Ghostlight
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Cast of Characters

The Students

GARBIELA NETTLES, the protagonist. You'll figure her out as you go along.

FANTINE, eager to be Garbiela's friend.

CLOVIS, already has a best friend.

MOGPIN, a loyal friend.

RUTH, wants to be more than friends.

CARA, a method actor.

COLBY, has a black hole where their stage presence should be.

BILLIAM, has one clear goal.

KELVIN, fast legs, too-fast ears.

MAUNDER, still learning their lines.

RILEY (aka THE OASIS), calm, calm, calm.

FREYA MCSLANE, in the past, coined a phrase.

The Adults

JACKSON NETTLES, Garbiela's father.

AMICUS, head of school.

COLLISTER, Spanish teacher, a stone wrapped in a blowtorch.

TAM TAM, Collister's bodyguard.

STAUNCHER, the theatre teacher.

HISTORY TEACHER (SFX)

PHYSICS TEACHER (SFX)

ENGLISH TEACHER (SFX)

Neither

THE FOLEYS (SFX)

SCATTERGOOD (SFX)

A THOUGHT (SFX)

A SECOND THOUGHT (SFX)

Time

The present.

Production Notes

A few thoughts on producing this play.

Tech Jargon

What a playwright wants for their play is for it to have a life. If it does get produced for many years, then the only downside is that it starts to show its age. Few things date a play faster than tech. *Ghostlight* contains references to texts and Wikipedia. Feel free to update those should it be necessary.

The Music

Isaiah Hastings's music for the play is spiffy and available free of charge. Use it as lead-in, if you wish, and for the silent rehearsal scene, which is what it was designed for. When the original production pivoted to virtual because of Covid, the music also played under an animated pre-play credit sequence and during the curtain call.

The Texts

The first time we tried sending texts to audience members, at the Burbank High School reading, the cryptic anonymous messages freaked out some recipients. The messages sent out for the Olathe South production added clarifying hashtags: #ghostlight #olathesouththeatre #Halloween #7pmAND10pm

Gender

As originally envisioned, Garbiela, Fantine, and Collister are female. Jackson and Ruth are male. Garbiela and Fantine should remain female, but you're welcome to change any of the other characters' genders.

Scattergood

Garbiela can see Scattergood as clearly as she can see Clovis. The audience can't see him because he's a stage convention, mimed by Clovis.

Other

Obviously, you'll need a voice double or a recording (or a teleporter) for the final time Kelvin shouts down from the rafters.

Fantine's performance as the eel at the end is subtle. She's careful not to upstage Clovis's speech.

For concessions, well, it's obvious, isn't it? But have some other options as well. Affinity is the most delicious food in the world that a few spit out.

Program

On the program is the recipe for Affinity:

AFFINITY

The most delicious candy in the world that some people do spit out.

1. Caramelize ½ cup of white sugar in a skillet.

2. Add 2 cups of sour cream.

3. Add 2 ½ cups of sugar to caramelized sugar and cook to soft ball stage.

4. Set off stove and add 1 cup of chopped walnuts (or not!), 2 tablespoons of butter, and 1 teaspoon of vanilla.

5. Cool.

6. Beat until stiff and spread in a pan.

The recipe starts by caramelizing sugar. This is dry—no water added—which can be tricky the first time you try it. There are good instructional videos. A wooden spoon works best. The soft ball stage means that a bit dipped into cold water holds its shape but can't be picked up.

Production History

Burbank High School in Burbank, California, presented *Ghostlight* as a staged reading on December 11-12, 2019. The production was double cast. The actors made their own sound effects live.

GARBIELA . . . . . Olivia Brumit, Alex McGee, Delilah Barbosa, Ayla Machado
FANTINE . . . . . Jessica Bassuk, Lily Kamm
JACKSON . . . . . Momammed Malia
AMICUS . . . . . Cole Lovejoy
MOGPIN. . . . . Faris Jalilov, Levin Akhkashian
COLLISTER . . . . . Sophie Perez
KELVIN/2ND MAID . . . . . Noa Pierce
CLOVIS . . . . . Da'Jhia Sanders
RUTH . . . . . Joelle Darrouj, Jean-Luc Fournier
STAUNCHER. . . . . Abby Griffith, Pauline Baghdasian
COLBY. . . . . Caleb Fauntleroy
BILLIAM. . . . . Austin Brito, KJ Boggs
MAUNDER/TAM TAM . . . . . Lucas Sheppe
RILEY (aka THE OASIS). . . . . Brandon Wilson
Costumes . . . . . Ayla Machado, Jessica Bassuk, Pauline Baghdasian
Props . . . . . Alex McGee, Olivia Brumit, Delilah Barbosa
Lights. . . . . Gabby Angeles
Stage Manager . . . . . Faris Jalilov
Director . . . . . Donovan Glover

Ghostlight was originally produced by Olathe South High School on October 31, 2020, with the following cast and crew:

GARBIELLA NETTLES . . . . . Aliyah Pullin
FANTINE . . . . . .Gia Darling
CLOVIS . . . . . Guyon Grant
RUTH . . . . . Max Pardo
RILEY . . . . . McKenna Cowles
COLBY. . . . . .Xavier Hylton
BILLIAM. . . . . Jack McCurdy
KELVIN. . . . . Carter Stelting
MAUNDER . . . . . Rowan Farha
MOGPIN. . . . . .Alana Shields
FREYA MCSLANE . . . . . Lake Sowles
CARA . . . . . .Loren Spellman
JACKSON NETTLES. . . . . .Jackson Cannell
MR. AMICUS . . . . . Raleigh Jonas
FLACHRA COLLISTER . . . . . Elise Bowles
TAM TAM . . . . . .Molly McBride
MS. STAUNCHER. . . . . .Abigail Dearing
Foley Artists . . . . . Beckett Chase,
Francesca Martini
Director . . . . . David Tate Hastings
Assistant Director . . . . . Maya Snyder
Stage Manager . . . . . .Amber Nugent
Assistant Stage Manager . . . . . Rachel Sullivan
Costume/Makeup. . . . . .Molly McBride
Video Crew. . . . . .Maddy Angell,
Ava Meyerhoff
Background Designs. . . . . Hailey Slaughter
Theatre Assistant. . . . . .Amy D. Hastings
Hair and Makeup Coordinator . . . . . John Hollan
Costume Coordinator. . . . . .Tam Osgood
Original Musical Theme . . . . . Isaiah Hastings

Ghostlight was fully produced live for the first time at Hollywood High School on September 30, 2021, with the following cast and crew:

GARBIELLA NETTLES . . . . . Madison Moore
JACKSON NETTLES. . . . . Delfin Gamboa
FANTINE . . . . . Emily Mendez
RUTH . . . . . Immanuel Tims
CARA . . . . . Ashley Jorge
COLBY. . . . . Leslie Alfaro
BILLIAM. . . . . Sergio Liden
KELVIN. . . . . Adela Ramirez
MAUNDER . . . . . Rocio Ramirez
CLOVIS. . . . . Lance Encarguez
RILEY . . . . . Angela Hernandez
MOGPIN/FREYA MCSLANE/
TAM TAM . . . . . Yvonne Contreras
AMICUS . . . . . Solbi Chung
FLACHRA COLLISTER . . . . . Catalina Agrello
MS. STAUNCHER. . . . . Veronica Torres
SFX. . . . . Selena Garcia
Director. . . . . John Tourtellotte
Assistant Director . . . . . Michelle Fernandez
Stage Manager. . . . . Sienna Willis
Lighting Designer . . . . . Stephen Azua

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GHOSTLIGHT
by Stephen Gregg

(Most of the settings, a good bit of the feel, and some of the plot of Ghostlight *are conveyed through sounds, which are produced live onstage by one or more SFX artists. The same artists also voice the ghosts that only* GARBIELA *can hear.)*

(A few days before the play, those who have bought tickets get a message—electronic or physical: "Hello you! It's Garbiela. I need a favor. Could you please please come to the play? I have an important task for you. I do know that the timing of this message is awkward, but I'm really looking forward to meeting you and I'd like to be your friend.")

(On the back of the program it says: "YOUR TASK. When signaled to do so, make this sound very softly until signaled to stop." Different programs have different assigned noises as spelled out in the back of the script: "Cough twice, softly." "Use the program as a fan." "Whisper: 'Can I help you with that?'" etc. [See back of this volume for details.])

(On stage is a ghost light.)

(As the lights go to half, the SOUND EFFECTS PERSON (SFX) *speaks to the audience.)*

SFX. Friends! Welcome to our play! All of us up on stage have rehearsed and rehearsed. We are going to do great. There's only one single thing that can go wrong, and that's you. There are a couple of ways that you can destroy this evening. The first is by not ever laughing. There are parts of the play that are funny and parts that are not, but the thing is, if the cast and crew doesn't hear you laugh once in a while everybody's going to home a little sad and it will be your fault. Also: On the back of the program you'll find a sound that you're going to make when signaled. The ghost light will flash and I'll go like this [a signal]. When I signal, make the sound until I signal you to stop. Let's try it.

(The ghost light flashes. SFX *signals; the audience makes the sound. Repeat if necessary.)*

SFX. If you do this wrong, the entire play will fail. I'm counting on you.

(Spotlight, GARBIELA, *16, on a bare stage.)*

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Everything I'm about to tell you is true and all of it is going to seem like a lie. My name is Garbiela Nettles. We're in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Albuquerque starts at the base of the Sandia Mountains and goes west all the way to the Rio Grande. It's four years and three months ago, four years and two months before I believed in ghosts. I'm on my way for my interview at the Doves Forge Academy. The school is in the New Mexico National Bank building, the tallest building in New Mexico. It's four hundred yards from where my father and I live, so I have to walk around the block three times in order to make sure that I'm late. My father's idea of raising a child is to recite mantras.

JACKSON. Life can be managed one clear, achievable goal at a time.

(And now we move into the scene:)

GARBIELA. I'm not going to apply.

JACKSON. You miss a hundred percent of the shots you don't take.

GARBIELA. I have *zero* chance of getting in.

JACKSON. The only real failure is the failure to try.

GARBIELA. They don't even have a theatre program.

JACKSON. Of course they do. You're only pretending you don't want to go to the interview. You want to see what it's like.

GARBIELA. That's not a good enough reason.

JACKSON. I want to see what it's like. Memorize it for me. And take this.

(He hands her a piece of paper.)

GARBIELA. Seriously?

JACKSON. Get it signed.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* The only thing you need to know to understand this story is that, all my life, I've had nightmares in which a voice says:

SFX. You're burning up.

GARBIELA and SFX. You're burning up.

GARBIELA. You're burning up. *(Beat.)* In the dream, I'm looking up at someone, and I feel sick. Nauseous. That's what wakes me up. I've never told anyone about these nightmares because I don't wake up frightened; I wake up feeling guilty, as though I've done something terrible.

I push through a heavy glass door into the lobby. To the right, people wait in line for a teller, bankers open accounts, consider loans. The elevators are to the left, except one: Straight ahead, beyond the bank

lobby, I see an elevator marked "Doves Forge." It's huge and it's already open. Empty. I enter. And the doors close.

(With a HISS.)

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* And . . . And nothing happens. There are no buttons.

(She speaks to what must be a security camera.)

GARBIELA. Hey! I'm here for an interview! *(Beat.)* I NEED TO BE TRANSPORTED UP TO THE SCHOOL! *(Beat.)* Please?

(The elevator starts abruptly. WHOOSH.)

GARBIELA. Twenty-four floors.

(While GARBIELA *is in the elevator, the Doves Forge Academy—students and all—materializes around her. DING.)*

GARBIELA. *(Awe:)* It's nothing like what I pictured. It's beautiful and warm. Wood paneling, leather armchairs, floor-to-ceiling windows that look out over the Sandias.
There's a moment when it feels like I belong here. But it's just a moment.

*(*FANTINE *enters. Excitement is* FANTINE's *at-rest state.)*

FANTINE. Hi!! Hello hello, I've been expecting you.

GARBIELA. Hi.

FANTINE. I'm going to be your guide. My name is Fantine, like in *Les Misérables.* The book not the musical.

GARBIELA. The musical is based on the book.

FANTINE. What do you think so far?

GARBIELA. Wow.

FANTINE. I like you already. The architects, Myer and Wombley, wanted to show that the whole experiment could work, that you could put a school twenty-four floors high in the air and still make it feel like a school. They wanted everything to feel warm, and safe. Of course as we know, that didn't work out. But it's safe now. We occupy floors twenty-four through twenty-eight. Floor twenty-nine, though technically part of the school, is still off-limits. It used to be the theatre. The carpeting is controversial. The pattern is called Rust and Willow. Some people hate it, including me.

GARBIELA. I like it.

FANTINE. Me too. I was testing you.

(A moment of happiness for FANTINE.*)*

FANTINE. You smell like you've just been ironed.

GARBIELA. *(The mild mortification of being told you can be smelled:)* It's a laundry soap my dad likes.

FANTINE. I do too. When you come here, if you need a best friend, or a practically best friend, you can just come to me if you want. We could tell each other secrets and bump against each other when we walk down the halls. *(Beat.)* Nobody would have to know.

GARBIELA. I'm not going to get in.

FANTINE. Yes you are. When you do, I can tell you about every student, and which teachers are nice. They're all nice except the sophomore Spanish teacher, Ms. Collister. She's a stone wrapped in a blowtorch. And I could tell you which clubs to join and which ones not to join. They have archery, and film studies, and there's really only one you shouldn't join. Are you even listening to me?

GARBIELA. Which one shouldn't I join?

FANTINE. There's a Pretend Fantine's Not Here Club.

GARBIELA. There is not!

FANTINE. Sometimes. Please don't join it.

GARBIELA. Of course I wouldn't join it. If I got in, I would love to be your best friend and I wouldn't be a good fit for that club. But I'm not going to get in.

FANTINE. Let's start in the library. There's a wall of books about self-esteem.

(From off, there's a pained yell.)

CARA. *(Offstage:)* HELP ME! It's freezing me!

*(*CARA *bursts in! Here—and every time we see her—*CARA *holds a large feather duster. But all we know about* CARA *at the moment is that she's fleeing from pain. It's a pain that started inside her—her whole body felt like it was freezing—and that she instinctively tried to run from.* GARBIELA's *impulse is to help.)*

GARBIELA. What's the matter?

CARA. It was freezing me!

GARBIELA. I don't understand.

*(*RILEY, *the calmest person alive, glides in.)*

RILEY. Cara, stand still for a moment.

(She does. Just the sound of RILEY's *voice calms* CARA.*)*

RILEY. Are you feeling it right now or did it stop?

(It might take a moment for CARA*, shaken, to realize:)*

CARA. It stopped.

RILEY. You think it was The Chill?

CARA. For sure it was. It's worse than they say.

GARBIELA. What's happening?

FANTINE. It's The Chill.

GARBIELA. What's The Chill?

RILEY. *(To* CARA*:)* Come on. Let's get you to the nurse's office.

CARA. *(As she exits with* RILEY*:)* I'm still shivering.

FANTINE. It started about a dozen years ago. The first girl it happened to, Freya McSlane, described it as—

*(*FREYA MCSLANE *appears . . .)*

FREYA MCSLANE. A heart attack crossed with an ice storm.

(And she disappears.)

FANTINE. People thought she was making it up. But it happened to other people, and it keeps happening. I hope this hasn't changed your desire to come here.

GARBIELA. It hasn't. Not a bit. *(To the audience:)* Life can be managed one clear, achievable goal at a time. My clear, achievable goal at the moment is to not get in to the Doves Forge Academy.

*(*GARBIELA *is being interviewed by* MR. AMICUS*, who takes his gatekeeper status seriously. He's browsing a file, puzzled by its lack of achievement.)*

AMICUS. So. Gabriela Nettles.

GARBIELA. Garbiela. It was a typo on my birth certificate but it stuck.

AMICUS. I'm looking at your file. I know a fair amount about you. What do you know about us?

GARBIELA. Almost nothing. That's why I'm here.

AMICUS. You didn't do any research.

GARBIELA. I couldn't be bothered.

AMICUS. And you were thirty minutes late.

GARBIELA. Well, technically fifteen.

AMICUS. Your appointment was for ten o'clock.

GARBIELA. The tour took fifteen minutes.

AMICUS. There's no tour.

GARBIELA. Fantine was my tour guide.

AMICUS. We don't have tour guides. She must have third period free. *(Beat.)* Why do you want to attend Doves Forge?

GARBIELA. I don't. I don't want to attend here. I wasn't even going to come to the interview but my dad gave me this. If you could just put your signature there, we could both get on with our day.

AMICUS. Why are you so set against coming here?

GARBIELA. It's going to be too hard for me. You can see the grades, the test scores. And the thing I hate most in life is effort. I'll just sit in the back and text.

AMICUS. We don't get reception here.

GARBIELA. I'll be so bored.

AMICUS. *(From her file:)* You seem to have put a lot of effort into drama.

GARBIELA. Yeah. And it's the one thing you're horrible at. You never rebuilt the theatre after the fire. Nine people go to your plays. You perform in the gym.

AMICUS. So you did do some research.

GARBIELA. If I think about an academic career here, what I'm thinking about is a muscly tutor named Omar who's exactly my age and lonely. I have ambitions in life but they involve drinking. This place is wonderful. Don't waste it on me.

AMICUS. Thank you. I think we're done here. *(As she goes:)* One more thing. How much do you drink?

GARBIELA. I don't. Yet. *(To the audience:)* Two days later, the decision came.

JACKSON. Congratulations! I'm so so proud of you.

GARBIELA. There's no way.

JACKSON. That must have been quite an interview.

GARBIELA. They got the name wrong.

JACKSON. No they didn't. They see something in you.

GARBIELA. I don't want to go. I'll miss Mogpin.

JACKSON. Mogpin's not going anywhere.

(And we've changed scenes: Kachina High hallways. STUDENT SOUNDS.)

MOGPIN. Your dad's right. Just because we're not going to the same school doesn't mean we're not gonna be friends. Does it?

GARBIELA. Of course not.

MOGPIN. Everybody at Kachina's gonna miss you.

GARBIELA. You know that's not true.

MOGPIN. You don't think? *(*MOGPIN *produces a large card.)* Then how did this happen?

GARBIELA. What's this?

(She opens it, is impressed by the tiny scribbling.)

MOGPIN. A card. Way more people wanted to sign it than could, cause some people wrote so much.

GARBIELA. Mogpin, thank you so much! This is so great. "We miss you already. —Lisa." "Can't wait to hear all about Doves Forge. —Raul." "The school's gonna shine a little less brightly without you. —Melissa." That doesn't sound like Melissa.

(She notices something.)

GARBIELA. The "n" in shine looks like the "n" in Mogpin.

MOGPIN. I don't see the resemblance.

GARBIELA. It's over here, too. And here. Did you forge all these signatures?

MOGPIN. No.

GARBIELA. Yes you did.

MOGPIN. No I didn't. The signatures are real. I only forged the inscriptions.

GARBIELA. The sentiment.

MOGPIN. Everybody likes you. They just don't know you.

GARBIELA. Mogpin, this is the nicest thing anyone's ever done for me. Thank you. I'm going to keep it forever.

MOGPIN. Pretty soon you'll have all new friends.

(A dark thought causes GARBIELA *to make some sound of unhappiness.)*

MOGPIN. What?

GARBIELA. There was this girl—this quite needy girl who toured me around, and I told her I'd be her—

(The DING of the elevator.)

FANTINE. Best friend!!!

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Day one.

FANTINE. So, first thing: How are people going to know we're friends?

GARBIELA. I think it'll be obvious.

FANTINE. I'm going to say something that I shouldn't say. But I'm going to, but I shouldn't. Do you have plans for tomorrow night?

GARBIELA. I do. I'm going out to dinner with my dad.

FANTINE. Are you tricking me?

GARBIELA. No.

FANTINE. In case you're really not tricking me, and your plans fall through: There's a surprise party for me tomorrow night, if you want to come.

GARBIELA. If it's a surprise party, how do you know about it?

FANTINE. Did anyone ever throw you a surprise party?

GARBIELA. Yeah.

FANTINE. Did you know?

GARBIELA. Yeah, like a hundred different ways.

FANTINE. Mine's at seven tomorrow. So you should come, unless you already are. My sister will be there, which is too bad. I wish she didn't exist.

*(*KELVIN *sprints on for no apparent reason.* KELVIN *is fast. He doesn't make it far when—)*

STAUNCHER. *(Offstage:)* Kelvin, get back here!

*(*KELVIN *turns, sprints back the way he came.)*

FANTINE. Hey Kelvin! *(To* GARBIELA*:)* Kelvin's fast. I need a favor.

GARBIELA. What's that?

FANTINE. The school play is already rehearsing but there's a part still open that's perfect for me. Can I do my audition speech for you?

GARBIELA. Sure.

FANTINE. Thank you!

(The BELL rings.)

FANTINE. Where are you supposed to be first period?

GARBIELA. Spanish.

FANTINE. With who?

GARBIELA. Ms. Collister.

FANTINE. You're late!

GARBIELA. The passing period just started.

FANTINE. Go! I'm serious. I'd take you, but I'm staying on this floor and you're heading up to twenty-eight . . . Down that hall, up the stairs, and three doors left.

GARBIELA. *(This represents* GARBIELA *walking:)* Down the hall, up the stairs, three doors left and—

COLLISTER. Where have you been?

*(*MS. COLLISTER *is imposing, at least in spirit. Next to her is someone more imposing than she is. This is* TAM TAM.*)*

GARBIELA. I'm new.

COLLISTER. The only proper response when I ask a question is to answer the question. The rule in this class is that you get here four minutes early to turn in your homework. Where were you?

GARBIELA. I got lost.

COLLISTER. The worst response is to lie. The school's not that big, the rooms are numbered, and there's no one who wouldn't have given you directions because everybody here is nice.

GARBIELA. Maybe not everybody.

COLLISTER. Explain that. Explain what you just said.

GARBIELA. It's three hundred students. There have to be some mean ones.

COLLISTER. This is my bodyguard, Tam Tam. Ignore him. I have a disorder that sometimes makes me attack students. He's here for your protection. You're Garbiela Nettles.

GARBIELA. Yes.

COLLISTER. Did you take Spanish at your old school?

GARBIELA. Yes.

COLLISTER. The class motto is on the board. Can you translate it?

GARBIELA. No.

(We hear a CHIME.)

COLLISTER. What was that?

GARBIELA. I think I got a text.

COLLISTER. That's impossible. We don't get reception here. Give me your phone.

*(*GARBIELA *does.* COLLISTER *reads it. It puzzles her. A SOUND tells us she's erased it.)*

GARBIELA. Did you just erase my text?

COLLISTER. I did.

GARBIELA. What did it say?

COLLISTER. It was private.

GARBIELA. You can't do that.

COLLISTER. Apparently I can.

GARBIELA. Give me my phone.

COLLISTER. Sit down.

GARBIELA. No, I'm out of here.

COLLISTER. If you leave this classroom, then you're leaving the school, permanently.

GARBIELA. That's right. I am. Give me my phone.

*(*COLLISTER *gives* GARBIELA *her phone.)*

COLLISTER. On your way out make sure to check in at the office so they don't think you've been abducted.

GARBIELA. I will.

(But then GARBIELA *hears a voice: strange, of indeterminate gender. It seems to come from above.)*

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

GARBIELA. Who said that?

COLLISTER. Who said what?

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

GARBIELA. A voice that said "You're burning up." *(To a* STUDENT *next to her:)* You heard that, didn't you? What's directly above us?

CARA. The theatre.

GARBIELA. I thought the theatre was in the gym.

CARA. The old theatre. The one that burned.

COLLISTER. You were on your way out.

GARBIELA. I changed my mind.

COLLISTER. It's too late for that.

GARBIELA. Here's my phone.

COLLISTER. Doves Forge is a privilege, and you've lost the privilege.

GARBIELA. Please. It's my first day.

COLLISTER. Goodbye.

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up!

GARBIELA. How can I be the only person hearing that? You don't hear a voice from up there? "You're burning up."

COLLISTER. You're holding up the class.

GARBIELA. I'll fix my attitude. I'll try so hard that— *(She looks at the board.)* The class motto: "No eres tan inteligente como crees." You're not as smart as you think.

COLLISTER. Sit down. Don't speak again this period. Do you understand?

GARBIELA. Yes. *(To the audience:)* I don't remember anything else from that morning.

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

GARBIELA. Just that voice, over and over again. From upstairs.

(BELL RINGS!)

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

(Boom. She's alone, in the hall.)

(From off, SNARLING, FEROCIOUS BARKING.
CLOVIS, *16, enters with his giant, invisible-to-us dog Scattergood on a leash. He's barely able to hold the dog back.* CLOVIS *has lost a tooth, and is self-conscious about it.)*

CLOVIS. Slow down SLOW down!

*(*CLOVIS *stops, but Scattergood seems desperate to reach* GARBIELA *and devour her.)*

CLOVIS. Are you lost?

GARBIELA. No, I have this period free.

(Another Scattergood lunge, accompanied by ferocious BARKING.)

CLOVIS. This is Scattergood.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* The single ugliest mammal I've ever seen.

(More ferocious BARKING.)

CLOVIS. He says hello! *(More BARKING.)* "Hello hello hello!"

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Like a sandworm.

CLOVIS. He's equal parts Great Dane, Rottweiler, and pit bull, so he's super loyal. You can pet him if you want.

GARBIELA. I'm allergic to dogs.

CLOVIS. He barely has any fur to be allergic to. He used to be better looking. *(To Scattergood:)* You were so handsome. Weren't you?

(A low, teeth-baring snarl from Scattergood.)

CLOVIS. He's showing you how clean his teeth are. It's cause I brush them. *(To* GARBIELA*:)* I'm on my way to the dentist myself.

(He shows her his mouth. There's a tooth missing.)

GARBIELA. Ouch. What happened?

CLOVIS. It got knocked out. And I'm in the play so I have to get it fixed. I have the final speech and I wrote it myself. It's about my future. I'm going to produce a TV show either about eels or about *an* eel.

*(*FANTINE *enters. Oddly,* CLOVIS *turns his back to her.)*

FANTINE. Hi, two favorite people! I'm looking for superglue and a swim cap. You don't happen to have any?

GARBIELA. No, sorry.

FANTINE. Hey Clovis.

CLOVIS. Hey.

*(*CLOVIS's *acknowledgement was minimal.)*

FANTINE. I'll let you know if I find any.

(She exits.)

GARBIELA. What's up with you two?

CLOVIS. I'm pretending to ignore her.

GARBIELA. What's the difference between pretending to ignore someone and actually ignoring them?

(He puts his finger to his lips.)

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* History.

HISTORY TEACHER (SFX). One cause of the Civil War was economic insecurity in the South which is why—

GARBIELA. Physics.

PHYSICS TEACHER (SFX). The speed of light is a constant.

GARBIELA. English.

ENGLISH TEACHER (SFX). And so is Hester Prynne's disgrace.

(BRRRG! Passing period.)

*(*RUTH *approaches. He has a crush of some sort on* GARBIELA. *[Note: the "u" in "Ruth" sounds like the vowel sound in "Tough."])*

RUTH. You talk to yourself.

GARBIELA. I talk to other people who aren't there. I'm Garbiela.

RUTH. I'm Ruth. It's spelled like Ruth. I thought it was amazing the way you stood up to Collister. I wanted to meet you before your death.

(DING!)

RUTH. Was that you getting a text?

GARBIELA. Yeah.

RUTH. That's not possible.

GARBIELA. Well, it happened. It says: "Get me out of here." I can't tell who it's from.

RUTH. "Get me out of here."

GARBIELA. Yeah.

(Another bell.)

RUTH. Where are you heading?

GARBIELA. The theatre.

RUTH. I'll show you the way.

GARBIELA. Thanks, but I know the way. *(To the audience, as she travels to the theatre:)* At Doves Forge, the chairs are ergonomically designed by a Norwegian firm to be comfortable for growing bodies. The chemistry labs are supplied by the same company that supplies MIT. The athletic facilities are famous; there's an NBA-caliber basketball court laid down in the middle of the twenty-eighth floor. But for reasons that no one talks about, the theatre was never rebuilt after the famous fire. These days it's easy to find: You just follow the signs that say "Gymnasium."

(As she approaches, we hear:)

STAUNCHER. *(Offstage:)* You're going to have to be louder.

COLBY. *(Offstage:)* I *am* louder!

STAUNCHER. *(Offstage:)* Don't get frustrated.

(As GARBIELA *walks in,* LUCY STAUNCHER *runs a rehearsal. She's tense, talking to* COLBY, *who has a black hole where his stage presence should be.)*

COLBY. Everybody hates this part of the play anyway.

STAUNCHER. Not if it's done correctly. *Again.*

COLBY. *(To an imaginary audience. Weak:)* "All right, everyone. Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. No, big, Colby. I need you to be big. The play is called *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation.* You're providing the audience participation.

COLBY. *(The same:)* "Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. "ARE WE HAVING A GOOD TIME?"

COLBY. "Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. You're getting quieter!

COLBY. My throat closes up when I'm terrified.

STAUNCHER. How can you be terrified? There's nobody even here!

COLBY. I'm picturing them anyway. "I have an important job for you. When I say a word . . . "

STAUNCHER. "WHEN I SAY A WORD!"

COLBY. *(Still weak:)* "When I say a word, you're all going to shout out that word, and if you don't do it, the whole play will fail."

STAUNCHER. "THE WHOLE PLAY WILL FAIL!" Moving on! Let's get set up for Scene 21B.

(The cast and crew get to work changing the set. GARBIELA's *phone DINGS. It DINGS again.)*

COLBY. You better turn that off. My name's Colby. I'm a genius. I take MIT math online, physics at Sandia labs, and Chinese at UNM. I'm only here cause they're trying to socialize me.

GARBIELA. I'm Garbiela.

COLBY. Sorry I forgot to ask.

STAUNCHER. KELVIN, ARE YOU READY BACK THERE?

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* YES!

STAUNCHER. All right! This is where I want the—

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* Got it!

(All the lights go out. A moment.)

STAUNCHER. Kelvin, I know you want to be helpful, but if you say yes—

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* Here you go!

(A badly aimed spotlight.)

STAUNCHER. *No.* If you say yes before I finish my sentence—

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* OK!

STAUNCHER. No.

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* I get what you're saying!

(Back to blackout.)

STAUNCHER. Stop! Don't agree with me and don't say anything!

(The lights come up.)

STAUNCHER. Can I help you?

GARBIELA. I want to join theatre.

STAUNCHER. We're all cast and we're all crewed.

(They are plunged into darkness.)

GARBIELA. I heard you're still squeezing people in.

STAUNCHER. Not anymore. You can observe this semester.

GARBIELA. Seems like you could use help with the lights.

STAUNCHER. Have you worked on lighting before?

(Pop. A spotlight directly on GARBIELA.*)*

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* This would be a good time to mention that I lie incessantly.

(Lights to full.)

GARBIELA. Yeah. Tons.

STAUNCHER. What shows?

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Detail is more important than the right detail. *(To* STAUNCHER:*)* At my old high school, *The Little Mermaid* and *Waiting for Godot.*

STAUNCHER. Your high school did *Waiting for Godot?*

GARBIELA. Twice. Also, there's a community theatre called the Splurge Players and when their lighting designer got a freelance accounting job out of town, I offered to step in. It was a production of the Scottish play, and their Fresnels didn't work with their antiquated light board so I had to figure out how to rewire it.

STAUNCHER. Good! Get up there and start fixing.

GARBIELA. I will.

STAUNCHER. Go!

GARBIELA. I have a migraine right now. I'll do it tomorrow.

STAUNCHER. PLACES!

*(*BILLIAM *stands on a pedestal, aggrieved.)*

BILLIAM. I hate my part.

STAUNCHER. Your part is important.

BILLIAM. No it's not. It's not even a talking statue. It's just a statue.

STAUNCHER. There are no small parts.

BILLIAM. Actually, if you don't talk and you don't move, that's a small part.

STAUNCHER. That's when you dig into research.

BILLIAM. I researched ghosts, *The Turn of the Screw,* and granite. I don't want to be just a statue; I want to be a statue that does a handstand.

STAUNCHER. There's no place in the play where that would fit.

BILLIAM. During the curtain call. Everybody would be like, "Hey, the statue is doing a handstand." It would be the highlight of the whole play. Ten years from now, people will be talking and someone will say, "Do you remember that play *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation?"* And they'll be like, "No. Wait, is that the one where the statue does the handstand? I love that play!"

STAUNCHER. Let me see it. Let's see the handstand.

BILLIAM. I can't do a handstand. That's why it's a good assignment.

STAUNCHER. If you can stand one hundred percent perfectly still for the whole play, I'll consider the handstand. Scene 21B! Enter the Butler.

*(*MAUNDER *enters as the Butler.)*

MAUNDER. "What will happen next in this house of terrifying spirits?"

STAUNCHER. Stop! You have to know your line.

MAUNDER. That is the line!

STAUNCHER. No. I changed "terrifying" to "terrifying and amazing." Do it again.

MAUNDER. "What will happen next in our house of amazing and terrifying spirits? And who's that knocking at the door!"

STAUNCHER. "DID YOU HEAR A KNOCK?" You have to know your lines! You have six of them.

MAUNDER. I do know the lines. I don't know the order of the lines.

STAUNCHER. Let's call it a day. I'll see you at three p.m. sharp tomorrow.

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up!

GARBIELA. *(To* BILLIAM*:)* Did you hear that?

BILLIAM. Hear what?

GARBIELA. You researched ghosts.

BILLIAM. Yeah.

GARBIELA. What did you learn?

BILLIAM. They're people with unfinished business. They need to get something done that they didn't do in life. Say goodbye, or get revenge.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* I walked home, trying to figure things out. I was distracted, which is why I made the mistake.

(She comes upon JACKSON *deeply sad, unaware of her.)*

GARBIELA. I forgot to make noise when I entered, something I'd learned to do from an early age so I didn't find Dad in the midst of his occasional, secret despair.

(She tiptoes back, makes a noise of some sort. This jolts JACKSON *into convincing cheer.)*

JACKSON. Hey! How was the day?

GARBIELA. Strange.

JACKSON. Strange how?

GARBIELA. I don't want to talk about it.

JACKSON. Any potential friends?

GARBIELA. I've been there exactly seven hours.

JACKSON. You want to start early. I made Affinity.

GARBIELA. Thank you!

JACKSON. It's not exactly for you. I want you to share it.

GARBIELA. Share it.

JACKSON. Yeah.

GARBIELA. With who?

JACKSON. Anyone who seems nice.

GARBIELA. You want me to take it to school?

JACKSON. Yeah. Sometimes, in new situations, you can be a little contained.

GARBIELA. "Have a piece of candy and be my friend."

JACKSON. It's an icebreaker.

GARBIELA. That's not gonna happen.

JACKSON. OK. I'll give it to the neighbors.

GARBIELA. I actually have tons of friends. Two days ago, right after school, there was a big going-away party for me.

JACKSON. You didn't mention that.

GARBIELA. I don't tell you everything. I didn't even show you *this.*

(She produces the card from somewhere.)

JACKSON. Let's see. *(He sees through it instantly.)* Well that is awfully nice. The handwriting is a little bit similar.

GARBIELA. It's all Mogpin's. She had people dictate what they wanted to say and she transcribed it.

JACKSON. Garbiela. Take the candy.

(She grudgingly takes the plate of Affinity.)

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Day two.

(And suddenly we're in the school hallway. Students pass back and forth. RUTH *stops.)*

RUTH. What have you got there?

GARBIELA. It's called Affinity. It's a family recipe. Have one!

RUTH. Thanks!

GARBIELA. A lot of people think it's the best thing they've ever tasted. Tell me what you think.

(She hands him one. He hates it, but desperately covers.)

RUTH. Wow!

GARBIELA. I knew I liked you.

RUTH. That's the best thing I've ever tasted. Colby come try this.

(This leads to a quick improvisation as students passing by get pulled in, love it: yum!)

(Hanging back is the deeply calm RILEY, *who we met briefly earlier.)*

GARBIELA. Last two pieces.

*(*CARA *gags, spits it into her hand.)*

CARA. This is candy?

GARBIELA. That happens sometimes.

RILEY. May I?

GARBIELA. Of course!

RILEY. My name's Riley, but my friends call me The Oasis. I'm the president of the yoga club. Come talk to me if you want to join.

GARBIELA. That certainly won't happen, but thank you. Last piece.

*(*RILEY *takes the piece. Takes a bite.)*

RILEY. That's the single best thing I've ever tasted.

GARBIELA. It's great, right?

RILEY. It makes my life better.

CARA. Take mine.

(She does.)

RILEY. Can I get the recipe?

GARBIELA. No, it's a family secret.

RILEY. Is that a joke?

GARBIELA. No. It's not my rule.

RILEY. I don't understand that, but I accept it. See you in rehearsal.

*(*FANTINE *runs in.)*

FANTINE. Hey Frienderifica! Is there more?

GARBIELA. No, I just gave away the last piece.

FANTINE. What was it?

GARBIELA. It's called Affinity.

FANTINE. My favorite food in the world.

GARBIELA. I'm sorry Fantine.

FANTINE. Is this an OK time to show you my speech?

GARBIELA. It's a perfect time.

(She almost starts, but nerves stop her.)

GARBIELA. You OK?

FANTINE. I'm nervous. I didn't tell you what happened last time. I got a part. A small part, but I was great at it. But then, at the last minute, it got taken away.

GARBIELA. Why?

FANTINE. I don't want to talk about it. But this time, I have that feeling, right here, like an intersection. *(She indicates her heart.) This* way, I get the part and my life changes. *That* way, I don't get the part. Or any part. And if you don't get a part in the school play, then you don't get, you know, *any part.* Ever. In life.

GARBIELA. That's not true.

FANTINE. Yes it is. And my sister takes the other path. One success leading to another leading to another. I think of getting this part as making my sister evaporate.

GARBIELA. Fantine.

FANTINE. It's nothing I wouldn't say to her face. You don't have brothers and sisters?

GARBIELA. No. Only child.

FANTINE. Lucky you. She has this ball and she's like, "Catch," and then she doesn't throw it. "Catch!" "Catch!" WOULD YOU JUST THROW THE DANG BALL? Whatever. She's three.

GARBIELA. She's three years old?

FANTINE. Yeah. Four next month. There's already a party planned.

GARBIELA. I forgot to ask! How was your surprise party?

FANTINE. It was timeshifted.

GARBIELA. Oh.

FANTINE. My stupid friends are lame. Except for you.

GARBIELA. Well that's great news. I'll be able to come.

FANTINE. I thought of that already!

GARBIELA. Let's hear why you should get the part.

FANTINE. *(To the imaginary teacher:)* Ms. Stauncher, thank you for seeing me today. I like your shoes.
The Second Maid is the part I was born to play. The part's not in the novel, but it's important. Just the fact that she's there tells you what kind of house they have.
You want an actor who's going to take this part seriously, who thinks about every single word like it's thirty-six tiny research projects. You want me because I know that the Second Maid has a name, which is Benithia, and that Benithia doesn't just want to pour tea, she also wants the new gardener, whose name is Del Toro.
It's fun to watch people having fun, like if you didn't get invited to a party, and you stand outside the window and peer through the curtains, watching, until everyone leaves. If I get the part I'll be having so much fun you'll have to get me offstage sometimes so I don't distract the audience with my happiness.

GARBIELA. You know what, Fantine? That's pretty wonderful.

FANTINE. You think?!

GARBIELA. I would lose the line about the curtains. But yeah, I think it's great.

FANTINE. You think I'll get a part?

GARBIELA. Is your character monologue as good as your speech?

FANTINE. It is!

GARBIELA. Let's hear it!

FANTINE. No it's secret. But it's great.

*(*FANTINE *starts to leave.)*

GARBIELA. Where are you going?

FANTINE. I have to get my snakes.

(And she's gone. STAUNCHER *storms in.)*

STAUNCHER. Garbiela, you're out of the play.

GARBIELA. You told me I could do lighting.

STAUNCHER. Because I took you at your word. But then a little bird told me to check where you came from. You said you went to the Wayfair School, but you went to Kachina High School until two weeks ago.

GARBIELA. I went to the Wayfair School in the summer.

STAUNCHER. There *is* no Wayfair School. And there's not one single high school in the country that's done *Waiting for Godot.*

GARBIELA. Wayfair is secret, for reasons having to do with my mother's employment, which is also secret.

STAUNCHER. Your parents divorced when you were six. Your mother lives in Tucson. She's a bookkeeper and you only see her in the summer. Goodbye.

GARBIELA. What about the lighting?

STAUNCHER. I don't believe you know anything about lighting.

GARBIELA. Then how could I have already designed a lighting plot?

STAUNCHER. You didn't.

GARBIELA. Follow me into the theatre. *(To the audience:)* Just a few steps. *(To* STAUNCHER*:)* I can demonstrate. I got here early and then Kelvin helped me at study period. KELVIN?

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* I will!

GARBIELA. I haven't told you to do anything yet.

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* I'm on it!

GARBIELA. *(To* STAUNCHER*:)* Designing lights means you figure out intensity, and color, and direction, and focus. Lights out, please?

(The lights go out. The cues happen as GARBIELA *speaks them.)*

GARBIELA. The first scene takes place in the morning, so the light is hopeful, tinged with yellow. When Peter Quint enters, it's evening, and I thought that while the door is open, the light should come behind him; he casts an unexpected shadow. The ghost enters on a moonlit night, so a cold light streams through the windows.

STAUNCHER. Lovely. You're rehired.

GARBIELA. Thank you.

(And now, in the moonlit room, we hear a distant voice.)

VOICE (SFX). *(Mild panic:)* Where is she?

GARBIELA. Where did that come from?

STAUNCHER. Where did what come from?

(The voices come from above, and it's clear no one else heard them.)

VOICE (SFX). Where is she?

SECOND VOICE (SFX). She was right here!

VOICE (SFX). You were supposed to be watching her!

GARBIELA. There!

(A long moment while they listen.)

STAUNCHER. Do you still hear it?

GARBIELA. No.

STAUNCHER. Go get some rest.

*(*MOGPIN *in her own space.)*

MOGPIN. Hey Garby! You know how I said Doves Forge would be a good chance to start over? I didn't mean start over with me, ha ha. I hope you're not still mad about the card incident. I miss you.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Day eight.

(Spanish class. COLLISTER *is in full scowl.)*

COLLISTER. Someone translate question three for me. Billiam. Go.

BILLIAM. Question three: The new dog is a disappointment. El neuvo perro—

COLLISTER. Perro nuevo!

BILLIAM. El perro nuevo esta una decepción.

COLLISTER. *Es*, not esta. Esta indicates a temporary situation. Disappointment is a permanent condition. Question four.

(From under, or perhaps inside, Collister's desk comes a banging.)

MAUNDER. What was that?

COLLISTER. I don't know. It must have been something from the floor below.

(It happens again.)

MAUNDER. Is there somebody under your desk?

COLLISTER. Whatever it is, we'll ignore it. Who's going to translate question four?

(Hands go up.)

COLLISTER. *(Re the hands:)* No. No. I don't want anyone smart answering this question. Maunder, why don't you take a crack at it?

MAUNDER. Well, it is pretty hard—

GARBIELA. Wait. What did you just say?

COLLISTER. That's not a question. It's a challenge.

GARBIELA. Yes. It is.

COLLISTER. Maunder's not that intelligent. Are you Maunder?

MAUNDER. Well . . .

GARBIELA. Of course he is. Everybody's smart in different ways.

COLLISTER. That's what people say. Teachers know better.

GARBIELA. You can't talk to him that way.

COLLISTER. I just did, and still the world spins.

GARBIELA. You're even worse than people say you are.

*(*COLLISTER *moves to attack* GARBIELA. TAM TAM *restrains her.)*

TAM TAM. Flachra no!

COLLISTER. You'll be gone by the end of the semester.

(Suddenly, there's a RUMBLING of THUNDER. The whole school knows what this means. The students look to COLLISTER.*)*

KELVIN. Can we go?

COLLISTER. Go.

(All the characters move to the hall and stare out the windows.)

GARBIELA. What's happening?

RUTH. It's a tradition. The first thunderstorm of the year, the whole school watches.

*(*COLLISTER*, still at her desk, takes a bright blue box out of a drawer. She sets it down.)*

(A long moment, then the box moves on the desk. Back and forth. Perhaps it makes tiny jumps as well. She snatches it, puts it back in the drawer.)

(GARBIELA *and* RUTH *stare out. A flash of light.)*

GARBIELA. Wow.

RUTH. It's great, isn't it?

GARBIELA. Really great.

(A big, triple flash of lightning makes everyone react.)

RUTH. That's sheet lightning. One . . . two . . . three . . .

(THUNDER.)

RUTH. Three miles away. I know a lot about weather. Maybe we could check out the Sunday railroad market and I could expound.

GARBIELA. Can I ask you something?

RUTH. Sure!

GARBIELA. Do you know anyone who's gotten up to that theatre?

RUTH. No. It's sealed off ever since the fire. Too many toxic chemicals.

GARBIELA. It was thirteen years ago.

RUTH. Well there's some reason they think it's unsafe.

(Flash!)

GARBIELA. Any idea how I could get up there?

RUTH. It's completely forbidden. *(THUNDER.)* Even trying would get you expelled.

(The lights go out, which kerjangles and amuses the storm watchers, who we now see only from the occasional lightning flash.)

COLLISTER. *(Loud:)* Settle down. It's just a power outage.

GARBIELA. If I tell you something, can you keep it secret?

RUTH. Yeah.

(Lightning.)

GARBIELA. I'm hearing things. From up there. Voices.

RUTH. There's nothing up there anymore.

GARBIELA. I know there's not.

(THUNDER.)

GARBIELA. What started the fire?

RUTH. It's *who* started the fire? Colin F. started the fire and died in it. But every once in a while, people catch a glimpse. Or they feel The Chill.

GARBIELA. Or they hear voices.

RUTH. Why would you be able to hear them and no one else?

GARBIELA. I don't know. Maybe getting up there will tell me.

RUTH. There might, theoretically, be a way to get up there, but . . .

GARBIELA. But what?

RUTH. But I can't tell you how, and I can't tell you why I can't tell you how.

(Behind them, a piece of furniture crashes over, as though kicked, startling people, GARBIELA *most especially.)*

(They settle down.)

RUTH. You're jumpy. Lucky you have a big strong guy to protect you. *(This fizzles.)* Anyway, what about that Sunday railroad market? Should we make a date?

(Lightning.)

GARBIELA. Ruth, I just got to this school. I'm not looking for romance right now.

RUTH. Are you looking for a friend?

GARBIELA. Yes!

RUTH. Do you ever hold hands with someone just as friends?

GARBIELA. No.

(After a moment, RUTH *starts to slowly, lightly CLONK, CLONK his head against the glass.)*

GARBIELA. What are you doing?

RUTH. All the endorphins just drained out of my body.

GARBIELA. I'm sorry. I have the bad habit of always assuming people are in love with me. I'm only right about ninety percent of the time.

(The storm has subsided. The lights come back on.)

HISTORY TEACHER (SFX). Show's over. Next class starts in six minutes.

GARBIELA. Good storm.

RUTH. Really good. I'll see you fifth period.

*(*RUTH *exits.* FANTINE *uses the opportunity to approach* GARBIELA.*)*

FANTINE. Garbiela, I have to tell you something.

GARBIELA. OK.

FANTINE. But not here. In the theatre. It'll be worth it.

SFX. Lots of steps.

(They're in the theatre.)

FANTINE. I love this place. There's not another theatre anywhere that has a "Go Doves" sign hanging behind the set.

GARBIELA. *(A good sport. She knows the news:)* So, what are you going to tell me?

FANTINE. I got the part!!

GARBIELA. That's fantastic!

FANTINE. Thank you!

GARBIELA. I'm so proud of you!

FANTINE. Me too! It's not *official* official but I nailed it. Ms. Stauncher was speechless. She was like *(staring, open-mouthed)*, like she'd never seen a better Medea.

GARBIELA. Medea.

FANTINE. Yeah.

GARBIELA. Fantine, I'm not sure Medea is great casting for you.

FANTINE. It is, even though my prop didn't work. I had this whole idea of snakes all over my head and they'd be moving around except one that's dead and he's hanging right here. And when I got pissy at the end of the monologue, I'd go like this: *(An upward puff of air)* and the dead snake goes: *(She indicates that it flips up into place on her head.)*

GARBIELA. I think you mean Medusa.

FANTINE. *(Anguish:)* No!

GARBIELA. Yeah.

FANTINE. Medea turns people into stone.

GARBIELA. No that's Medusa.

FANTINE. I'm not going to get the part!

GARBIELA. Yes you are!

FANTINE. No, I always screw it up and I never get a part!

GARBIELA. Fantine, you are going to get a part. I promise.

(A noise alerts them that people are coming.)

GARBIELA. Shhh!

*(*STAUNCHER *enters with* COLLISTER *right behind.)*

STAUNCHER. *(To* COLLISTER*:)* Go back to your own class.

COLLISTER. *Listen to me.*

STAUNCHER. I'm tired of listening to you.

COLLISTER. Why did you let Garbiela take part in the play?

STAUNCHER. I don't need to explain my decisions.

COLLISTER. She lied to you.

STAUNCHER. I need a lighting person. She knows what she's doing.

COLLISTER. Don't tell me. She talked about intensity, color, direction, and focus. That's not knowledge. That's Wikipedia.

STAUNCHER. This isn't your program anymore. It hasn't been for a long time.

COLLISTER. And the school is the worse for it. How many people in your production?

STAUNCHER. Twenty-nine.

COLLISTER. I'm sure the twenty-nine members of your audience will love it.

STAUNCHER. You've never attended one of my plays.

COLLISTER. I'm not interested in *conventional* theatre.

STAUNCHER. *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation?* That's too ordinary for you?

COLLISTER. *Narrative-based* drama. *Scripted* entertainment. Your plays are *stories*. My plays were life.

STAUNCHER. What was it called again? *Past, Most Past, Keep Dwelling on the Past?*

COLLISTER. Make fun of *Past, Present, and Future* all you like. We sold out, and if we'd finished, people would still be talking about it.

STAUNCHER. People *are* still talking about it. Flachra.

(This was a harder blow than STAUNCHER *intended.)*

STAUNCHER. I'm sorry. That was uncalled for.

COLLISTER. It's true. I've never seen one of your shows. That was a favor to you. But I'll be in the front row of this one, holding binoculars.

GARBIELA. *(To* RUTH*, in the library:)* And then Collister stormed out of the room.

RUTH. I'm still not adding it up the way you are.

GARBIELA. Collister used to be the theatre teacher. Her production of *Past, Present, and Future* is what started the fire. She knows I can hear things from up there and she does not want me anywhere near that theatre. She's hiding something.

RUTH. That's a lot of guess.

GARBIELA. What's the theoretical way up to the theatre?

RUTH. I knew we were getting back to this.

GARBIELA. At least tell me why you can't tell me.

RUTH. Because it involves me. You know the back stairwell is completely off-limits, right?

GARBIELA. Yeah.

RUTH. This is confidential.

GARBIELA. I'm great with secrets because I love hearing them.

RUTH. I'm in the back stairwell twice a day. I'm so claustrophobic that it's medical. Being in the elevator makes me actually pass out. For a while, they hired a paramedic to go with me both ways, but it was costing a fortune so I said let me just take the back stairwell. It takes me thirteen extra minutes to get to school and four extra minutes to leave.

GARBIELA. So you could take me with you.

RUTH. I'm not allowed past this floor. And the door's just gonna be locked.

GARBIELA. But whatever I'm hearing, I bet I can hear it better through the door. Please?

RUTH. No.

GARBIELA. You scared of some voices?

RUTH. No. I'm scared of authority.

GARBIELA. The worst that can happen is that a security guard catches us, we get suspended, and bum around downtown for a day or two.

RUTH. *(Relenting:)* Don't make any noise.

(They PUSH open the door. They don't move at all during this section. A character saying the word "Step" equates to them taking one step up.)

GARBIELA. Step step step step step step step. Come on!

RUTH. Step. Step step step step.

GARBIELA AND RUTH. Step step step step step step step step step.

GARBIELA. *(Big steps:)* St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e- e-p St-e-e-e-p.

RUTH. *(To catch up:)* St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p.

GARBIELA. This is the door?

RUTH. Yeah.

*(*GARBIELA *RATTLES it. Of course it's locked. She KNOCKS on it. She presses her ear to the door.)*

RUTH. Now can we go?

COLLISTER. *(From below:)* WHO'S UP THERE?

*(*COLLISTER *and* TAM TAM *peer up. This freezes* RUTH *and* GARBIELA*, freaks out* RUTH.
COLLISTER *takes two steps up.* TAM TAM *follows.)*

COLLISTER. Step step.

TAM TAM. Step step.

COLLISTER. Two people I think. Step.

TAM TAM. Step.

COLLISTER. Good news for Albuquerque. Doves Forge is about to have two openings! Step step.

TAM TAM. Step Step.

*(*COLLISTER's *doing this slowly, to protract her pleasure.)*

COLLISTER. Tell your friends! Step.

TAM TAM. Step.

COLLISTER. Here's something fun we can do. If one of you shouts "I'm here!" I'll have the other one kicked out and you can stay. Just say "I'm here!" and I'll have the other one dragged away, slowly so you can wave. "I'm here! I'm here!"

GARBIELA. *(Whispered:)* Yell!

RUTH. *(Whispered:)* No!

COLLISTER. What's the use of both of you being disgraced?

*(*COLLISTER *and* TAM TAM's *footsteps accelerate! It should suggest crabs scuttling up the stairwell.)*

GARBIELA. *(Whispered:)* Just yell!

AMICUS. *(A shout up the stairwell:)* COLLISTER IS THAT YOU?

(This freezes everyone.)

COLLISTER. Yes!

AMICUS. What are you doing up there?

COLLISTER. There are students at the door to the theatre.

AMICUS. No there aren't. Get down here.

COLLISTER. I can hear them.

AMICUS. You're just on edge because someone moved that ladder.

COLLISTER. Yes! Someone was in the theatre.

AMICUS. It was a prank.

(A tiny moment between GARBIELA *and* RUTH*, who have no idea what the ladder refers to.)*

COLLISTER. *(The kids:)* They're right outside the theatre.

AMICUS. They're not. I was watching the security cameras.

(Which GARBIELA *and* RUTH *now see.)*

AMICUS. You get back to class. *(To upstairs:)* I'll investigate as soon as I do five minutes of paperwork.

(The adults exit. A moment of relief.)

RUTH. Let's go.

GARBIELA. I need to listen.

*(*GARBIELA *puts her ear to the door.)*

(The ghost light starts to flash. SFX *signals the audience members to make their sounds.)*

GARBIELA. Listen!

*(*RUTH *puts his ear to the door as the light goes out and the* SFX *silences the audience.)*

GARBIELA. Hear it?

RUTH. No. What do you hear?

(She listens again. Again, the SFX *has the audience make noise.)*

GARBIELA. I'm not sure. It sounds like a lot of people.

(The SFX *silences the audience. Then:)*

VOICE (SFX). Where is she?

VOICE 2 (SFX). She was just here!

GARBIELA. There are voices. "Where is she?" "She was just here!"

RUTH. OK, but can we go?

GARBIELA. Give me one more second.

VOICE (SFX). GARBIELA, YOU'RE BURNING UP!

GARBIELA. *(Startled:)* Oh!

RUTH. What?

GARBIELA. I heard my name.

(One more brief moment of listening as the audience is signaled to make their sounds.)

GARBIELA. I know what I'm hearing. It's particular. It's the sound of an audience, settling in to watch a play. *(To the audience:)* Rehearsals.

(This would be a good place to use Isaiah Hastings' free-to-use music. One by one, the actors in the play enter. This isn't a single rehearsal. Each is practicing on their own. For whatever reason, CARA *is not part of this rehearsal. The performance of the play is the first time we realize why she carries a feather duster.*
BILLIAM *enters, attempts stillness, but it doesn't go well. His face itches. He's distractible.*
COLBY *practices warming up an audience without making an actual sound.*
FANTINE *pours tea, carefully.*
CLOVIS *practices something we don't quite understand. His cheeks puff as he holds his breath, then turns a hand into what might be a slow-motion sock puppet. The sock puppet stares at him as he holds his breath.*
BILLIAM *attempts a handstand, barely gets his feet off the ground.)*

COLBY. *(Ferocious and perfect, except silent:)* "Are you ready to make some noise?!!"

(STAUNCHER *reacts to imagined congratulations on the play:)*

STAUNCHER. Oh thank you! Thank you. It's the kids you should be congratulating.

FANTINE. "Let me fill that for you."

STAUNCHER. *(To the congratulators:)* It did go well, didn't it? The kids did it all.

(They file out.)

(A hallway. CLOVIS, *still missing his tooth, catches up to* GARBIELA.*)*

CLOVIS. I hear you're looking for the person who moved the ladder.

GARBIELA. Was it you?

CLOVIS. No, but I might know who it was.

GARBIELA. Who?

CLOVIS. First, I need a favor.

GARBIELA. OK.

CLOVIS. A big favor. You're in Collister's class.

GARBIELA. Yeah.

CLOVIS. Have you seen the box?

GARBIELA. No. What box?

CLOVIS. It's in her desk. Small, bright blue. Bring it to me and I'll tell you the name.

GARBIELA. That's too big a favor.

CLOVIS. Then you don't get the name.

GARBIELA. She locks the room, she locks the desk, and if she finds me anywhere near it, she'll have me expelled.

CLOVIS. Oh well.

GARBIELA. Oh well.

CLOVIS. Let's try a different favor. I need a friend.

GARBIELA. Of course.

(A LOW GROWL, then Scattergood lunges at GARBIELA. CLOVIS *restrains him.)*

CLOVIS. Not for me. For him. He's so desperate to make friends that he drives them away. All you have to do to be Scattergood's friend is . . . put your hand in his mouth.

GARBIELA. I can't do that.

CLOVIS. Do you want to know who moved that ladder or not?

(She lets him take her hand, guide it to Scattergood.)

CLOVIS. O-o-open. *(Her hand is now inside Scattergood's mouth:)* Clo-o-ose.

(Scattergood closes his mouth gently on her hand.)

GARBIELA. *(Protracted and horrible:)* Ohhhh.

CLOVIS. Ticklish? Saliva means "I love you."

GARBIELA. Good boy.

(Scattergood licks her face.)

GARBIELA. Who got into the theatre?

CLOVIS. Who missed the last week of school?

GARBIELA. Who?

CLOVIS. Seriously, Sherlock Holmes?

GARBIELA. I don't know who you're talking about.

CLOVIS. And: The first thing she did when she got back? She dropped out of the play.

GARBIELA. She did what? Who are we talking about here?

CLOVIS. The Oasis.

*(*CLOVIS *exits.* GARBIELA *hears crying. Anguished, increasingly loud.* FANTINE *enters.)*

GARBIELA. What's the matter?

FANTINE. I was practicing my part, extra, in the hall…

GARBIELA. What happened?

FANTINE. She tapped me on the shoulder. She said she needed me as the assistant stage manager, so I'm not in the play anymore.

GARBIELA. Are you sure?

*(*FANTINE's *too upset to answer.)*

GARBIELA. *(Fury filled steps:)* Stepstepstepstepstepstep. *(To* STAUNCHER*:)* What were you thinking?

STAUNCHER. Excuse me?

GARBIELA. You took away the part of the one person who wants it more than anything!

STAUNCHER. Speak less loudly.

GARBIELA. Fantine's been working so hard, and really? You're just gonna take away her part? You're not a playwright by the way. *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation* is the single stupidest play I've ever seen. If Fantine's not in the play, I don't want to be in the play.

STAUNCHER. Who's this *Fantine*?

GARBIELA. Fantine! Fantine whose part you took away. *Fantine.*

STAUNCHER. There's no Fantine, except the famous one a long time ago. Colin *F.* The F was for Fantine. The girl who started the fire.

GARBIELA. No, the student here. Right now!

STAUNCHER. You need to leave.

GARBIELA. But you know who I'm talking about.

STAUNCHER. You lost me at "single stupidest."

GARBIELA. The girl who started the fire died.

STAUNCHER. Yes. She did.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* And suddenly my head felt light. Fantine! I bolted out of the theatre and ran through the halls. "Have you seen Fantine?" "When was the last time you saw Fantine?" "You must know who I'm talking about. Fantine!" *(To the audience:)* I realize that most of you are ahead of me here, that you know what's

up with Fantine. But I didn't. I'd seen ghost stories but I'd never experienced one. Trust me; it's quite different. *(To passing students:)* HAS ANYONE SEEN FANTINE? *(To the audience:)* Nobody had even heard of her. And now I had two questions. Question one: Was Fantine what I was afraid she was? I found her in the library.

*(*FANTINE *is focused on a doll she's holding.)*

FANTINE. Hi friend-a-ricious! I'm calming myself down by making a voodoo doll of my sister. I made hair out of tinsel so I can shave it off.

GARBIELA. Fantine, how long have you been going to this school?

FANTINE. Forever it seems like.

GARBIELA. A year? Ten years?

FANTINE. I don't keep track. But everything got better when you got here.

*(*RUTH *hurries past, hesitates just long enough to say:)*

RUTH. You're talking to yourself again.

(He hustles off.)

FANTINE. Another member of the Fantine's Not Here Club.

GARBIELA. Would it be OK if I held your hand?

FANTINE. Yes please.

(They reach out. FANTINE *takes* GARBIELA's *hand.* GARBIELA *snags it back!)*

FANTINE. I know. My hands are like ice.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* Not like ice. Like death, if death could slither into you. That answered question one. Question two: Why was she here after all these years? How could I help her find peace? *(To* FANTINE*:)* You always seem so busy.

FANTINE. I try.

GARBIELA. Don't you ever just want to rest?

FANTINE. Too much to do.

GARBIELA. Is there any way I can help? What's the one thing you want to get done before you feel like you can be done for the day?

FANTINE. I want my part back.

GARBIELA. You're the assistant stage manager. That's important.

FANTINE. I want to be the Second Maid!

GARBIELA. Maybe I can help you prepare for next time.

FANTINE. You'd do that?

GARBIELA. Of course I would. We could study lines and I could convince Ms. Stauncher how good you are onstage.

FANTINE. Thank you. That means a lot. *(Beat.)* You know, I'm not even sure I need the help.

GARBIELA. No?

FANTINE. Maybe I just needed the offer. That'll give me confidence. Thank you.

GARBIELA. Of course.

FANTINE. I'm sleepy all of a sudden. It's strange. I can barely keep my eyes open. I'm going to find someplace to rest.

GARBIELA. Good!

FANTINE. Good night. You're way better than Garbiela One.

GARBIELA. Than who?

FANTINE. The first Garbiela. My sister. I still can't get over that you and my sister have the same name.

GARBIELA. We don't.

FANTINE. Of course you do.

GARBIELA. Your sister's name isn't Garbiela.

FANTINE. I know my own sister's name.

GARBIELA. Nobody names their child Garbiela on purpose.

FANTINE. It was a typo on the birth certificate but it stuck.

(This sends GARBIELA *reeling.)*

FANTINE. She reminds me of you in a lot of ways, if you were three. It's strange to be jealous of someone who can't speak complete sentences. But the attention she gets; people stare at her when she's *sleeping.*

(An odd, strained moment.)

GARBIELA. What are you looking at?

FANTINE. The way you moved your head just now. It gave me a funny feeling. Look at the color of your eyes. I've seen that color before. Are you my sister?

GARBIELA. Of course not!

FANTINE. Let me see your wrist.

GARBIELA. Why?

FANTINE. My sister has two freckles right here. Let me see!

*(*GARBIELA *holds out her wrist.)*

FANTINE. It is you. You aged yourself so you could pretend to be my friend.

GARBIELA. I am your friend!

FANTINE. You're supposed to be three! But no. You can sing better, sleep better, age faster! You're the worst Garbiela in the world!

(She storms out, possibly through a wall.)

GARBIELA. *(To herself:)* Question three. Question four. Question five. Question six. Question seven. Question eight. Question nine.

(And we move to the Nettles home. GARBIELA's *alone. She's been cooking. We hear* JACKSON *arriving home.)*

JACKSON. *(Offstage:)* Hello?

(He enters.)

JACKSON. Hi, I thought you'd be at play practice.

GARBIELA. I took the day off.

(Something about her tone puts him on guard a bit.)

JACKSON. You allowed to do that? Just take a day off?

GARBIELA. Apparently.

JACKSON. It smells great in here.

GARBIELA. Yeah.

JACKSON. Did you make Affinity?

GARBIELA. Yeah. Figured I should try.

JACKSON. I hope it fails. You won't need me for anything. *(Beat.)* You doing OK? *(What's wrong:)* What's up?

GARBIELA. Start with the biggest lie you've ever told me, hopefully the biggest lie you've ever told.

JACKSON. I don't know what you're talking about.

GARBIELA. Don't lie to a liar.

(And he knows she knows . . .)

JACKSON. We agonized about whether to tell you.

GARBIELA. Why *didn't* you?

JACKSON. It was complicated.

GARBIELA. You didn't think I'd find out?

JACKSON. She was a minor. Her name wasn't in the coverage.

GARBIELA. You should have told me.

JACKSON. Why have you grow up in the shadow of that? She started a fire that killed two people.

GARBIELA. She wouldn't have done that.

JACKSON. How do you know what Colin would have done?

GARBIELA. She didn't like the name Colin. She went by Fantine.

JACKSON. Who told you that?

GARBIELA. You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

JACKSON. Was it Collister?

GARBIELA. No.

JACKSON. Who?

GARBIELA. Fantine wouldn't have started the fire.

JACKSON. She did.

GARBIELA. How do they know? Did someone see her?

JACKSON. No. It started backstage.

GARBIELA. So that could have been anyone.

JACKSON. She was the only one backstage. The play was experimental. Every single person in the cast and crew was onstage, except the assistant stage manager.

GARBIELA. What about the regular stage manager?

JACKSON. Everybody, except Fantine.

GARBIELA. I don't understand.

JACKSON. Nobody did. The play was called *Past, Present, and Future* and Colin was desperate for a part, but she didn't get one. Then, a student, a very kind student, said, "You know what? I need help with my part. Could you be onstage with me?" She was over the moon thrilled. But then, right at the last minute, Collister took away that tiny part and made her the only person who wasn't onstage.

GARBIELA. Why?

JACKSON. I don't know.

GARBIELA. She wouldn't have started a fire just because she lost her part.

JACKSON. You didn't see how upset she was.

GARBIELA. If I tell you something will you promise to believe me?

JACKSON. Yes.

GARBIELA. I did see how upset she was. I can see her.

JACKSON. Garbiela, that's disgusting.

GARBIELA. It's true. I talk to her.

JACKSON. Don't.

GARBIELA. I was three when she died.

JACKSON. Who's talking to you about this?

GARBIELA. Fantine. I'm the only one who can see her.

JACKSON. Don't say that again.

GARBIELA. You said you'd believe me.

JACKSON. I expected better.

GARBIELA. She gets upset but then she calms down.

JACKSON. On an ordinary day she would have calmed down, but this wasn't an ordinary day. It was her birthday.

(From off, a timer starts to DING. GARBIELA *heads off, returns immediately with a plate/pan of disappointing Affinity.)*

GARBIELA. It didn't harden up.

JACKSON. It'll be fine. Put it in the freezer for a bit. I'll be your taster.

GARBIELA. It's not for you. It's for— *(Beat.)* The Oasis!

(We've moved to a school hallway. RILEY *is different. She's not a calm presence. She's jittery, scared of the world.)*

RILEY. Affinity girl.

GARBIELA. Could I talk to you for a second?

RILEY. I have to get to class.

GARBIELA. You have American History with Ms. Shimmer. She won't even give you a tardy slip.

RILEY. How do you know my schedule?

GARBIELA. I need a favor.

RILEY. No.

GARBIELA. You don't even know what I want.

RILEY. I don't even know *you*.

GARBIELA. You dropped out of the play. Why?

RILEY. I couldn't be at enough rehearsals.

GARBIELA. You were playing a fountain. After you got up to the theatre, you didn't even want to be in rehearsals one floor below it.

RILEY. How did you know I got up to the theatre?

GARBIELA. I didn't until now. How did you get up there?

RILEY. I'm late.

GARBIELA. Tell me.

RILEY. No.

GARBIELA. How about if I gave you a piece of Affinity?

RILEY. No. *(Beat.)* Do you have one?

GARBIELA. I do. How did you get into the theatre?

RILEY. Why do you want to go up there?

GARBIELA. Why don't you want me to?

RILEY. Because you seem nice.

GARBIELA. I'll give you two pieces. I'll give you the whole batch.

RILEY. No.

GARBIELA. What's up there?

RILEY. The Chill. The moment I got up there, I felt it.

*(*FREYA MCSLANE *makes another cameo.)*

FREYA MCSLANE. Like a heart attack crossed with an ice storm.

RILEY. Then something I really didn't expect. It happened again. And again. It kept happening until I was out. Six times in four minutes, like it was chasing me.

(She's almost out of the room.)

GARBIELA. Wait. I'll give you the *recipe*. Come on Riley.

*(*RILEY *moves toward the recipe.* GARBIELA *pulls it back.)*

GARBIELA. First, tell me how you got up there.

RILEY. I was shooting free throws after school, and the ball got away from me. I followed it behind the bleachers. And there was a vent that had come loose.

*(*RILEY *exits. And now* GARBIELA's *with* RUTH.*)*

GARBIELA. I know how to get up to the theatre. I'm gonna stay after school and sneak in.

RUTH. Why?

GARBIELA. It involves one maneuver that I need your help with.

RUTH. How do I enter this equation?

GARBIELA. I have to drop from a vent and I need someone to lower me partway so I don't break my wrist.

RUTH. You sound psychotic.

GARBIELA. I can't do it alone.

RUTH. I'm sorry.

GARBIELA. I need a *friend* here.

(A MOIST, SLITHERY sound from the SFX *person.)*

RUTH. That sound you just heard was all the flesh crawling off my body. We've known each for five weeks. And you know why we're friends? We're friends because I said "We're friends."

GARBIELA. That's not true.

RUTH. You coast on people wanting to be with you. You don't do any of the work. You don't even stay in touch with the people who already *did* the work.

GARBIELA. You don't know that.

RUTH. I don't hear a lot about your Kachina friends.

GARBIELA. Oh that's so irritating! You don't know anything about me! I'm in touch with my Kachina friends *every single day.*

MOGPIN. *(In her own space:)* Hey Garby, me again. I walked past Linda's Pizzeria tonight and I had this thought: I hope I didn't offend you with my offhand comment about not liking Chicago-style pizza. I didn't mean to be flip. I actually like Chicago-style pizza quite a bit.

RUTH. It's kind of an unfortunate time to reach out, when you need me to lower you into a void.

GARBIELA. Fine. I'll go up there myself.

RUTH. Good. I want a full report.

*(*RUTH *exits.)*

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* A screwdriver, a little courage, a deep breath. Slip behind the bleachers . . .

(She reaches for the imaginary grate, starts to undo the screws when:)

SCATTERGOOD (SFX). *(Loud and ferocious:)* ARF ARF ARF ARF ARF!

*(*CLOVIS *and Scattergood have entered.)*

GARBIELA. You startled me.

CLOVIS. What are you doing?

GARBIELA. Shhhh. I'm going up the vent.

CLOVIS. It's too dangerous.

GARBIELA. It wouldn't be if I had help. Come with me.

CLOVIS. It's also dull.

GARBIELA. You've been up there?

CLOVIS. A bunch of times. It's just a burnt-out shell. Not worth getting expelled over.

GARBIELA. No one's going to find out.

CLOVIS. My mom will.

GARBIELA. Who's your mom?

CLOVIS. You know.

GARBIELA. I don't.

CLOVIS. I'm Clovis *Collister.*

GARBIELA. You never told me that.

CLOVIS. Everybody knows it!

GARBIELA. I didn't. That's got to be horrible.

CLOVIS. You're not allowed to say that! I'm allowed to say that.

GARBIELA. I'm sorry. Your mom really doesn't want me in that theatre.

(She moves to the vent.)

CLOVIS. GET AWAY FROM THERE!

GARBIELA. Shh!

CLOVIS. GARBIELA'S TRYING TO GET UP TO THE THEATRE!

(A moment. Nobody comes.)

CLOVIS. ANYBODY? HELP!!

GARBIELA. Why do you care?

(A low GROWL from Scattergood.)

CLOVIS. Scattergood's not gonna let you by.

GARBIELA. He won't hurt me.

CLOVIS. Try testing that.

GARBIELA. I will!

*(*GARBIELA *moves toward the vent.)*

CLOVIS. Get her!

*(*CLOVIS *releases the leash.)*

(What happens next confuses, terrifies, and hurts GARBIELA. *We can't see this, of course, but Scattergood lunges, puts his paws on* GARBIELA's *shoulders. We hear the odd GURGLING sound of his body passing into hers, inhabiting it, passing through.)*

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* He put his paws on my shoulders, then his head was in mine. His whole body passed through me. It felt like:

*(*FREYA MCSLANE *appears yet again.)*

GARBIELA and FREYA MCSLANE. A heart attack crossed with an ice storm.

GARBIELA. That was The Chill.

CLOVIS. Yeah.

GARBIELA. Bad dog!

CLOVIS. I can make it happen again.

GARBIELA. Scattergood isn't really with us.

CLOVIS. Yes he is.

GARBIELA. Neither are you. You're the other student who didn't make it out of the building. You're a ghost.

CLOVIS. If that's what you want to call it.

GARBIELA. What do you call it?

CLOVIS. Frustrating. Fantine doesn't know she's dead. But I do. Sometimes. I'm aware enough to know that I'm not completely aware. Better to be her.

(He takes out his phone, pushes a button. GARBIELA's *phone DINGS.)*

GARBIELA. *(Reading:)* "Get me out of here."

CLOVIS. Please.

GARBIELA. Maybe there's something you need to do. Ghosts have unfinished business.

CLOVIS. Thank you, Madame Arcati. I know I have unfinished business. But I don't know what it is.

GARBIELA. It must have to do with what happened up there. What do you see when you go up?

CLOVIS. I don't know. I go up there but I never remember what happens.

GARBIELA. Everyone thinks Fantine started the fire, but you were up there too.

CLOVIS. I didn't start it.

GARBIELA. You just said you don't know what happened up there.

CLOVIS. Fantine got kicked out of the play at the last minute.

GARBIELA. Were you angry at your mother for some reason? Did you sneak backstage?

CLOVIS. I wouldn't have done that.

GARBIELA. She thinks you did. I'm going up.

CLOVIS. Do me a favor?

GARBIELA. What?

CLOVIS. If it turns out it was me, don't tell anyone.

GARBIELA. I can't promise that.

CLOVIS. Then how about this: If it was me, don't tell me.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* The journey into the theatre was scary and difficult to stage. I'm just gonna narrate the way in, with a little help from The Oasis.

(And now, most likely without moving, RILEY *narrates to* GARBIELA, *and* GARBIELA *narrates to the audience.)*

RILEY. I was shooting free throws after school, and the ball got away from me. I followed it behind the bleachers. And there was a vent that had come loose. When I looked in, it was a shaft that led *way* up. There were little rivets that I could put my feet on . . .

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* So I climbed.

RILEY. At the top, it went sideways, farther than I could see. An air-conditioning vent.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* I fit, barely. And I started to crawl. It was easier to move forward than back. And the farther I crawled in, the smaller it got.

RILEY. I could see a light ahead. When I wriggled up to it, I was suddenly in the theatre, but only halfway, up to my waist. I got lucky. Just within reach was a ladder. I grabbed it and climbed down. But *you* can't do that.

GARBIELA. Why not?

RILEY. I left through the doors. I just had to get out of there. But I wanted to make sure no one else would get in. So I moved the ladder.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* I was suddenly in the theatre, but only up to my waist, fifteen feet in the air. There was nothing to grab on to, and no way to move back. I could yell for help, or I could let myself fall, headfirst. Yell or fall?

A THOUGHT (SFX). Yell or fall.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* For ten minutes.

A SECOND THOUGHT (SFX). Yell or fall.

GARBIELA. *(To the audience:)* And finally:

A THOUGHT (SFX). Fall.

(Blackout. From GARBIELA*, a sharp cry of pain. Then: The ghost light turns on.)*

RILEY. There's some sort of after-hours light.

GARBIELA. *(To* RILEY*:)* It's called a ghost light. It's there to keep you safe.

RILEY. When I saw the theatre, I couldn't believe it.

GARBIELA. Couldn't believe what?

RILEY. It's not burnt out. They rebuilt it. It's beautiful.

*(*RILEY *exits.* GARBIELA *takes in the theatre. She can't quite believe it either.)*

GARBIELA. State of the art. Thrust stage. Plush seating. LED lights.

(Now our attention is called to a prop table. Perhaps GARBIELA *notices it, or it lights up. Or it creaks onstage magically. The appearance of the table begins a brief journey into the past.)*

ANNOUNCEMENT (SFX). Places everyone! Places! Five minutes 'til curtain.

(A small ball rolls onto stage. This intrigues GARBIELA*, who goes to it. As she picks it up, she becomes* THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA*. We're in the past.)*

JACKSON. *(Offstage:)* Where is she?

GARBIELA'S MOTHER (SFX). She was right here!

JACKSON. *(Offstage:)* Garbiela!?

*(*GARBIELA's *nauseous. She fights it.* FANTINE *enters.)*

FANTINE. Garbiela!

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Catch!

(But she doesn't throw the ball.)

FANTINE. What are you doing back here? The play's about to start.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. I don't feel good.

FANTINE. How did you get away from Mom and Dad?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Ohhhh.

FANTINE. What?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. I feel sick.

*(*GARBIELA *throws up.)*

FANTINE. Oh no! Let me feel your forehead.

(She does.)

FANTINE. Garbiela, you're burning up. Let's get you to Mom and Dad.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. No. Nooo!

FANTINE. Come on.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. No!

FANTINE. Clovis!?

*(*CLOVIS *enters with Scattergood, who's calmer than usual.* CLOVIS *holds something behind his back.*

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Catch!

CLOVIS. *(Charmed:)* What are you doing here?

FANTINE. She's not feeling good. Hi Scattergood. *(To* CLOVIS*:)* Can you watch her for two seconds while I get my parents?

CLOVIS. Happy to!

*(*FANTINE *exits. What was behind* CLOVIS's *back was a cupcake and candle.)*

CLOVIS. Shhh! Fantine thinks I forgot her birthday. But I have this! Strawberry chip with cream cheese frosting. You want to help me sing "Happy Birthday"?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Yes.

(He has a lighter. He clicks it. Clicks it again. Click click click!)

CLOVIS. Hang on.

(He sets the cupcake and lighter on the props table.)

CLOVIS. I'm going to get something to light this. Do not move and *do not eat that cupcake.*

(He exits. GARBIELA *moves to the table, picks up the lighter, and examines it. Click click click.)*

(It lights! She lights the candle, pleased with herself. From off:)

JACKSON. *(Offstage:)* Garbiela? Where are you?

(Panicked, she tries to blow out the candle. But she can't. This freaks her out.)

JACKSON. Garby?

(She puts the lit cupcake behind a curtain as JACKSON *enters.)*

JACKSON. There you are! Let's get you home.

(He leads her off as a light starts to glow behind the curtain. We hear the crackle of the fire.)

(Now we're back in the present. GARBIELA *enters, back to the teenage* GARBIELA *but confused. The flames are everywhere. She panics.)*

GARBIELA. HEY! EVERYBODY! Everybody get out of the building!

(She finds the fire alarm. Pulls it. The ALARM CLANGS; SPRINKLERS drench the room and GARBIELA.*)*

(STAUNCHER *runs into the room.)*

STAUNCHER. You pulled the fire alarm.

GARBIELA. I couldn't find it at first.

STAUNCHER. Why did you pull the fire alarm?

GARBIELA. *You're welcome!*

STAUNCHER. The whole building is evacuating.

GARBIELA. Good! There's a fire.

STAUNCHER. Where?

(It starts to dawn on GARBIELA *that there is no fire.)*

GARBIELA. It must have gone out.

STAUNCHER. *(Into some kind of walkie-talkie:)* False alarm. Repeat. False alarm. *(To* GARBIELA:*)* You do understand that this is the end of your time at Doves Forge.

GARBIELA. No!

STAUNCHER. You pulled a fire alarm for no reason—

GARBIELA. Not for no reason.

STAUNCHER. —in a building that once had a tragic fire.

GARBIELA. There was smoke and there were flames. Obviously it wasn't real but that doesn't mean I didn't see it.

STAUNCHER. I need you to follow me.

GARBIELA. I need to talk to Mr. Amicus.

STAUNCHER. No you'll have to come with me.

GARBIELA. He'll want to talk to me.

STAUNCHER. I doubt that.

GARBIELA. He will. The only reason he let me into this school is because I could see Fantine.

STAUNCHER. *(Again, the walkie-talkie:)* Stauncher again. Send security to the theatre.

GARBIELA. Look at this theatre!

(Which she does. It stuns her.)

STAUNCHER. It's beautiful.

GARBIELA. They rebuilt it but they keep it secret because everybody who comes up here feels The Chill. The Chill is Scattergood.

STAUNCHER. I have no idea what that means.

GARBIELA. Please don't let them kick me out!

STAUNCHER. Pulling a fire alarm is a mandatory expulsion.

*(*TAM TAM *enters.)*

TAM TAM. What do you need?

STAUNCHER. I called for security.

TAM TAM. Security is handling the evacuation. They sent me.

STAUNCHER. Please escort this young woman out of the building.

GARBIELA. *(As* TAM TAM *approaches:)* I know who started the fire! *(And now she's with her father at home.)* I did.

JACKSON. You didn't start the fire.

*(*GARBIELA *is deeply upset.)*

GARBIELA. I did! I saw it.

JACKSON. Your sister started it.

GARBIELA. No, it was three-year-old me. I was there that night, right? I got away from you. I ran backstage. Everyone thought it was her because she'd lost the part, but it was me.

JACKSON. No it wasn't, and I need you to stop saying that.

*(*GARBIELA's *still got the ball.)*

GARBIELA. Dad, catch!

(But she doesn't throw it.)

GARBIELA. Catch!

(Again, she doesn't throw it. This probably mildly freaks him out.)

JACKSON. You really can see her.

GARBIELA. Yes!

JACKSON. You talk to her.

GARBIELA. We have to get her out of there. She wanders the halls looking for friends. She wants a part in the play, and then she gets one, and then she loses it.

JACKSON. That's exactly what happened. She worked so hard on that tiny part. She was playing an eel.

GARBIELA. An eel?

JACKSON. It was the Collister boy. Fantine didn't get a part to begin with, but then all of a sudden he needed an eel.

GARBIELA. Then his mom took it away.

JACKSON. Said Fantine would be better backstage.

GARBIELA. Cause she's evil.

JACKSON. I don't *think* so. I called Collister. I was furious. She said it would be for the best.

GARBIELA. *(To herself:)* Clovis said he was *pretending* to ignore her.

JACKSON. What's that?

GARBIELA. I have to get back there for the play.

JACKSON. They're not going to let that happen, Garbiela. I'm sorry.

GARBIELA. We have to help her.

JACKSON. They said they'll be watching for you in the lobby.

GARBIELA. I need you to make me a plate of Affinity. It was her favorite food in the world.

JACKSON. She told you that?

GARBIELA. And I didn't believe her. Please?

*(*JACKSON *exits.* GARBIELA, *alone with her thoughts. Finally, she dials.)*

MOGPIN. Hey! What a great surprise.

GARBIELA. Yeah.

MOGPIN. *(Something in her voice:)* Are you OK?

GARBIELA. Yeah, I just wanted to hear your voice . . .

MOGPIN. Are you sure you're OK?

GARBIELA. Yeah, I'm OK. I'm the worst friend in the world.

MOGPIN. No, you've been busy.

GARBIELA. I have been, actually. I'll talk to you soon, I promise.

MOGPIN. Wait, Garby, do you need something?

GARBIELA. That's not why I called.

MOGPIN. I know. But what is it?

GARBIELA. The Doves Forge play is tonight.

MOGPIN. Can I come?

GARBIELA. I'm not in it. There's gonna be about thirty people there but I need it to be full.

MOGPIN. Why?

GARBIELA. If I talk about it I'll sound crazy. Could I see your contact list? I have to send a message.

MOGPIN. To who?

GARBIELA. Your contact list.

MOGPIN. Send me the message. I'll zap it out.

GARBIELA. Thank you. *(She hangs up, types.)* Hello you! It's Garbiela. I need a favor. Could you please please come to the play? I have an important task for you. I do know that the timing of this message is awkward, but I'm really looking forward to meeting you and I'd like to be your friend.

*(*GARBIELA *dials another number.)*

RUTH. Hey!

GARBIELA. Thank you for picking up. I'm sorry. *(Beat.)* I know you still don't love elevators.

RUTH. I don't.

GARBIELA. Could you help me take the stairs?

RUTH. To?

GARBIELA. The play.

RUTH. I'll meet you at the side door.

(With STAUNCHER *and the cast and crew of the play.)*

STAUNCHER. Break a leg break a leg break a leg. You're going to remember this night your whole life.

COLBY. *(Terror:)* The theatre's filling up! There's way more people than you said would be here.

STAUNCHER. That's a *good* thing. Remember Billiam, you can only do your handstand if you stay perfectly still through the whole play.

(In the stairwell, GARBIELA *and* RUTH, *focused on running.* GARBIELA *holds a plate of Affinity.)*

RUTH and GARBIELA. *(Running:)* Step step step step step step.

RUTH. *(Winded:)* Why are we doing this?

GARBIELA. I know why Fantine lost her part. *(The candy:)* This is the key to my plan. I'm going to have Kelvin run through the building with it and lure her to the theatre. You can have a piece but only one.

(He pretends to pop one in his mouth, but tosses it aside.)

RUTH. Yum! Thank you!

(We're at the play! STAUNCHER *enters. She is clearly a little stunned by the number of people in the audience.)*

STAUNCHER. Everyone, we're so glad to see you here! *(Re the number of people:)* Word certainly got out! You have a treat in store for you. Without further ado, we bring you *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation*.

(Lights come up on a suggestion of a country manor. CARA, *as a maid, enters and dusts objects, including* BILLIAM, *who remains a perfect statue. She talks to herself.)*

CARA. *(As maid, British:)* "He's being sent home from school, which nobody understands. He was expelled, and they won't explain why. They just sent him home! That's not all. The new governess is due to arrive any minute."

*(*GARBIELA *and* RUTH *run onto stage.)*

GARBIELA. Stop! Stop the play!

CARA. We just started.

*(*GARBIELA *looks around.* FANTINE's *not there.* STAUNCHER *comes onstage. Everything that happens for the next few pages challenges* BILLIAM-THE-STATUE's *sense of stillness.)*

GARBIELA. Fantine!

STAUNCHER. Why are you here and what are you doing?

GARBIELA. *(To the rafters.)* Kelvin, are you back there?

KELVIN. *(Offstage:)* Yes!

GARBIELA. Get down here. I need your speed! Everybody, listen up! I have instructions for you!

*(*KELVIN *sprints on, magically fast.)*

KELVIN. I'm here!

GARBIELA. I need you to take this—

KELVIN. Got it!

(He takes the candy and sprints off.)

GARBIELA. Wait! I didn't tell you the plan! KELVIN! *(But he's gone.)* Plan B. I'm going to have to find her myself. Colby.

COLBY. *(Terrified:)* What?

GARBIELA. I need you.

COLBY. No.

GARBIELA. *Everything depends on you.*

(She whispers to him, runs off, RUTH *in tow, leaving* COLBY *terrified.)*

COLBY. *(Weak, weaker, weakest:)* So. Are we having a good time? I said, are we having a good time? *(At least audible:)* Hey everybody, I have an important job for you. *(A little stronger:)* I have a task . . .

(Then, he finds some sort of inner power. BOOM!)

LISTEN UP PEOPLE. WE'VE GOTTA MAKE SOME NOISE HERE. ARE YOU READY? *(Yes.)* I said, ARE YOU READY?! I'M GONNA SAY A WORD, YOU'RE GONNA SHOUT IT BACK AT ME! FIRST WORD . . . PHYSICS! *(The audience shouts.)* Terrible, try that one again. PHYSICS. *(Audience response.)* I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

*(*RUTH *bursts in.)*

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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