man" she dubbed me.

KIM. The poor girl.

WESTON. Poor girl? She was as vicious and unpleasant a creature as any I met.

KIM. She was sick.

WESTON. Yes. Yes she was. And I did my best to help her with the knowledge and technology we had at that time.

KIM. But if you were helping her why does she hate you so much? Why is she scared of you?

WESTON. Treatment of the mentally ill was not as advanced back then as it is now. You would think of it as quite brutal. I was trying my best to help her but she saw it as a form of torture. She has had her revenge on me tenfold, trust me.

KIM. What happened to her? What happened to you?

WESTON. Her parents ran out of money and she was to be removed from the hospital. For all my attempts to treat her she had become a wild, reclusive girl not fit to return to normal society. Her parents knew this and begged us to keep her here. But I couldn't.

KIM. You turned her away?

WESTON. It wasn't my choice. I took May's parents to her room and left them to get her ready to leave. I was only away a few minutes.

WESTON TAILS OFF LOST IN HIS MEMORIES. THERE IS A SHORT PAUSE.

KIM. What is it? What happened?

WESTON. When I returned to the room her mother had May pinned to the bed and her father was smothering her with a pillow. I tried to stop them but I was too late.

KIM. That's awful!

WESTON. They did it for the best. They knew they couldn't look after her - no one could. But that was when it all started.

KIM. What happened to her parents?

WESTON. They never got to leave the building. I checked May's body, tried to revive her. But I couldn't – it was too late. And then her spirit struck with terrible vengeance. She took her fathers body over and killed her mother, right there in front of me. As she left her father he keeled over and died too...

KIM. Just like Karen and Bill tonight.

WESTON. And then I felt her attack me. I can't explain it; it was just a massive psychic attack.

KIM. And then...?

WESTON. It was a colossal scandal. The hospital was shut down shortly afterwards and demolished. On the site they built a theatre.

KIM. But... I don't understand. How did you end up there?

WESTON. When May's spirit attacked me I ceased to exist on your plain. I'm not sure that I even existed for a while; not as you would understand it. But then I became aware again and I was here, stuck in the theatre. And then the theatre went too but still I'm stuck here.

KIM. Then I did do my research right; this theatre isn't real.

WESTON. That's right. The theatre is a trap.

KIM. Set by you?

WESTON. Set by May.

KIM. So where are we?

WESTON. We're on the site where it used to stand. The theatre itself is merely an idea that she puts into the minds of those she wants to bring here.

KIM. I still don't understand though. Why did she bring us here? And Why have you been murdering my friends – how will that help?

WESTON. She bought you and your friends here as a perverse sort of joke. You wanted to find ghosts and a ghost found you. As to why I killed them, it's not personal. I want to be let go. I want to die, to rest.

KIM. How will killing us help?

WESTON. May is a savage little girl but she is desperately scared and lonely too. She craves company; playmates. If I can provide her with those, maybe she'll let me go.

KIM. You've killed six people – how many playmates does she need?

WESTON. Oh she only needs one. But she's a very choosy little brat and so far she hasn't found the one she wants. She discards the unsuitable souls and tethers them to me.

KIM. To you?

WESTON. Oh yes; a further element to my suffering.

KIM. So Sophie, Jake, Neil...?

WESTON. None of them were suitable. Which brings us on to you.

KIM. Me?

WESTON. May likes you. You were nice to her when she possessed that damnfool medium. You were the only one not being unpleasant to your colleagues. You have a good heart. You might just be the one she's been looking for.

KIM. Oh no, please.

KIM BEGINS TO BACK AWAY FROM WESTON WHO VERY SLOWLY BEGINS TO ADVANCE ON HER. UNSEEN BY KIM, MAY ENTERS BEHIND HER AND STANDS WATCHING.

WESTON. I'm sorry Kim.

KIM. People will miss us – they'll come looking.

WESTON. No one will miss you – no one will come looking.

KIM. Our friends will. Our families.

WESTON. You are already in a place that doesn't exist. And as May takes your souls so she will wipe you from existence. This is why you couldn't find anything about her when you researched. Or about me. Or about the many others who have been here throughout the years.

KIM. Please. I just want to go home.

WESTON. No one can leave here. This is your home now.

KIM. But you don't know if this will work. You could kill me and still be stuck here.

WESTON. Understand this Kim – I have nothing to lose. As I said, it's nothing personal.

KIM. Maybe if we work together we can talk to her, reason with her. We could work something out – both get out of here.

WESTON. You're forgetting; she's insane. It's very hard to reason with the insane. Still we could ask her I suppose.

WESTON LOOKS OVER KIM'S SHOULDER TO TALK TO MAY. KIM BECOMES AWARE THAT MAY IS BEHIND HER. KIM REALISES SHE IS DOOMED, HER FACE DISPLAYING HORROR.

WESTON. What do you think May?

MAY. I like the nice woman. Stay here and play with me.

KIM TURNS SLOWLY TO FACE MAY, HER SHOULDERS HEAVING AS SHE TRIES NOT TO CRY.

MAY. Keep the bad man away.

KIM. (WHISPERS) Oh no, please no.

MAY TAKES A COUPLE OF STEPS TOWARDS **KIM** AND THE LIGHTS GO OUT. IN THE DARKNESS **KIM** SCREAMS. AFTER A SHORT SILENCE, **MAY** LAUGHS.

THERE IS A PAUSE BEFORE THE LIGHTS COME UP. THE STAGE IS COMPLETELY EMPTY. WE HEAR **WESTON** OFF TALKING WITH **PETE**. THEY ARE APPROACHING THE STAGE.

WESTON. (OFF) ...the size of the plot is quite significant, although the building itself is smallish. For a theatre.

PETE. (OFF) Yes indeed. How old is this theatre?

WESTON. (OFF) Oh, it's been here for around 120 years now.

WESTON AND PETE ENTER. PETE IS A PROPERTY DEVELOPER. HE CARRIES A CLIPBOARD WHICH HE IS MAKING NOTES ON.

PETE. And you're absolutely sure it's not listed?

WESTON. Quite sure.

PETE. What about building restrictions?

WESTON. I'm afraid that's really not my field.

PETE. I'll need to get all that checked out before we would go ahead and buy the plot. Although I have to say there's a lot of potential here.

WESTON. Indeed.

PETE. You must be disappointed about the decision to sell the place.

WESTON. I think it's a tragedy in its own way but there's no use in being sentimental. It's a very old, disused theatre after all.

PETE. Why is it disused?

WESTON. Oh the bookings dried up over the years and it was no longer viable to keep it open. We employ only a skeleton staff now to keep the place running.

PETE. Well thank you for showing me round Mr Weston; it's been a pleasure to meet you.

WESTON AND PETE SHAKE HANDS.

WESTON. What will happen next?

PETE. I'll head back to the office and get the wheels in motion. Between you and me, I'll be recommending we go ahead with the purchase and re-development.

WESTON. How quickly will it start?

PETE. Oh nothing will happen immediately. First of all we'll be sending in a group of surveyors and consultants in. They'll need to be here a few days looking things over.

WESTON. Really? Is that a large group?

PETE. Normally about ten or so in total. They won't be in the way.

WESTON. Ten, eh? Excellent. Excellent.

KIM ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE BUT SHE IS ALTERED FROM LAST TIME WE SAW HER. SHE IS PALE AND WALKS STRANGELY AS THOUGH SHE IS NOT REALLY USED TO WALKING. KIM STARES AT WESTON.

WESTON. Oh, er.. Mr Woodward, this is Kim Daniels, my personal assistant.

PETE. Hi.

PETE MOVES TOWARDS KIM, HIS HAND OUTSTRETCHED TO SHAKE. KIM TAKES A STEP BACK, STARING BLANKLY AT HIS HAND.

WESTON. Kim, shake hands.

KIM LOOKS BLANKLY AT WESTON FOR A MOMENT BEFORE CLUMSILY SHAKING PETE'S HAND. PETE SHUDDERS AT HER TOUCH, WITHDRAWING HIS HAND QUICKLY.

WESTON. I must apologise for Kim. She suffered a trauma a short time back and I'm just helping her to readjust after some time off.

PETE. I see. I'm sorry to hear that.

WESTON. Well, I mustn't keep you I suppose. Thank you again for coming; I look forward to seeing you again and meeting the rest of your team. I'm sure everyone at the Royal Theatre will as well.

PETE. Thank you Mr Weston. It was nice to meet you Miss Daniels.

WESTON SIGNALS TOWARDS THE EXIT AND **PETE** LEADS OFF. **WESTON** FOLLOWS. ALONE ON THE STAGE, **KIM** TURNS HER HEAD SLOWLY TO LOOK OUT AT THE AUDITORIUM. WE HEAR **MAY** LAUGH AND **KIM** GRINS, A HORRIBLE DEAD GRIN. AFTER A MOMENT **WESTON** RE-ENTERS. HE AND **KIM** STARE AT EACH OTHER ACROSS THE STAGE. **WESTON** CROSSES TO **KIM** AND STROKES HER FACE.

WESTON. Did you hear that Kim? There are some more playmates on the way for you and May.
(*TO HIMSELF*) Ten more chances.

WESTON SHAKES HIS HEAD AND EXITS DEEP IN THOUGHT.
KIM REMAINS ON THE STAGE FROZEN.

BLACKOUT.

THE END.