

STORMS, SHEETS, AND SHOW TUNES

A One-Act Play

by

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Cast of Characters

Skip Smith

An anxious, fresh-faced,
dull-witted ghost

Patty Mert

A go-getting do-gooder of a
ghost

James Blake Billington

A minuscule man of a ghost
with a booming voice

Ladonna Daily

A theatre-loving ghost
waiting for her prime

Edwin Blackheart

An ancient ghoul who has seen
and done it all with no
remorse

Gina Jones

A grief-stricken young woman

Scene

The stage of the Hartman Theatre in Columbus, Ohio.

Time

1971.

AT RISE:

The lights come up on the stage of the Hartman Theatre in Columbus, Ohio in 1971. PATTY MERT, a perky ghost, sits authoritatively behind a table cluttered with papers. An empty chair is next to her. On the other side of the stage, five chairs are lined up. In the first sits SKIP SMITH, a nervous, young ghost, clutching a backpack and frantically filling out a form. The second chair is empty. The back of the third chair is being used as a dance bar by LADONNA DAILY, a determined ghost, in the process of doing an intense physical and vocal acting warm-up. The fourth chair is empty. The final chair is occupied by the stoic ghost of EDWIN BLACKHEART. He simply stares forward, deadpan, uninterested in the flurry around him. SKIP jumps up and hurries over to PATTY's table, clipboard in hand.

SKIP

Okey dokey. I got this thing filled out for ya and here's my resume, but where it says headshot-

PATTY

Hun, if you don't have-

SKIP

You see ma'am, I wasn't shot in the head. I fell off a roof.

PATTY

This will be fine, honey. If you'll just have a seat, we'll be getting started as soon as-

(JAMES BLAKE BILLINGTON bustles in and crosses to the table. SKIP scampers to his chair. LADONNA takes her seat.)

JAMES

Patty, how many times did I tell you- Bring them in groups of five! Five! Not three. Can't you do anything correctly?

PATTY

This is it, boss.

JAMES

I beg your pardon.

PATTY

This is everybody that showed up.

JAMES

But how can that-

PATTY

I guess the stage just isn't as popular as it used to be. Now everybody wants to haunt Hollywood.

JAMES

The bastard art! In my day, the legitimate theatre-

PATTY

Well, it looks like this is what we're stuck with, chief. Wanna get started?

JAMES

Very well. Good evening ladies and gentlemen, ghouls and boys. As I am sure you are well aware, I am James Blake Billington, your director. Although too numerous to mention, my casting credits include the Palace Theatre, the Huntington Playhouse, the Roundtown Theatre, Variety Theatre-

LADONNA

Wow!

JAMES

I'm certain you've heard of the legendary Miss Victoria, haunter of Victoria Theatre.

LADONNA

Of course.

JAMES

Well, I cast her-

LADONNA

Really?

JAMES

Understudy.

LADONNA

Oh.

JAMES

But I don't wish to bore you with my extensive resume. We could be here for hours if I-

(PATTY clears her throat.)

JAMES

Allow me to introduce my assistant director-

PATTY

Slash stage manager-

JAMES and PATTY

Patty Mert.

JAMES

And we are here, as you are well aware, to cast a replacement for the renowned, the legendary, Dr. Samuel J. Hartman, who not only built, but has haunted the Hartman Theatre, for nearly sixty years.

PATTY

But now wishes to retire to Hawaii to self-medicate with Peruna snake-oil cocktails-

JAMES

Leaving the American theatre with quite a void to fill-

PATTY

Which is where you *three* come in.

JAMES

Before I see your prepared auditions pieces, I would like to get to know each of you a little better by asking you where you are currently haunting-

PATTY

And why you would rather be haunting the Hartman.

JAMES

Young man, you may begin.

SKIP

Me? Well, um, hey! I'm Skip. Skip Smith.

JAMES

And?

SKIP

And?

PATTY

Where are you currently haunting?

SKIP

Buckeye Mart.

JAMES

And why do you wish to leave your current post?

SKIP

Cause its at Buckeye Mart.

JAMES

Can you elaborate?

SKIP

Well, um, I hate it there. Nobody 'spects a Buckeye Mart to be haunted, so nobody takes me seriously and stuff. If I knock over a display, they blame the stock boys. If I take bites out of the candy bars, they blame the kids or the rats. Nobody ever blames nothing supernatural.

PATTY

I see how that could be frustrating.

JAMES

Why would you like to haunt the Hartman?

SKIP

Cause it's not Buckeye Mart.

JAMES

Next.

LADONNA

Good evening Mr. Billington, Ms. Mert. Allow me the pleasure of introducing myself. My name is Ladonna Daily and I am a life-time lover of the stage and all it stands for. I would be most honored to be selected to haunt the Hartman-

JAMES

Where do you currently haunt?

LADONNA

Well, I've been exploring my artistic options and bettering myself as an artist. I audition at every chance I-

JAMES

And where do you currently haunt?

LADONNA

A couple of restaurants part-time. It's a great study of human nature. And did I mention I've only been dead three months, so-

PATTY

And why would you like to haunt the Hartman?

LADONNA

I've always loved the theatre and I especially love this one. It feels like home to me. I auditioned here four times when I was alive.

EDWIN

How many times did you perform here?

LADONNA

Ever since I was a little girl, I've dreamed of being a theatre ghost one day, if the whole Broadway star thing didn't work out and I had to kill myself. And it didn't and I did. So here I am. Haunting a theatre is really something special. The raw emotions, the tension, the passion, the love, the hate that passes through the air flowing freely between the performers and the audience- well, it's magic. The pure joy of-

JAMES

Next.

EDWIN

Edwin Blackheart, at your service. I have had the privilege of haunting the Camp Chase Confederate Cemetery for the past one hundred odd years.

SKIP

Oh cool! A real dead graveyard ghost! Why the heck would you want to leave-

JAMES

Why are you unsatisfied with your post?

EDWIN

Camp Chase is haunted by five other ghosts, three of which are less experienced than myself. Not to mention the Lady in Grey with her incessant crying fits. I desire to be the only one in the establishment which I haunt.

LADONNA

Let me guess. Don't play well with others?

EDWIN

Would you like to find out?

LADONNA

I'd rather die... again.

PATTY

So why do you want to be the only ghost-

EDWIN

Differences in ideology. Case in point. Drunken lads come to the cemetery looking for a thrill. I believe we should not give them the satisfaction of getting what they came for. The others take the bait and play their foolish games. Now a grieving widow, crying at her beloved's graveside, that's more my taste.

LADONNA

That's sick.

PATTY

And so why the theatre?

EDWIN

John Wilkes Booth sparked my interest in the theatre and its possibilities.

JAMES

Let's move on to the prepared audition pieces shall we?
(To SKIP.)

Young man?

SKIP

Huh?

PATTY

Are you ready to audition?

SKIP

Right. Okay. Yeh.

PATTY

Well, whenever you're ready...

SKIP

Uh huh.

(He grabs his bag, pulls out a white sheet which he stuffs behind his back and moves to center stage.)

You ready?

JAMES

Please.

SKIP

Okey dokey. Here we go.

(SKIP throws the sheet over his head and stretches his arms out and moves slowly around the stage.)

Booooooohhhhhh! Ooooooohhhhhhhh!

JAMES

Next.

(SKIP takes off the sheet and returns to his seat. LADONNA jumps to her feet.)

LADONNA

(She takes center stage, closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and opens her eyes, a huge smile plastered across her face.)

Good evening. My name is Ladonna Daily, auditonee number two. For my first piece, I will be singing "Meet Me in St. Louis" from the great Broadway musical *Meet Me in St. Louis* based on the great classic movie *Meet Me in St. Louis*.