Acting Edition

THE ENFIELD HAUNTING

by Paul Unwin

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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ISBN 978-0-573-00045-4

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

CHARACTERS

WRITER – a middle-class voice on a telephone.

OLDER MARGARET – a voice on the telephone.

PEGGY – Late forties. Working class, deep feeling, a lioness under a nervy shell.

REY – Late forties. Working class. Never left home, now lives alone with his cat.

JIMMY – Twelve. Very intense. Bad stutter.

MARGARET – Seventeen. Bursting with pubescent energy.

JANET – Sixteen. Gaunt, bags under her eyes, intense in a haunted girl kind of way.

MAURICE – Mid-sixties. An upper-middle-class man. He is tender and warm. He wears a moustache, bow ties, etc.

THE MAN

THE GIRL

BETTY – mid-fifties, Maurice's wife. Dignified in her grief.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The play can be performed by eight actors with **WRITER/MAN**, **JANET/GIRL** and **BETTY/OLDER MARGARET** doubling.

No interval.

THE ENFIELD HAUNTING is inspired by real events and by real people. Much of what we show happened, and some characters are based on real people. However, it is a play and does not profess to be a true re-enactment of the events surrounding this notorious and extraordinary story. It is a work of imagination.

Scene One

(Snap blackout – A mobile phone chirps...and chirps...and chirps. Maybe we start to laugh. Then, finally, it is answered. Two voices in the darkness.)

OLDER MARGARET. 'ello?

(Her voice has a rasp – from a thousand cigarettes.)

WRITER. Oh, hi there – is that Margaret? Margaret Hodgson?

OLDER MARGARET. Who is this?

*(***WRITER** *is middle class, upbeat, breezy.* **OLDER MARGARET** *is flinty, taut.)*

WRITER. I know it's all a really long time ago but they said you might be prepared to talk?

OLDER MARGARET. How did you get my number?

WRITER. There's so much stuff on YouTube and on the net and I'm sure most of it is absolute rubbish. I want to...

OLDER MARGARET. How d'you get this number? I don't like people having this...

WRITER. Please, Margaret listen to me. All I want is to know the truth.

(Silence. Just **OLDER MARGARET** *breathing.)*

Hey, why don't I come down? I can meet you somewhere? A cafe? Near the station... Or on the beach? For a walk?

OLDER MARGARET. Please. I don't want to talk to no journalists. It's all been said.

WRITER. I'm not a journalist.

OLDER MARGARET. Now please…

WRITER. Can I talk to Janet then?

(Silence. Finally…)

OLDER MARGARET. No.

WRITER. I know what happened to Jimmy…

OLDER MARGARET. You don't!

WRITER. I know what I have been told. And what I've read.

Where is Janet? Has she passed…?

OLDER MARGARET. She went through enough.

WRITER. Can't I speak with her? We need – I need – to know the truth.

OLDER MARGARET. Leave it alone.

WRITER. *It?* What do you mean?

(Silence from **OLDER MARGARET** *– just maybe a breath.)*

Please.

(Lights build, revealing the skeletal shadows of a set.)

What do you mean by 'it'?

Scene Two

(Imagine you had ripped a house in half. The house is a study in 1978.)

(284 Green Street, Enfield, was built between the wars. It hasn't been redecorated for years. The poverty is visceral.)

(There is a Formica kitchen off a living area. The living area has a TV, a built-in gas fire, sofa, armchair and table.)

(Upstage centre – at the end of the downstairs hall – the front door. There is a toilet off the hall. Off to one side is a staircase to the bedroom. The bedroom has several beds crammed into it, flock wallpaper, and a thin curtain over a window. 1970s posters cover one wall.)

(Downstairs, **PEGGY** *is sat at the table. She has a needle and thread and is re-repairing a piece of one of her children's clothing: a pair of pyjama bottoms.* **PEGGY** *is in her mid-forties but looks older. She is a lioness with deeply rattled nerves. But now she is happily humming to herself. A moment.)*

(Upstage, the front door opens – we just catch a shadow.)

PEGGY. *(Without turning, calling.)* You're back early!

*(***PEGGY** *goes on stitching. Suddenly, a large man in a boiler suit looms over her.)*

REY. *(Cod ghost.)* Whooah, whooah!

*(***PEGGY** *screams, he laughs.)*

I surprised you!

*(**PEGGY** is furious but laughs nervously. A big part of her is trying to remain positive at all times.)*

PEGGY. Dear God, Rey you near gave me a heart attack. You gave me a fright, you did. What are you doin' creeping in like that?

*(**REY** is a big man. Uncomfortable in himself but kind.)*

REY. You gave me the keys, when they took you to the seaside. You remember!

PEGGY. Not so you can creep in like that!

REY. Thought I'd see how you were...

*(**REY** holds out a box of Quality Street sweets. This is an important moment for **REY**.)*

PEGGY. What the heavens?

REY. I bought them for you, Peggy.

PEGGY. For me...?

REY. I'm worried about you.

PEGGY. There's nothing to worry about!

*(**REY** looks around – and whispers.)*

REY. They here? His Jaguar's not out there. Quite a motor that, I can tell you. That is not going to be cheap to run, not with the Sheiks taking their pound of flesh.

PEGGY. The children will be home any second now.

REY. I know. That's why I wanted to see you. And give you them.

(He carefully puts the sweets on the table, but he doesn't know what to do next. There's a pause.)

PEGGY. Well. There. I have my nippers' dinner to make, Rey.

(She stands and goes upstage to the kitchen. **REY** *hovers.)*

REY. At least the rain has held off. They say it's going to be a scorcher. The weekend.

(He looks around, checks that **PEGGY***'s back is turned in the kitchen and goes across to the armchair.* **REY** *looks at it. Steps away from it. He then drops into a squat and lifts the heavy chair so he can look underneath. Upstage – beyond the kitchen window – a loud miaow and a glimpse of a black cat.* **PEGGY** *turns, watches* **REY** *–)*

PEGGY. What are you doing?

REY. Nothing!

(Startled, he drops the chair and straightens.)

Wanted to get to the bottom of things, Peggy.

PEGGY. *(Changing the subject.)* You should feed that poor cat, sometimes, you know. Spider's in and out of our garden, hungry like she's starvin' to death…

REY. I do, but I can't control her.

PEGGY. She's possessed – that's what Mr Playfair reckons!

(She laughs and turns back to the kitchen.)

REY. Listen to me, please, Peggy.

PEGGY. What did you want Rey? Because if it's to give me a talking to, I'm not sure I'm interested.

(And she turns to go back to the kitchen. **REY** *clears his throat – this is his moment.)*

REY. I… we… think it's got to stop.

PEGGY. What has got to stop?

REY. What is going on! Here. Something bad is going to happen.

(**PEGGY** *returns to lay the table. She puts her needlework and repaired clothing carefully on the sideboard.)*

People are talking.

PEGGY. Well we *were* in the newspaper. On the front page.

REY. And on the TV. On the BBC!

(Smiling.) You've certainly put Green Street, Enfield, on the map! We all…

PEGGY. *(Interrupting.)* It's got nothing to do with anyone, Rey.

REY. I… we…

PEGGY. Who's this 'we', when they are at home?

REY. The Police.

PEGGY. *(Alarmed.)* What have you said to the Police?!

REY. No what I mean, even them, comin' here!

(**PEGGY** *stares at him.)*

Your girls – I don't know much about these things – but they are a pair of minxes. You know that. Young girls can get up to all sorts…

PEGGY. You're right. You don't know much about young girls.

REY. No, but I am trying to help.

(Trying again.) You know me, Peggy, I don't want trouble. I was born next door. This is where I live. I see the comings and the goings. I seen them. All of them.

(Declaration.) If it's anything, and I don't think it is anything, myself, it's that chair.

PEGGY. I have no idea what's got into you.

REY. I see how tired you all are, and I just want to help.

PEGGY. *(Wanting none of this.)* Thank you for the Quality Street. My favourite. I'll put them away for a rainy day.

(The front door opens with a bang, and **JIMMY** *[eleven, strange, with a terrible stutter] flies in. His school uniform is darned and re-darned. Without stopping, he lands in front of the TV – puts it on – JIMMY SAVILE'S JIM'LL FIX IT. He doesn't take his eyes off the screen as he talks.)*

JIMMY. I h-h-ate them.

PEGGY. Jimmy, darlin', who now...?

(She is crossing to **JIMMY** *when* **MARGARET** *[seventeen – in a tight tank top and tighter loon pants – bursting with pubescent sexual energy] comes in from the front door.)*

MARGARET. Why'd you run away like that Jimmy yer little tit?

PEGGY. Oh dear what happened?

JIMMY. N-n-othing.

MARGARET. Some of the boys said we was a bunch of liars and J-J-J-immy just ran away when he could've stood an' fought like a fuckin' man.

REY. You might want to watch your language, young lady.

MARGARET. And you might want to shut your gob, Uncle Rey.

(Then, **MARGARET** *laughs uproariously.* **MARGARET** *has a strange energy. She never settles and her laugh, and her movement, feels uneasy.)*

REY. Margaret, I'll not have anyone speak to me like that.

PEGGY. *(To* **JIMMY**.*)* They don't know what they are talking about. Come on, Jimmy, my love.

(She scrunches his hair but **JIMMY** *leans in and whacks up the TV volume, his face is inches from the screen. It's now very loud.)*

MARGARET. Well, will you look at these!

(She has the Quality Streets, **PEGGY** *takes them.)*

PEGGY. For a rainy day.

MARGARET. *(Smiling.)* From Uncle Rey? Cheeky monkey. He's a right flirt, mum.

(To **REY**.*)* You're a right flirt aren't you?

PEGGY. Where's Jan'?

MARGARET. Last seen floating six feet in the air in the middle of the playground...

(Her laugh, again.)

PEGGY. I wish you'd look after Janet, I really do.

*(***PEGGY** *runs fast out the front door.* **JIMMY** *takes a chair from the table and puts it in front of the TV. He then sits on it, his legs scrunched up.* **MARGARET** *stalks. She goes up to the kitchen, gets a glass of water, and appears through the hatch. She smiles warmly.)*

MARGARET. You staying for tea, Rey? Be fish fingers.

REY. Oh no just wanted to have a word with you. You two young ladies, particularly.

(To **JIMMY** *– who is only inches from the TV.)* You want to turn that thing off son?

*(***JIMMY** *doesn't react.)* Jimmy, lad, please.

> *(***REY** *now moves to the TV and is about to switch it off. But* **MARGARET** *has moved like lightning and is suddenly half an inch from* **REY***'s face.)*

MARGARET. You touch that an' we'll do you from the inside out.

REY. *(Frightened.)* You don't frighten me Margaret.

> *(Then* **JANET** *appears at the front door. She wears a school uniform and carries a satchel. She is sixteen, blonde, with sallow grey skin. Dark rings under her eyes. She is extraordinary: fragile, but also very powerful. She stops. Stares at* **REY**. *For a moment, he doesn't know what to say – the stare is uncomfortable.)*

There she is! Your poor mum is worried sick, Janet.

> *(***JANET** *walks straight to the table and pulls an exercise book from her satchel. She sits, takes out a school book and locks into her homework, writing fast with a pencil.* **PEGGY** *comes from the front door, following.)*

You found her! That's good, isn't it?

PEGGY. *(Bright.)* Who's hungry? Who wants their din-dins?

> *(None of the* **CHILDREN** *respond.* **PEGGY** *goes upstage to the kitchen.)*

REY. Hard to hear yourself think with that on… *(The TV.)*

> *(***REY** *is in the middle of the room.* **JIMMY** *is half an inch from the TV screen,* **PEGGY** *upstage,* **MARGARET** *turns, goes.)*

MARGARET. *(Indicating the loo corridor.)* Pardonnez moi.

(She walks towards **REY** *and passes him provocatively close.)*

You be good Uncle Rey, when I am not here to keep an eye on you.

(She goes. The TV is really loud.)

REY. *(Uneasy.)* Anything I can do, Mrs Hodgson?

*(***PEGGY** *is in the kitchen – making tea.* **REY** *drifts over – looks over* **JANET***'s shoulder. She blocks his view of what she is writing. He hesitates and then…)*

I was never much use when it came to school. Tricky, Jan'?

(Silence but for Jimmy Savile on the TV.)

You gave Mrs Washington a right fright. Says she saw you from across the zebra crossing flying – or something – in the upstairs front.

*(***JANET** *hunches intensely.)*

You look like you haven't had a night's sleep. Janet, I've known you for, well, it must be five years since you moved in here. You were such a lovely little thing – skipping and playing…

*(***PEGGY** *has appeared from the kitchen. She is carrying a teapot. She stops.)*

PEGGY. Rey I want you to stop. I want you to go. What is happening here is nothing to do with you.

REY. But nothing is happening! The kids are just running rings…

(And then there's a very loud bang. **REY** *spins, but* **PEGGY** *doesn't even appear to notice and puts the teapot on the table.)*

PEGGY. *(Quietly, tenderly.)* Jan', dear, you want to put that homework to one side so you can eat. There's a good girl.

(But **JANET** *doesn't stop her intense writing as* **REY** *announces:)*

REY. You got an air-block in your plumbing Peggy, I'd reckon. That's all that it is!

PEGGY. Jimmy, please...

JIMMY. I-I-I want to see this.

(There's another very loud bang. **PEGGY** *goes back to the kitchen.)*

REY. *(Excited.)* That's Margaret! She's the minx bangin' like that!

(Calling, laughing.) Margaret stop that banging will you?

(The table **JANET** *is sitting at suddenly thumps loudly.* **REY** *spins to look at* **JANET**. *She's still scribbling away. Then the TV dies.)*

JIMMY. Fer f-ucks sake Jan'! Not the f-uckin' TV!

REY. Language! Jimmy...

(The table is starting to shake. **JANET** *stops her writing and stares ahead.* **REY** *looks at her and then grabs the teapot.* **JIMMY** *is thumping the TV to make it work.* **MARGARET** *saunters back from the downstairs toilet and goes upstairs...)*

JIMMY. *(Shouting.)* Jan' you do this?!

(Suddenly, **JANET***'s eyes roll into her head, and she starts to shake and stare upwards.)*

(Upstairs in the bedroom, **MARGARET** *plops the needle on a little Dansette record player. The Bay City Rollers' "I Only Want to Be With You" blasts out.)*

*(***REY** *is holding the teapot.)*

REY. *(Shocked.)* Janet – you alright, dear? Is she alright?

*(***PEGGY** *is in the kitchen, getting on with the kids' dinner.* **JIMMY** *is thumping the TV to make it work.)*

JIMMY. You k-know h-ow to fix this Un-cle Rey?

(Upstairs, **MARGARET** *is dancing around to the music. It is weird because as the music gets louder, she seems to be throwing herself against the walls of the small room.)*

(Downstairs, the table shaking is becoming very powerful. And then **JANET** *starts making a weird grumbling noise.)*

REY. Oh now come on Janet! Mrs H… She's making this up. You're making this up!

JANET. Grrehhhhhh. Grrrrrrrr.

*(***MARGARET** *is upstairs singing along with the Bay City Rollers, she's loud, excited.)*

REY. Janet – stop that. Girl, you got to stop that!

*(***JIMMY** *has now crawled behind the TV and has the plug out.* **MARGARET** *is singing and dancing upstairs.* **JANET** *is growling… The table is shaking horribly.* **PEGGY***, however, is calmly preparing the food.)*

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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