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SF PERUSALS

# GHOST RIDER:
## *The Final Journey on the Underground Railroad*

**by Steph Deferie**

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GHOST RIDER
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***GHOST RIDER*** was first staged by the Chatham Middle School Drama Club on Cape Cod, Massachusetts on May 12, 2007. The show was directed by Karen McPherson and stage managed by Ashley Shaffer and Rachael Weber. Sound was by Michael Sequin and lighting was by Patrick Corb. The cast was as follows:

**MR. WILLIAMS** . . . . . Tommy Rayder
**MRS. WILLIAMS** . . . . . Lily Kaar
**JANIE** . . . . . Sarah Lanning
**TY** . . . . . Liam Phelan
**MAGGIE** . . . . . Abigail Grattan
**BECKA** . . . . . Michaela Ryder
**SUZE** . . . . . Brianna Jarvis
**MR. JAMESON** . . . . . Damien Chandler
**MRS. JAMESON** . . . . . Kelsey Morse
**FAITH** . . . . . Courtney Milley
**ELIJAH** . . . . . Jonathan Morse
**TEMPERANCE** . . . . . Susan Hart
**SLATTERY** . . . . . Kyle Forgeron
**COOMBS** . . . . . Griffin McLain
**MADAME ROSA** . . . . . Ella Nichols
**REVEREND MATTHEWS** . . . . . Jonas Greenblatt
**MRS. COLLINS** . . . . . Rachel Jerauld
**CALICO** . . . . . Indie Fleuriot
**FAST** . . . . . Cooper Seidewant
**SLOW** . . . . . Lucas Parada
**PROFESSOR PORTERFOY** . . . . . Patti DeTraglia
**NEIGHBORHOOD GIRLS** . . . . . Mackenzie Barnard
Connie LaMott

## CHARACTERS

**Present Day:**

**MR. WILLIAMS**
**MRS. WILLIAMS**
**MAGGIE –** their daughter
**TY –** their son
**JANIE –** their daughter
**SUZE –** a neighbor girl
**BECKA –** a neighbor girl
**MADAME ROSA –** a psychic
**PROFESSOR POTRTERFOY –** a historian

**1855:**

**MR. JAMESON**
**MRS. JAMESON**
**ELIJAH –** their son
**TEMPERANCE –** their daughter
**FAITH –** their daughter
**REVEREND MATTHEWS**
**CALICO –** a runaway slave
**FAST –** a runaway slave
**SLOW –** a runaway slave
**MR. COLLINS –** a conductor
**SLATTERY –** a slave hunter
**COOMBS –** a slave hunter

## TIME

Today & 1855

## PLACE

The living room of a house in Ohio

Act 1 Scene 1 – Present Day
Act 1 Scene 2 – 1855
Act 1 Scene 3 – Present Day, a few days later
Act 1 Scene 4 – 1855, a few days later
Act 2 – Present Day, three days later

*For my ghosts - Gram, Pop, Nunu and especially Jack.*

# ACT ONE

## Scene One

*(The living room of a house in Ohio. It's a large room with a door to the outside and a doorway to the kitchen and rest of the house. There is a large window and a fireplace and a bookcase that is actually a door with a little secret room behind it. There is the usual furniture – couch, chairs, tables. The furniture is nondescript and colonial. The light is provided by a chandelier that hangs over the center of the room – the light bulbs are in the shape of candle flames – and the window.)*

***(AT RISE:** It is today. The room is gloomy, lit only by light that comes in through the dirty window. The furniture is covered by sheets. There is some debris and trash. Some of the furniture has been knocked over. )*

*(Silence. Emptiness. Abandonment. Stillness.)*

*(Suddenly, an indistinct shadow flits across. There is a soft, sorrowful cry. The chandelier sways. We hear a few notes from the old song "Follow The Drinking Gourd." Something falls from the bookcase shelves. Silence and stillness again.)*

*(Enter through the front door the Williams family –* **MR. WILLIAMS**, **MRS. WILLIAMS**, **MAGGIE**, **TY** *and* **JANIE**. **MAGGIE** *is clutching a Barbie doll. They are carrying suitcases, boxes, bags. They turn on the lights, take off the cloths, exit and re-enter with more things, exit to explore the house and put away things, place books and knick-knacks on the bookcase shelves, unpack a bit, etc.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Well, here it is! Our new home! What do you think?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** It stinks! *(***MR. WILLIAMS** *gives her a look.)* No, really! What is that smell? *(She sniffs.)* Are raccoons living here? Wet raccoons?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** It just needs a little cleaning up is all. *(At the window)* Look at that view!

**MAGGIE.** Mommy, it smells in here! P-ew!

**MAGGIE, JANIE, TY, MRS. WILLIAMS.** P-ew! P-ew!

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *gives them a look. The* **CHILDREN** *stop.* **MRS. WILLIAMS** *continues:)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** P-ew! P… *(She trails off.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** You children are a very bad influence on your mother.

**TY.** How's the yard?

*(***TY** *exits out front door.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** It'll be fine once we air it out, you'll see. It's just a little moldy is all.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** A *little* moldy? It's a mushroom farm in here. Bring in some pigs and we'll search for truffles.

**MAGGIE.** What are truffles, Mommy?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Over-priced fungus.

**JANIE.** There's a fungus among us!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** You can say that again.

**JANIE & MAGGIE.** A fungus among us! A fungus among us!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I don't seem to recall it being quite this bad when the realtor showed it to us.

**MAGGIE.** Are we bringing in pigs to live with us, Mommy? The three little pigs?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** No, dear. No self-respecting pig would leave his clean, little sty for this place.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Look at these classic lines! It's a piece of history.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** It's a piece of something, all right.

**JANIE.** Oh, Daddy. You're always going on about history. It's sooooo boring. It never has anything to do with anything.

*(***JANIE** *exits to kitchen.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Calling after her)* It has everything to do everything. You children never listen to me. Think of the stories this place could tell. It was built in the early 1800's, for God's sake.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** And I don't think anyone's dusted since. Let's hope the plumbing at least is from the 20th century. I am not an outhouse kind of girl.

**MAGGIE.** What's an outhouse, Mommy?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** A place where you pee outside.

**MAGGIE.** Yuck! I'm not going to pee outside.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Neither am I.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** They really built 'em to last back then.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *slams his hand against the bookcase and one of the shelves falls down.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Oops! And don't even get me started on the price. It's a steal!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Somebody certainly stole from somebody, that's for sure. *(Seeing* **MR. WILLIAMS***' disappointed look)* I suppose it does have…possibilities.

**MAGGIE.** *(Pointing up to a corner)* Are those possibilities, Mommy?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** No, dear, those are cobwebs.

**TY.** *(Entering)* Dad, you should see this great tree out back! It's perfect for a tree house!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Ty, do you think the tree house could wait a few minutes while we get all this stuff inside? *(Looking at his watch)* We made good time. The movers won't be here for an hour.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** That gives you plenty of time to get organized while I go pick up some groceries.

*(***JANIE** *enters humming "Follow The Drinking Gourd."* **MRS. WILLIAMS** *exits to kitchen.)*

**JANIE.** I call the big bedroom in the back.

**TY.** No fair! I haven't gotten to see it yet!

*(***TY** *exits to kitchen.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Ty!

**JANIE.** It is so fair. I called it.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Actually, Janie, I think that bedroom's already spoken for.

**JANIE.** If I have to share with Maggie, we need the biggest one.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Your mother and I have to share, too, you know.

**JANIE.** That doesn't count. You don't need so much room because you two sleep in the same bed.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** *(O.S.)* Not when someone's had chili for dinner we don't.

**JANIE.** And anyway, you didn't call it.

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *enters, humming a few notes from "Follow The Drinking Gourd.")*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I don't have to call it – I'm the father.

**JANIE.** *Everybody* has to call it. That's the rules.

*(***JANIE** *picks up a box of toys and exits to kitchen.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** She's got you, you know. That is the rules.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Calling after)* That's our room, young lady! Don't put your stuff in there because you'll just have to move it all back out again! *(To* **MRS. WILLIAMS***)* She gets pigheadedness from your side of the family, you know. *(Sniffs)* Remember to pick up some air freshener.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *exits outside.)*

**MAGGIE.** P-ew! P-ew!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Honey, please. Do you want to come with Mommy to the store and pick out something for dinner?

**MAGGIE.** Waffles!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** That's what we had for breakfast.

**MAGGIE.** Waffles!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Is that all you can say?

**MAGGIE & MRS. WILLIAMS.** Waffles!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What do you have in your head instead of brains?

**MAGGIE** and **MRS. WILLIAMS.** Waffles!

*(***TY** *and* **JANIE** *enter.* **TY** *is now humming some of the song.)*

**JANIE.** My bedroom, my bedroom, my bedroom!

**TY.** Keep your old bedroom, I don't care. I'm going to live up in the attic. It's cool up there.

**JANIE.** Aren't you afraid of ghosts? They live in attics, you know, with the bats and the monsters.

**TY.** I'm not afraid of ghosts. There's no such things as ghosts.

**JANIE.** There are, too!

**TY.** Are not!

**JANIE.** Are, too! My friend Patty saw one.

**TY.** Oh, yeah? Where?

**JANIE.** In her grandmother's closet. It was wearing her grandmother's dress and her grandmother's big, floppy hat and it went "Whhhhooooo, whoooooo!"

**TY.** Aw, she's making that up.

*(***JANIE** *exits to kitchen.)*

**MAGGIE.** Mommy, I don't want to live in a house with ghosty closets.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** There are no ghosty closets here, honey. Janie, stop scaring your sister.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *enters carrying boxes. He is now humming the song.)*

**MAGGIE.** Daddy, are there ghosts?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** If there are, I sure wish they'd come and give me a hand.

**TY.** Dad, can I have my room up in the attic?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** You can have anything you want if you help bring in all these boxes from the trailer.

**TY.** Anything? Really? How about a monster truck?

*(***JANIE** *enters.)*

**JANIE.** If Ty's getting a monster truck, I want a monster truck. Mommy, there's something all gross in the oven. I think it's a dead poisoned dog!

**TY.** I wanna see!

**MAGGIE.** Me, too!

*(***TY** *and* **MAGGIE** *rush off to kitchen.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Ty!

**JANIE.** I'm not eating anything that comes out of that oven, I can tell you that.

*(***JANIE** *picks up another box and exits to kitchen.)*

**MAGGIE.** *(Entering)* Gross! We're having dead poisoned dogs for dinner!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Ty! Get back here!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** We are most certainly not having dead poisoned dogs for dinner.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** We will if you don't get moving.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** We're going. Come one, Magpie.

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *grabs* **MAGGIE** *and pulls her with her. As she passes* **MR. WILLIAMS,** *she grabs a kiss.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What's that song you're humming?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** How should I know? I picked it up from you.

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *and* **MAGGIE** *exit out front door, leaving it open.* **BECKA** *and* **SUZE,** *neighbor children, poke their heads in.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Kids! Leave the dead, poisoned dog in the oven alone and come help me! *(He notices the girls.)* There really isn't a dead, poisoned dog in the oven, you know. It just looks that way. *(They stare at him in astonishment).* Who are you?

**BECKA.** I'm Becka.

**SUZE.** I'm Suze. *(She gestures vaguely.)* We live over there.

**BECKA.** We came to see who would live in a haunted house.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** What makes you think this house is haunted?

*(Enter* **TY**, *covered in a sheet and chasing* **JANIE**.*)*

**TY.** I'm the ghost of the dead, poisoned dog!

**JANIE.** Daddy! Make him stop!

**TY.** Why did you poison me?!

**JANIE.** Daddy!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(To* **BECKA** *and* **SUZE***)* You see? Not a ghost in sight. Becka, Suze, these are the children I adopted who are going right back to the orphanage if they don't start helping.

**SUZE.** Really?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** They'll have to toil from dawn to dusk braiding hair extensions for wealthy Chinese opium lords and eating gruel and cockroach sandwiches.

**BECKA.** They will?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** They will if they don't get their butts in gear.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *exits outside.)*

**SUZE.** Gosh! That sounds even worse than living in a haunted house.

**BECKA.** Nothing's worse than living in a haunted house.

**JANIE.** Who's living in a haunted house?

**BECKA.** You are.

**JANIE.** We are not.

**SUZE.** You are too. Everybody knows this place is haunted.

**TY.** Of course it is, that's why we bought it. We looked all over the world for the most haunted house of all and this is it.

**JANIE.** Yeah, it's cool to live in a haunted house.

**BECKA.** I bet you won't say that when the ghosts get you.

**JANIE.** We eat dead poisoned dogs for dinner. Ghosts don't scare us.

**TY.** Just what kind of ghosts live here exactly?

**SUZE.** A kid who got eaten!

**TY.** Really? Cool!

**BECKA.** You see, a long time ago…

**SUZE.** Hundreds and hundreds of years ago…

**BECKA.** There was this family that lived here…

*(A light change. We are seeing the* **JAMESON** *family who lived in the house in 1855. Because they are in the past, they do not see or interact with the children. Likewise, the children can neither see nor hear the Jamesons.***)**

*(Enter* **MR. JAMESON** *through front door, carrying a load of logs that he begins to stack by the fireplace.)*

**MR. JAMESON.** Mother, it's me!

**MRS. JAMESON.** *(O.S.)* Thomas? What are you doing home so early?

**MR. JAMESON.** Hiram had already cut and sized the planks so we just had to nail them together. I felt guilty about taking the firewood he promised for such little work but he insisted. He's a good man, Hiram.

**MRS. JAMESON.** *(Entering with a mug of coffee that she gives to* **MR. JAMESON***)* He sides with the abolitionists, you know. Have you had your dinner?

**MR. JAMESON.** No, I didn't want to take the time.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Goodness, I didn't know I had such charms to draw you back in such a hurry.

**MR. JAMESON.** *(He kisses her.)* I do believe you are one of the fabled sirens in that old story. Well, what if he does side with the abolitionists? So do I.

**MRS. JAMESON.** But he puts his words into actions.

**MR. JAMESON.** He has no children to endanger if he is caught.

**BECKA.** A mom and dad and three kids…

*(Enter* **FAITH***,* **ELIJAH** *and* **TEMPERANCE** *who carries a doll.)*

**TEMPERANCE, FAITH, ELIJAH.** Papa!

**ELIJAH.** You were supposed to be gone all day!

**MR. JAMESON.** We finished early and I knew how much you wanted to start your tree house…

**ELIJAH.** Now?

**MR. JAMESON.** Have you done your chores?

**ELIJAH.** Every one.

**MR. JAMESON.** Then let the construction begin!

**ELIJAH.** Hooray!

**TEMPERANCE.** Hello, Papa.

**FAITH.** We missed you at prayers last night.

**MR. JAMESON.** *(Teasing)* You missed me choosing a short passage, you mean. I'm sure Mama had you on your poor, sore knees for hours.

**FAITH.** Hours and hours and hours!

**TEMPERANCE.** I almost fainted it was so long! Miss Alice swooned!

**MRS. JAMESON.** Yes, that's me – the mean, old mother who will push, pull or drag her children into the kingdom of Heaven by any means necessary.

**FAITH.** Even if we have to travel through Hell to get there?

**MR. & MRS. JAMESON.** *(Shocked)* Faith!

**BECKA.** They were mean and horrible to their kids…

**MR. JAMESON.** I'm surprised at you!

**SUZE.** They made them work day and night and only gave them scraps of bread to eat and rags to wear and made them sleep out in the barn where they almost froze to death every single night…

**MRS. JAMESON.** I should wash your mouth out with soap for saying such a thing!

**FAITH.** For telling the truth?

**MR. JAMESON.** Kneeling at prayer a few minutes every night can scarcely compare to the torments of Hell.

**FAITH.** It can to me.

**MR. JAMESON.** *(With mock seriousness)* With that attitude, young lady, you don't deserve the present I brought you. I shall give it to some more deserving child instead.

**TEMPERANCE.** I'm deserving, Papa!

**MR. JAMESON.** Deserving but greedy! All the presents shall go to the Sutter children down the road.

**TEMPERANCE & FAITH & ELIJAH.** Papa!

**MRS. JAMESON.** *(Teasing)* You are very wise, Thomas. They are much more worthy of them.

**TEMPERANCE & FAITH & ELIJAH.** Noooo!

**MR. JAMESON.** I'll go take them right away…

**TEMPERANCE & FAITH & ELIJAH.** Papa, no! Please! We'll be good, honest! *(etc)*

*(The* **JAMESONS** *all exit out the front door. The lights change back.)*

**BECKA.** …and finally they ran away and the parents realized they needed someone to do all the work so they caught an orphan but he wouldn't do what they said so they pushed him into the oven and cooked him and ate him!

**TY.** Aw, get out! That's "Hansel and Gretel."

**SUZE.** It is not. That's not a dead, poisoned dog in the oven – it's the kid!

**BECKA.** And his ghost still haunts here to this very day. He can't rest or anything. He wanders around moaning and crying and looking for somebody to eat.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *enters.)*

**TY.** Dad, these girls say that the people who used to live here once killed a kid and ate him.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** So that's why we got it so cheap. Well, we can't afford to leave now so I hope you're all very brave.

*(There's the sound of knocking.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** It's open!

**JANIE.** That's not the door, Daddy. It's coming from the kitchen. It's the ghost!

**TY.** It's the dead poisoned dog trying to get out of the oven!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Your mother must have forgotten something and come back, that's all.

**TY.** In the kitchen? Why didn't she use the front door?

**SUZE.** It *is* the ghost!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** It's not a ghost! It's air in the pipes. It happens all the time in old houses like this.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *starts to exit.)*

**JANIE.** Daddy, don't go in there!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Scary voice)* If I'm not out in 10 seconds, run for your lives.

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *exits to the kitchen.)*

**TY.** Dad, wait!

**JANIE.** Come back!

**BECKA.** *(Whispering)* Too bad the ghost is gonna get him – he looked like a nice dad.

*(There is a long silence. Suddenly…)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Screaming off)* No! Help! Don't eat me! Help! Help!

**TY & JANIE.** Daddy!

*(The* **KIDS** *rush for the door to the kitchen. The front door opens and* **MRS. WILLIAMS** *and* **MAGGIE** *enter.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What's all the screaming for? Has anyone seen… ?

**TY & JANIE.** The ghost has Daddy!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What?

**JANIE.** The ghost of the dead poisoned dog!

**SUZE.** The ghost of the kid who got eaten!

**JANIE.** He's going to eat Daddy!

**TY.** It's in the kitchen!

**JANIE.** We have to save him!

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *sticks his head in from the kitchen.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Smiling)* Got ya!

*(The* **KIDS** *and* **MRS. WILLIAMS** *scream.* **MR. WILLIAMS** *screams.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What is going on in here?!

**Blackout**

## Scene Two

*(1855.)*

*(All traces of the modern scene have been removed – boxes, bags, cloths on the furniture, people, etc. The room is quite set up. Enter* **MR. JAMESON** *and* **MRS. JAMESON**.*)*

**MRS. JAMESON.** …and the poor man was on the bank of the river, his freedom just on the other side, when those horrible slave catchers grabbed him and returned him to bondage again.

**MR. JAMESON.** It is terrible. It is the most terrible thing I have ever heard. But there is nothing I can do!

**MRS. JAMESON.** There is!

**MR. JAMESON.** At what cost? You would have me endanger our children for the lives of strangers? What good am I to this family if I am in prison?

**MRS. JAMESON.** What good are you to this family if you do not have the courage to act on your principles?

**MR. JAMESON.** Principles are all very well but they do not provide for a roof overhead and food in the belly.

**MRS. JAMESON.** It is just as important to provide the example of courage.

**MR. JAMESON.** That is easy to say now when you are far from danger.

**MRS. JAMESON.** This life matters nothing compared to the everlasting life with our Lord. Whatever we lose here shall be returned to us a hundred fold if it is lost in a just cause.

**MR. JAMESON.** But that does not mean we should throw away so lightly what we do have. Our children depend on me.

**MRS. JAMESON.** And who is to say we shall be caught? People, good people, help escaping slaves every day and are never found out.

*(A knock at the front door.* **MR. JAMESON** *crosses and opens it.)*

**MR. JAMESON.** Can I help you?

**SLATTERY.** *(Pushing* **MR. JAMESON** *aside and entering carrying a rifle)* Stand aside! We're here to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act!

**COOMBS.** *(Entering, carrying a rifle)* Move away, there.

**MR. JAMESON.** Who are you?

**SLATTERY.** Slattery. *(He indicates* **COOMBS.***)* Coombs.

**MR. JAMESON.** How dare you barge… !

**SLATTERY.** We have reason to believe you are harboring runaway slaves.

**COOMBS.** Breaking the law, you are.

**MR. JAMESON.** You have no right to come into my home.

**COOMBS.** Oh, we have the right.

**SLATTERY.** We have every right as good citizens who want to see the law upheld.

**MR. JAMESON.** Are you federal marshals, then?

**MRS. JAMESON.** Of course they are not! Look at them. They are filthy bounty hunters. Get out!

**SLATTERY.** It makes no difference if we are marshals or not.

**COOMBS.** No difference at all.

**SLATTERY.** You are required to help us.

**MRS. JAMESON.** We will not help you.

**COOMBS.** I think they're obstructing justice, Slats.

**SLATTERY.** Are you refusing to aid us in our search?

**MRS. JAMESON.** With all the strength God gives me. You do the devil's work.

**SLATTERY.** We do the work of the law.

**COOMBS.** The law, missus.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Man's law, not God's.

**COOMBS.** The Slave Act requires that you help us.

**SLATTERY.** If you refuse, you'll be arrested on charges of obstruction.

**MR. JAMESON.** No law may compel me to help you. Although I have never aided runaway slaves, I will never aid those who seek to capture them and return them to slavery.

**SLATTERY.** The law is the law.

**MRS. JAMESON.** The law is wrong!

**SLATTERY.** That is not for you to say. It is for you to obey.

**COOMBS.** To obey!

**MRS. JAMESON.** The government should not force us to do what we feel is morally unjust.

**SLATTERY.** I don't have time to debate a law that is already on the books.

**COOMBS.** Move aside!

*(***SLATTERY** *and* **COOMBS** *begin to ransack the room, looking for evidence.)*

**MRS. JAMESON.** What makes you think we are helping slaves?

**SLATTERY.** We know a farm in this area is acting as a refuge.

**MRS. JAMESON.** So you have no proof that we are the ones you are looking for.

**SLATTERY.** We're searching everyone.

**COOMBS.** All the farms around here.

**MR. JAMESON.** Then it is you who act in defiance of the law. You must have some proof to search us. You cannot come in here without good evidence. If you do not leave immediately, I shall have *you* arrested.

*(***SLATTERY** *and* **COOMBS** *look unsure.)*

**MRS. JAMESON.** Now go!

*(***SLATTERY** *and* **COOMBS** *begin to cross to the front door.)*

**SLATTERY.** We'll go but we'll be watching you!

**COOMBS.** We ain't finished with you yet.

*(***SLATTERY** *and* **COOMBS** *exit through front door.)*

**MRS. JAMESON.** There! You see! How can you stand by and let that happen?

**MR. JAMESON.** *(Shaken, closing the door)* That is not right. By God, that is not right!

**MRS. JAMESON.** What are you going to do about it?

**MR. JAMESON.** I must think upon it and weigh the consequences.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Listen to what God moves your heart to…

*(Enter through the kitchen doorway* **ELIJAH, FAITH** *and* **TEMPERANCE** *who carries her doll.)*

**ELIJAH, FAITH, TEMPERANCE.** Papa! Mama!

**MRS. JAMESON.** Where have you been? You must leave those new kittens alone. Your chores…

**TEMPERANCE.** We saw it, we saw it with our own eyes! In town… !

**FAITH.** It was terrible! The children were crying and crying!

**ELIJAH.** They were just like us… !

**TEMPERANCE.** …except they were brown instead of white…

**ELIJAH.** …and they were being dragged away in chains!.

**MRS. JAMESON.** What are you talking about?

**FAITH.** They were slave children and we saw them captured!

**ELIJAH.** They were taken away from their Mama and no one did anything to stop it!

**TEMPERANCE.** It was the most terrible thing I've ever seen in my whole life! No one will ever take us away from you, Mama, will they?

**MRS. JAMESON.** Of course not, dearest. You're perfectly safe. *(With a look to* **MR. JAMESON***)* God has blessed us with white skin and you must be thankful of that every day.

**ELIJAH.** I'd fight them if they tried to take me away. They'd be sorry they came for me.

**FAITH.** You couldn't fight those big men. They'd put chains on you and drag you off just like those others.

**ELIJAH.** They didn't even try to fight or get away. Why didn't they, Papa?

**MR. JAMESON.** I don't know, Elijah. Maybe they were tired

of running and just gave up.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Maybe they knew no one would help them so there wasn't any use in fighting.

**ELIJAH.** You would've helped them if you'd been there, wouldn't you, Papa?

**TEMPERANCE.** Of course he would've. He would've beaten those mean, old slave catchers until they let them go. Right, Papa?

**MR. JAMESON.** Children, sometimes things are not as simple as they…

**FAITH.** Then we could've brought them here and helped them escape.

**ELIJAH.** We could build them a secret room to hide in and Papa could take them in his wagon up to freedom in Canada.

**FAITH.** We could show them the kittens!

**TEMPERANCE.** *(Holding up her doll)* And they could play with Miss Alice if they liked. I wouldn't mind. When are they coming?

**MR. JAMESON.** There aren't any slaves coming here.

**ELIJAH.** Of course not, not until we build the secret room. It's not safe. *(He crosses to the bookcase.)* We could put it behind here, Papa, and build a false wall up in the kitchen to hide it.

**FAITH.** And they could use the quilt I'm making to keep warm!

**TEMPERANCE.** Miss Alice will have a tea party for them!

**MR. JAMESON.** We're doing no such thing! I'm very proud of you for wanting to help but it's very, very dangerous. It's not something for children to play at.

**FAITH.** But it wouldn't be just us. You'd have to help, too.

**MR. JAMESON.** It's out of the question. We are not going to aid runaway slaves.

**FAITH.** But we have to, Papa. Reverend Matthews was talking about it in church last week, remember?

**TEMPERANCE.** He said it's what Jesus would do. Don't you

want to be like Jesus?

**MR. JAMESON.** It's not as simple as that…

**TEMPERANCE.** Why not?

**MR. JAMESON.** Would you like to see your poor, old Papa go to jail for years and years if we were caught? All alone in a tiny cell with no fire to keep me warm?

**TEMPERANCE.** Poor Papa.

**ELIJAH.** But you wouldn't get caught, Papa. You're much too clever. *(To* **TEMPERANCE** *and* **FAITH***)* Come on, let's go start working on it.

**FAITH.** I'll be the runaway slave and you try to catch me.

**TEMPERANCE.** *(Giving doll to* **MR. JAMESON***)* You can take Miss Alice with you to prison, Papa, to keep you company. I won't mind.

*(***TEMPERANCE***,* **FAITH** *and* **ELIJAH** *exit to the kitchen.)*

**MRS. JAMESON.** Well, then, I guess it's settled.

**MR. JAMESON.** Don't be ridiculous. By tomorrow, they'll have forgotten all about it and be playing at Settlers and Indians.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Don't you want to be like Jesus?

**MR. JAMESON.** Now don't you start, Mother, you know this is not a game.

**MRS. JAMESON.** No, it's not. It is life and death to the slaves we could help.

**MR. JAMESON.** Bondage is not death.

**MRS. JAMESON.** Tell that to the children taken from their mother, children just like your own.

*(***MRS. JAMESON** *exits to kitchen.)*

**MR. JAMESON.** *(Looking at Miss Alice)* Children just like my own…

**Blackout**

## Scene Three

*(Today, a few days later.)*

*(The room is dark – the drapes are shut. The lights are low.* **TY***,* **JANIE***,* **MAGGIE***,* **SUZE** *and* **BECKA** *are sitting in a group on the floor or at a table using a Ouija board.)*

**SUZE.** Ghost of this house, come to us!

**BECKA.** Ghost of this house, speak to us!

**TY.** Ghost of this house, this is stupid!

**JANIE.** If you think it's so stupid, what are you doing it for?

**TY.** To prove to you how stupid it is. We're not going to get a message from beyond.

**JANIE.** That's what you think.

**BECKA.** Ghost, tell us what you want. What will appease your anger?

**MAGGIE.** Janie, I'm scared!

**JANIE.** It's all right. We're just going find out what the ghost wants so we can give it to him and he'll go away.

**TY.** What if what he wants is to eat somebody?

**JANIE.** Then we'll give him you!

**SUZE.** Give us a message, ghost!

*(A book falls out of the bookcase.)*

**MAGGIE.** Janie!

**JANIE.** It's the ghost, all right! He keeps doing that! *(To* **TY***)* See?

**TY.** What do you want? Tell us what you want!

*(A pause.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Off, in a spooky voice)* I want…I want…baloney sandwiches for lunch!

*(All the* **KIDS** *jump in surprise.)*

**(MR. WILLIAMS** *enters from the kitchen, turning on the lights and opening the curtains.)*

**JANIE.** Daddy!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** You better not let your mother catch you doing this. You know she doesn't like you getting yourselves all worked up.

**MAGGIE.** *(Indicating* **SUZE** *and* **BECKA***)* They made us!

**SUZE.** Sorry, Mr. Williams. We thought if we could just make contact with the ghost we could ask him to leave.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I know it's fun pretending there's a ghost, but Maggie's having bad dreams and it's upsetting your mother. Maybe you should stop playing for a while.

**JANIE.** We're not playing, Daddy. It's real.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Now you know that's not true.

**TY.** Somebody pushed another book out of the bookcase.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Re-shelving the book)* That's not ghosts.

**JANIE.** Then what is it? Books just don't jump down from their shelves, you know.

**BECKA.** And how do you explain that knocking?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I told you, it's the plumbing. Air gets in the pipes…

**SUZE.** More like ghosts get in the pipes…

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Mice in the walls…

**MAGGIE.** Giant mice? That's even scarier than a ghost!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** There isn't any ghost!

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *enters from the front door.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I found someone to get rid of the ghost.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** You see? *(Does a double take)* What?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I've found someone to get rid of the ghost. A ghost buster.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** What is the woman I married who doesn't believe in ghosts?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** *(Quietly)* If you can't beat 'em…Kids, run and get washed up for lunch. We're having company.

**MAGGIE.** Who is it, Mommy?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** It's a surprise.

*(The* **KIDS** *exit.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I'm assuming you have some kind of secret plan and haven't just lost your mind.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Look, they're all convinced this place is haunted whether we say it is or not, right? We're never going to have a moment's peace until we persuade them that it isn't. So I'm going to have an expert clear out the ghost and we're all set.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** And you found this expert in the yellow pages under "Crazy Pants?"

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Mrs. Bishop down at the drugstore told me about Madame Rosa…

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Aaahh, Mrs. Bishop, I should have known! And who, pray tell, is Madame Rosa?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** The local soothsayer. No matter what your problem, Madame's got a spell or a charm or a potion.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** And she can help us…how?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** She's also…psychic.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Oooohh!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I dropped in to see her this morning, crossed her palm with silver and she's making a house call this afternoon.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I had no idea you were so devious. It's wonderful.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** She is going to come in, read the vibrations, make contact with the lingering shade and purge him from our lives once and for all.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I will never underestimate you again.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I should hope not. This is all your fault, you know. If you hadn't encouraged them to begin with…

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I didn't think they would take it so seriously.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** She promised to put on a good show and things will get back to normal.

**MAGGIE.** *(O.S.)* Mommy! Janie's splashing me!

**JANIE.** *(O.S.)* I am not! Ty's splashing me!

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Well, just splash him back then!

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *exits to kitchen.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Singing and dancing around a bit)* "Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!"

*(***MR. WILLIAMS** *dances by the bookcase and another book falls out.* **MR. WILLIAMS** *jumps back, surprised and a bit scared.)*

*(A knock at the front door.* **MR. WILLIAMS** *jumps again and then crosses to answer it.)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Opening door)* Hello, can I help you?

**MADAME ROSA.** Oh, I believe it is *I* who can help *you.* I am… Madame Rosa.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Wonderful! I'm…

**MADAME ROSA.** Don't tell me! You are…*(She puts her hands to her head.)*…the butler!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I'm Mr. Williams.

**MADAME ROSA.** And since you just answered the door, there for a moment, you were, in fact, the butler.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Well, if you want to look at it that way…

**MADAME ROSA.** Ta da! My psychic powers are truly amazing!

**MR. WILLIAMS.** Okay. Won't you come in?

**MADAME ROSA.** Wait! I must prepare myself. *(She does. Entering)* Doom! Despair! Evil! I sense the presence of great, overpowering, black evil! Oh, what a charming room! You've fixed it up wonderfully. *(Notices* **MR. WILLIAMS** *is staring at her)* Please don't be intimidated by my awesome powers. In many ways, I'm just like you. Treat me exactly as you would any normal person.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I'll try. *(Calling)* Honey, your special guest is here.

**MADAME ROSA.** I'm afraid I'm a bit early but I had a very strong feeling that you needed me right away.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** That's very crazy of…uh, *thoughtful* of you.

*(***MRS. WILLIAMS** *enters from kitchen.)*

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Who's crazy?

**MR. WILLIAMS.** No one. Not one crazy person as far as the eye can see.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Madame Rosa! Thank you so much for coming.

**MADAME ROSA.** It's a good thing you called me when you did. The moment I walked in, I could sense the malevolent spirit that inhabits this house.

*(***MADAME ROSA** *looks pointedly at* **MR. WILLIAMS**.*)*

**MR. WILLIAMS.** What'd I do?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** *(Calling)* Kids! The surprise is here!

*(The* **KIDS** *enter.)*

**TY.** Is it my monster truck?

**JANIE.** Is it *my* monster truck?

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** It's Madame Rosa. *(The* **KIDS** *look disappointed.)* She is not a monster truck but you're going to be very happy she's here. Madame Rosa, these are my children Ty, Janie and Maggie and these are their friends Becka and Suze

**MADAME ROSA.** Children are very sensitive, you know. I myself was quite touched as a child.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** I don't doubt that for a minute.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** *(With a black look at* **MR. WILLIAMS***)* Yes, they're the ones who first noticed that something was wrong.

**MADAME ROSA.** I see. And exactly what sort of manifestations are you experiencing?

**JANIE.** What?

**MADAME ROSA.** What's going on?

**TY.** Something keeps knocking in this wall.

**JANIE.** And books jump out of the bookcase.

**SUZE.** It's always cold in here.

**BECKA.** And there was a poisoned, dead dog in the oven.

**MAGGIE.** *(Whispering loudly)* Mommy doesn't believe us. Daddy says he does but he doesn't really.

**JANIE.** And we all keep humming the same stupid song.

**MADAME ROSA.** What song?

*(EVERYONE but* **MADAME ROSA** *hums "Follow The Drinking Gourd.")*

**SUZE.** And don't forget the crying.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What crying?

**BECKA.** We heard somebody crying this morning.

**TY.** That doesn't count – it was just Maggie because she couldn't find her stupid Barbie doll.

**MAGGIE.** It was not me! And you give me back my Barbie, Tyler! I know you took her!

**TY.** I did not! Dad, I didn't… !

**BECKA.** So crying *and* doll-stealing.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** That Barbie gets lost and found ten times before breakfast. I don't think that really counts.

**TY.** What do you want to know for?

**MADAME ROSA.** Because I am a psychic, my dear boy. I am in touch with the spirits who have passed on from this realm and have not yet moved on to the next.

**JANIE.** Like that man we saw on TV. Daddy said he was a big fat fake who fooled people and took their money.

**MR. WILLIAMS.** *(Uncomfortable)* Well, yes…*he* was a fake. But you, Madame Rosa, anybody can tell that you are the real thing.

**MADAME ROSA.** *(Icily)* It is very difficult to work with unbelievers in the room. Their negative vibrations quite interfere with my sensitivity.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** Of course. We totally understand. Would we have invited you here if we thought you were less than gifted?

**MADAME ROSA.** I suppose not.

**TY.** Can you see the ghost flying around the room right now?

**MADAME ROSA.** *(To* **MR. WILLIAMS***)* I can *feel* distressing currents of energy flowing among us.

**MAGGIE.** *(Brushing wildly at her hair)* It is in my hair?!

**MADAME ROSA.** It is all around us, my dear, but do not fear. It cannot harm you. I am going to try to make contact with it and persuade it to move on.

**BECKA.** Move far, far on because we live just over there and we don't want it moving into *our* house.

**MADAME ROSA.** Let us begin.

*(***MADAME ROSA** *sweeps around the room very dramatically, waving her hands around to feel the vibrations, following the movements of invisible beings only she can see, etc. She ends up as far from the bookcase as possible.)*

**MADAME ROSA.** Yes, yes, the energy is very strong over here. The vortex seems to be centered in this area…

**TY.** *(By bookcase)* But most of the stuff has been happening over here.

**MADAME ROSA.** *(Quickly crossing to bookcase)* Oh yes, yes, I feel it getting stronger, stronger…! Oh, my! It's strongest right here. It was leaking over a bit into that area but this, this is most definitely the source.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** What does it want?

**MADAME ROSA.** We must have…a seance!

*(***MADAME ROSA** *closes the curtains, dims the lights.)*

**MADAME ROSA.** Everyone gather around here in a circle and join hands.

*(They do.)*

**MADAME ROSA.** Now, we must all concentrate very hard and whatever happens, do not speak and do not break the chain.

**MAGGIE.** Mommy, I'm scared.

**MRS. WILLIAMS.** I'm right here, darling, I won't let anything happen to you.

**MADAME ROSA.** Now we begin. *(Closes her eyes)* Spirit of this house, we wish to contact you. Let us ease your pain and release you from this place. *(She sighs dramatically.)*

**BECKA.** *(Unimpressed)* That's just what *we* were doing.

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