



**Eddie McPherson**

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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## The Hapless Haunting of Helen Hinklemeier

**FARCE.** In this boo-tifully funny play, Mike buys a house haunted by a beautiful ghost, which makes his fiancée, Sally, instantly jealous. Determined to rid the house of its gorgeous ghost, Sally and her friend, Jane, arrange for a paranormal investigator to hold a séance. At the séance, several ghosts appear including a pirate, a coalminer, the Ghost of Christmas Past, and a dyslexic ghost who yells "Oob!" instead of "Boo!" Then when Sally stands up in the middle of the séance and tells the ghost off, things go downhill fast. There are kooky characters, madcap misunderstandings, and sight gags galore in this frighteningly funny play!

**Performance Time:** Approximately 60 minutes.

## Characters

(6 M, 9 F, 13 flexible)

(With doubling: 5 M, 9 F, 6 flexible)

- MS. WILLINGHAM:** A nervous real estate agent who's trying to unload a haunted house; female.
- MRS. COLLINS:** Purchases a haunted house as a wedding gift for her son Mike; female.
- MIKE COLLINS:** Engaged to Sally; a man of science who doesn't believe in ghosts; male.
- SALLY:** Mike's beautiful, rich, materialistic fiancée; doesn't want to play second fiddle to a ghost; her father owns a magic shop; female.
- JANE:** Sally's weird best friend who senses the ghost and convinces Sally to get rid of it; dressed like an old-fashioned Gypsy fortuneteller complete with head and waist scarves, skirts, and lots of jewelry; female.
- IMA FALSCHUNG:** A retired paranormal investigator hired to de-ghost the house; speaks in silly rhymes; dressed like an old-fashioned medium complete with head and waist scarves, skirts, and lots of jewelry; female.
- JACK:** Mike's wacky friend who spends some unwelcomed time in the closet with the ghost; male.
- DOUG:** Mike's friend who has his own plan to get rid of the ghost; male.
- HELEN HINKLEMIRE:** Beautiful ghost who shows up in mirrors and closets; wants to take revenge on her sister Sybil, who murdered her in the 1920s; wears a flapper-type dress; female.
- SYBIL HINKLEMIRE:** Helen's sister who is accused of Helen's murder; female.
- MR. HINKLEMIRE:** Helen's dad; male.
- MRS. HINKLEMIRE:** Helen's mother; female.
- POLICE OFFICER 1, 2:** Investigate Helen's death; flexible.

**MISS ARCHER:** Ms. Willingham's client who is scared off by the ghost; female.

**WINK:** A game show host; wears a bright pastel or plaid suit; male.

**MR. BUGGS:** Termite exterminator who tells terrible termite jokes; male.

**REALTOR 1, 2, 3, 4:** Realtors who swear to keep the ghost of Helen Hinklemire a secret; wear black hoodies; flexible.

**SIGHTSEER 1, 2, 3:** Walmart shoppers who want to see the ghost; carry cameras/cell phones; flexible.

**GHOST 1:** Pete the pirate ghost who walked the plank in 1863; flexible.

**GHOST 2:** The ghost of a grumpy old minor who lost his life in the West Virginia coalmines; speaks with a southern accent; flexible.

**GHOST 3:** Ghost of Christmas Past from Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol"; speaks with a bad English accent; flexible.

**GHOST 4:** A random ghost with dyslexia who shouts, "Oob!"; flexible.

**EXTRAS (opt.):** As additional Realtors and Sightseers.

## Options for Doubling

REALTOR 1/GHOST 1 (Flexible)  
REALTOR 2/GHOST 2 (Flexible)  
REALTOR 3/GHOST 3 (Flexible)  
REALTOR 4/GHOST 4 (Flexible)  
SIGHTSEER 1/POLICE OFFICER 1 (Flexible)  
SIGHTSEER 2/POLICE OFFICER 2 (Flexible)  
SIGHTSEER 3/WINK (male)

## Setting

Old house that is haunted.

## Set

**Living room.** The home looks rundown and has not been lived in for many years. There are cobwebs and dingy walls. An old sofa sits CS with a coffee table in front of it. The door to the front yard is SL, and the kitchen door is SR. The door to the closet is USR, and the mirror is USL. There is a small table covered with a nice tablecloth. There are pictures on the walls SL and SR. There is a large rug on the floor. Other pieces of furniture may be set about. In Scene 1, the furniture is covered with sheets but the sheets are removed in Scene 2.

## Synopsis of Scenes

**Scene 1:** Living room.

**Scene 2:** Living room.

**Scene 3:** Living room.

## Props

Water pitcher	Black tablecloth
Paper cups	Purse, for Jane
Pieces of paper	Fake money
Shoulder bag or purse, for Ms. Willingham	Chairs, for séance
Trashcan	Bottle of soda
Wallet	Oversized turban and long flowing robe or moo-moo, for Jane
Pen	All-black clothing (black pants, black shirt and black ski hat), for Jack and Doug
Contract	All-black clothing, for Ima (same outfit as Jack and Doug)
White sheets	Crystal ball (Cheap white glass or plastic light fixture domes that can be found at Walmart or any hardware store Spruce it up by putting a glow stick inside it.)
2 Hairbrushes	Bag (for garlic)
Floor lamp	Jacket, for Mike
Umbrella	Vacuum cleaner with a hose attachment
Tissues	Pictures
Handheld wooden or plastic frame with bars attached	Moving boxes
Piece of old parchment	Old board
Cell phone, for Jane	Glass doorknob or diamond shaped paperweight (for diamond)
Handheld "termite detector" (can be any electronic item)	
4 Glowing candles	
Glass of water	
Rag	
Sheet with eyeholes cut in it, for Jack	
Newspapers	
Toolbox	
3 Cameras or smart phones, for Sightseers	
3 Dollar bills (can be fake money)	

## Sound Effects

"Ghost Riders in the Sky" or another suitable ghostly song	Wind Strange, mysterious music
Knock on the door	Spy music
Chimes	Soft mystical music
Door squeaking open	Bell
Thunder	Rimshot

## Special Effects

**Mirror:** There's a square or oval hole cut in the upstage wall (like you would cut for a window). You may cover the hole with Plexiglas or leave it uncovered. There is black material hanging behind the hole. A light is placed on the backstage floor below the hole. When Helen appears in the mirror, have the actor standing there turn on the light, reflecting up on her. Make sure you can't see the actor taking her place prior to the scene. If this is impossible, have the actor simply walk into place or pop up from below on cue.

**Closet door opening/closing on its own:** Someone offstage pushes the closet door open and pulls it closed with the fishing line.

**Blinking floor lamp:** The floor lamp's cord and switch run to backstage, where a stagehand manipulates it safely on cue.

**Pictures falling off the walls:** On cue, have someone pull out the nails the pictures are hanging on from the wall backstage, causing the pictures to fall to the floor.

**Dancing umbrella:** The actor playing Helen—since she's about to appear anyway—is simply holding the umbrella by its tip (handle end up) and bobbing it up and down and back and forth in rhythm to the song.

**Bobbing table:** A stagehand climbs underneath the card table before the scene starts and raises and lowers the table on cue. Note: The black tablecloth must reach the floor so the audience can't see the stagehand.

“I hear poisonous gas  
is bad for the lungs.”

—Sally

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Living room of a very old house. There is an old sofa and other pieces of furniture covered with white sheets. The only thing that doesn't look old is a small table covered with a nice tablecloth. A pitcher of water and a few cups are on the table. The chorus from "Ghost Riders in the Sky" or another suitable song is heard before the lights come up. Lights up, music fades, and the front door opens. Ms. Willingham, a real estate agent, and her client Miss Archer enter. Ms. Willingham moves quickly to the center of the room.)

MS. WILLINGHAM: (Nervously.) Here we are. Isn't it a lovely house? It has windows and doors and floors and even windows and doors.

MISS ARCHER: You said windows and doors twice.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Did I? (Nervous laugh.) Silly me. Also, you'll notice the house comes with floors, oh, and windows.

MISS ARCHER: (Looking at her suspiciously.) I see...

(Ms. Willingham pulls pieces of paper out her purse.)

MS. WILLINGHAM: So, if you're ready to sign the contract...

MISS ARCHER: (Walking around.) I'd like to look around, if you don't mind.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Be my ghost.

MISS ARCHER: What?

MS. WILLINGHAM: (Realizes.) Guest! Be my guest, not ghost. Who said "ghost"? (Nervous laugh.) You'll find the standard contract—

MISS ARCHER: Goodbye.

(Miss Archer heads to the door, but Ms. Willingham stops her.)

MS. WILLINGHAM: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Please don't leave!

MISS ARCHER: *(Hesitates.)* Well... *(Closet door opens slowly and then slams shut.)* What was that?!

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Ignoring her.)* Let me show you around. You'll die when you see the kitchen.

MISS ARCHER: Die?

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Frustrated with herself.)* Not die. I didn't mean "die." No one died in this house.

MISS ARCHER: Well, I simply refuse to be the first. Good day. *(Runs off.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Shouts.)* But she's a friendly ghost! *(Shuts the door. To herself.)* I think. *(A slow knock at the closet door is heard. Calls toward the closet.)* Hello? Is...is anyone there? I'm opening the closet door. Don't be afraid. *(Turns the doorknob and opens the closet door only to find the closet empty. A knock at the front door causes her to jump, turn, and look. When she does, the closet door closes again. She runs to the front door and flings it open.)* What do you want?

*(Mrs. Collins and her son, Mike, are standing there.)*

MRS. COLLINS: *(Hand to her chest, startled.)* I beg your pardon.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Sorry, I thought you were... *(Regains composure.)* You're here to see the house.

MRS. COLLINS: We did have an appointment.

*(Ms. Willingham crosses to the pitcher of water.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: Come in, come in. The first thing I do is offer my clients a refreshing cup of water. *(Pours water from a pitcher into a paper cup.)*

- MRS. COLLINS: Thank you, that would be nice. *(Reaches for the water cup, but Ms. Willingham drinks it in one gulp. Sarcastic.)* Thank you, that was refreshing.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Keeping her eyes on the closet door.)* Have some more. *(Throws the cup in the trash.)*
- MRS. COLLINS: *(Sarcastic.)* No thanks, I've had enough.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Looks quickly at Mrs. Collins. Acting a little crazy.)* What makes you think there's someone in the closet?
- MIKE: I beg your —
- MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins, curtly.)* Do you want the house or not? There's a line of people wanting this house, you know. See, there's a call now. Excuse me. *(Puts her wallet to her ear.)* Hello? Okay, thanks, I'll let them know. *(Putting her wallet away.)* Looks like the Hoodwink family is heading over to sign the contract, so if you want this house, you'd better sign now.
- MRS. COLLINS: You were talking into your wallet.
- MIKE: Something strange is going on. And when I say strange, I mean cuckoo.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: How old are you...thirteen?
- MIKE: Uh, 28.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Leaning in.)* Why don't you just leave the business end of things to the real adults in the room, huh? What do you think of that? Huh? Huh, Mr. 28? *(To Mrs. Collins, with a sweet smile.)* So, are you ready to sign now?
- MRS. COLLINS: *(Through her teeth.)* We haven't seen the house yet.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: Well, someone's certainly grumpy-wumpy today.
- MRS. COLLINS: I'm sorry, I guess I'm just a little stressed. You see, my husband and I are buying Mike a house for a wedding gift.
- MS. WILLINGHAM: Don't care. *(Placing the contract on the table and presenting a pen.)* Here you go. Just sign right

there... *(Indicating.)* ...on the dotted line right there.  
*(Indicating.)* Not there, or there, but right there.

MRS. COLLINS: *(Suspicious.)* There's something you're keeping from us. The roof isn't about to fall in, is it?

MS. WILLINGHAM: Let me look. *(Doesn't move.)* Nope.

MIKE: The foundation is strong, right?

MS. WILLINGHAM: Let me check. *(Jumps up and down.)*  
Yep.

MIKE: *(Jokingly.)* It isn't haunted, is it?

MS. WILLINGHAM: Let me check. *(Opens the closet door quickly, revealing a glimpse of someone standing there in a white sheet. Slams the door shut.)* Nope. No ghosts.

*(Mike crosses behind the sofa.)*

MIKE: I was only joke— *(Stops. Indicating floor.)* Wait, this floorboard seems a little loose. *(Bounces lightly up and down on it.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: The house is a million years old. What do you expect...strong floorboards?

MRS. COLLINS: Mike, dear, what do you think of the house?

MIKE: *(Shrugs.)* I think it's boo-tiful.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Taken aback.)* What did you say?

MIKE: I said, I think the house is beautiful.

MS. WILLINGHAM: You said *boo-tiful!*

MIKE: No, I didn't.

MRS. COLLINS: I agree, Son. The house is dead gorgeous.

MS. WILLINGHAM: There you go again.

MRS. COLLINS: I must admit the price is a little frightening.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Can't take it anymore.)* Okay, okay, okay! I can see you're on to me! Not to worry, though. The story is just a made-up legend. Just a fun, harmless ghost story. Here you go, Mrs. Collins, sign riiiiight there.

*(Indicates on contract. Presents a pen.)* Here's a brand-new ballpoint pen to use.

MRS. COLLINS: I think we have a right to know if someone was murdered here.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Trying to force the pen into Mrs. Collins's hand.)* I promise you...no man, or woman, or boy was murdered in this house.

MIKE: What about a girl?

MS. WILLINGHAM: What about a girl?

MIKE: The girl who was murdered here.

MS. WILLINGHAM: A girl was murdered here?

MRS. COLLINS: Let's go, Mike.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Fine, but I think you should know that I have three and a half people standing in line for this house.

MRS. COLLINS: You do not.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Hold on. *(Holds a hairbrush up to her ear.)* Hello? You want to buy the *un*-haunted house and you will come over right this very minute to sign the papers, no questions asked, and you think I'm beautiful? Let me see if it's available... *(To Mrs. Collins.)* Is it available?

MRS. COLLINS: You're talking into a hairbrush.

MIKE: Mom, the house looks fine. I'm tired of looking. Let's just sign the papers.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Into hairbrush.)* Goodbye. *(To Mrs. Collins, holding out pen.)* Here's your pen.

MRS. COLLINS: Mike, are you sure?

MIKE: It's close to my work. Plus—and this is a big plus—I don't believe in ghosts. *(The floor lamp begins to turn off and on by itself as Mrs. Collins signs the contract. Indicating floor lamp.)* What's causing that?

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Shouts to the air.)* Stop it!

*(Floor lamp goes out.)*

MIKE: I hope the house doesn't have faulty wiring.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Too late, she signed it. Enjoy your new home. Gotta go!

*(Ms. Willingham rushes to the door. Mrs. Collins follows her.)*

MRS. COLLINS: Ms. Willingham, I just want to thank you for being honest with us about the house. Honestly, you don't find many honest people in the world anymore. Honesty is a lost art. Honesty is sacred. Honesty is still the best—

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(Shouts.)* It's haunted!

MRS. COLLINS: *(Taken aback.)* ...policy?

MS. WILLINGHAM: Haunted, haunted, haunted! This house you just bought is haunted by a stubborn ghost named Helen. She's a nuisance and a pest.

MIKE: You can't be serious.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Dead serious. *(Realizes.)* Sorry, that one just slipped out.

MIKE: Ma'am, I'd have you know I have earned a Master of Science degree in Bioinformatics, and believe me, there are no such things as ghosts.

MRS. COLLINS: Yeah, yeah, dear, no one cares. *(To Ms. Willingham.)* You said it's a ghost of a young girl named Helen?

MS. WILLINGHAM: I might as well tell you. The house was built in the 1920s by Mr. J.T. Hinklemire. *(Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire enter with Helen and Sybil. Helen lies on the floor. Sybil sits on the sofa, holding an umbrella. Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire stand at the front door. Note: As Ms. Willingham tells the story, they act it out in pantomime.)* Mr. Hinklemire had a wife and two daughters, Helen and Sybil. One evening, Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire came home from the theater and found their daughter Helen dead in the middle of the living room.

*(Mr. Hinklemire sees Helen "dead" on the floor. Note: Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire, Sybil, and Police Officers are very poor actors.)*

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(To Mrs. Hinklemire.)* Oh my, our Helen is dead in the middle of the living room.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* Their other daughter Sybil sat on the sofa, crying.

SYBIL: *(Crying into a tissue, melodramatically.)* Boo-hoo! I'm sitting here crying! Crying, I tell you!

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* When police investigated... *(Police Officer 1 enters and examines Helen.)* ...they found that Helen had been poisoned with some type of gas.

POLICE OFFICER 1: *(To Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire, with his finger in the air.)* This young lady has been poisoned with some type of gas.

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(Stiffly.)* Woe is me. Oh, woe is me.

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: Our little girl is deed.

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(Correcting.)* "Dead," dear.

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: Our little girl is dead, dear.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* The police officer glanced over at Sybil and noticed she was holding an umbrella.

POLICE OFFICER 1: *(To Sybil.)* Young lady, I notice you are holding an umbrella. *(Takes the umbrella.)* And not just any ordinary umbrella, but one that shoots out invisible toxic fumes from its tip here. Allow me to demonstrate. *(Puts his nose to the tip of the umbrella, sniffs it, and falls over dead.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* Well, that officer keeled over, so another officer took his place. *(Police Officer 2 enters and picks up the umbrella.)* The second police officer suspected Sybil right off. He asked Sybil questions, but she wouldn't talk.

POLICE OFFICER 2: *(To Sybil.)* What's two plus two?

SYBIL: No comment.

MRS. COLLINS: *(To Ms. Willingham.)* What happened to Sybil? Was she arrested?

MS. WILLINGHAM: I'm getting to that. Shesh! She was arrested and charged with murdering her sister.

POLICE OFFICER 2: *(Putting Sybil's hands behind her back.)* You have the right to remain stylish.

SYBIL: *(Flirtatiously.)* Oh, how sweeeeet.

POLICE OFFICER 2: *(Realizes.)* Sorry, my first arrest.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* Once Sybil was sent to prison, her mother and father visited her on a regular basis.

SYBIL: *(To Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire, holding a wooden frame with bars attached in front of her face.)* Thank you for visiting me on a regular basis, Mother and Father.

MR. HINKLEMIRE: We have a question to ask you, Sybil.

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: *(To Sybil.)* Did you murder your sister by spraying a toxic gas into her face?

SYBIL: *(Fake crying.)* Of course not!

MR. HINKLEMIRE: But you were sitting there that night with this gas-shooting umbrella in your hand. *(Holds up his hand, but there's no umbrella. To Police Officer 2.)* Umbrella!

POLICE OFFICER 2: Sorry!

*(Police Officer 2 hands Mr. Hinklemire the umbrella.)*

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(To Sybil.)* With this gas-shooting umbrella in your hand.

SYBIL: Mother, Father, have I ever lied to you?

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: Many times.

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(To Sybil.)* Six-hundred and twenty-two times at last count.

POLICE OFFICER 2: *(Announces.)* Visiting hours are over.

SYBIL: Mother, Father, I want to leave you with just two words: I did not murder my sister with an umbrella. I loved her, and she was my best friend.

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: That was, like, a million words.

MR. HINKLEMIRE: *(Shaking his head.)* Poor girl, a nasty murderer and can't count.

MRS. HINKLEMIRE: Where did we go wrong?

*(Mrs. Hinklemire cries on Mr. Hinklemire's shoulder.)*

MR. HINKLEMIRE: You're getting my best shirt wet, soooooo... *(Pushes Mrs. Hinklemire away.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mrs. Collins.)* Sybil served a life sentence in prison with no hope of getting out... *(Mr. and Mrs. Hinklemire and Sybil start to exit.)* ...no hope of getting out, no hope of getting out, no hope of getting out. Sorry, just giving them time to exit. *(Sees Helen still lying on the floor. To Helen, shouts.)* Hey, you!

*(Helen jumps up.)*

HELEN: Sorry! *(Exits.)*

MIKE: *(To Ms. Willingham.)* And now you think Helen's ghost has been haunting this house ever since?

MS. WILLINGHAM: Yes, waiting for her sister to return from prison so she can seek revenge on her once and for all. The legend says that's why Helen doesn't want people living here...so she can be alone when Sybil returns.

MIKE: Malarkey, nonsense, absolutely ridiculousity.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Suit yourself. *(Remembers.)* Oh, I almost forgot. As a bonus for buying this lovely home, you get a lovely door prize. *(To offstage.)* Wink, tell him about his door prize.

*(Wink runs on wearing a bright pastel or plaid suit and holding a piece of parchment.)*

WINK: *(Announcing.)* Along with this lovely haunted property... *(Indicating parchment.)* ...you receive this

Ghost Conjure Incantation. Boo, yeah. That's right, read these words aloud, and any ghost within 40 yards will come visit you, maybe even chat awhile. Just sit around, eat, drink, and be scary. This Ghost Conjure Incantation is yours for absolutely... *(Like a ghost.)* ...freeeeee!

*(Wink hands Mike the parchment and runs off. Ms. Willingham applauds.)*

MRS. COLLINS: That was weird.

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To Mike.)* I believe that's everything. Enjoy your new home. *(Turns to exit.)*

MIKE: Wait. *(Holds out the parchment.)* You can just take this hocus-pocus with you. Like I said, I'm a man of science and have no time for fairytales.

*(Mrs. Willingham shrugs and heads to the front door.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: Keep it as a souvenir. Goodbye.

*(Mrs. Collins shrugs and follows Ms. Willingham.)*

MRS. COLLINS: *(To Mike.)* Keep it as a souvenir. Goodbye.

*(Ms. Willingham opens the front door.)*

MS. WILLINGHAM: *(To the room, shouts.)* Goodbye, Helen, wherever you are! Don't be too hard on him, will you? He's a pretty nice guy. *(Exits.)*

MRS. COLLINS: Love you, Son. Mean it. *(Exits.)*

MIKE: *(Through the front door, shouts.)* I don't believe in Helen's ghost, and I am not a nice guy! *(Realizes.)* I mean, I am a nice guy! *(Holding up the parchment.)* I'm not going to read this aloud. It's all silly nonsense! *(Hears the closet door open slowly. He looks back at the closet. The door slowly closes again. He looks at the piece of parchment and opens the*

*front door. Through the front door, shouts.)* Okay, I'll read it just once if it will make you happy! But that doesn't mean I believe it. As a matter of fact, I'll read it aloud just to show you nothing will happen. Here goes. Reading it now. *(Shuts the door. Reads.)*

"Bone of white, candle tall—"

*(To audience.)* Sorry, I guess I need to read it more sarcastically dramatic to keep you guys entertained. *(Clears his throat. Chimes play under, melodramatically reads.)*

"Bone of white, candle tall,

Enter ghost within these walls

Moan by night,

Roam by day

Spirit come forth,

I'm not afraid." *(Helen appears in the mirror, brushing her hair. Note: See Special Effects. Mike doesn't turn and look, but we can tell he senses something. He gets some courage, turns, and looks back at the mirror, but Helen disappears before he can see her. Mike moves quickly to the door. Reciting his own rhyme.)* "Pinch of nose,

Cut of ear,

Poor, dear Helen never appeared." *(Opens the front door.*

*Sally is standing there, poised ready to knock.)* Sally!

SALLY: Michael Chandler Collins, you look a mess. Tuck in that shirttail before someone I know sees you.

MIKE: Sorry, my little cupcake.

SALLY: And what have I told you about calling me desserts? I can see training you for husband-hood will be a challenge. You may kiss me on the forehead. *(Mike kisses Sally on the forehead. She enters the room.)* I stopped by to talk to you about your job. I'm not sure you will make enough money in your chosen field, so you may work for my father instead. You're welcome.

MIKE: But your father owns a magic shop.

SALLY: The most famous chain of magic shops in the state!  
Must I remind you that The Crystal Ball Palace of Magic  
and Mystic Mayhem...

MIKE: *(Under his breath.)* Long name for a magic shop.

SALLY: ...has kept my mother and me in the finest clothes  
and nicest house in town? Father is willing to make you  
partner someday.

MIKE: But honey, pumpkin, I'm a scientist. That's what I  
do. That's who I am.

SALLY: I'll tell you who you are: You are my future  
husband. And I like stuff...lots of stuff...oodles and  
oodles of stuff. Have I made myself clear?

MIKE: It just doesn't seem fair.

SALLY: *(Playing with his ear, baby talk.)* Oh, Mikey-wikey, I  
don't mean to be pushy-wushy, but partnership in  
Daddy's business means good money, and good money  
makes me happy-wappy. You do want to make me  
happy-wappy, don't you, snuggle-puggles?

MIKE: Of course, but—

SALLY: *(Normal voice.)* Good, now let's see this dreadful  
new house of yours.

MIKE: You mean house of *ours*.

SALLY: That's up in the air.

MIKE: Our future marriage is up in the air?

SALLY: *(Goes behind the sofa.)* Yikes, got a loose floorboard  
there. *(Bouncing on it.)* A little unstable...reminds me of  
our relationship...

MIKE: What do you mean unstable like our relation—

SALLY: Is this the closet? *(Starts to open the closet door.)*

MIKE: *(Sarcastically.)* Be careful, there might be a ghost in  
there.

*(Sally opens the closet door. Helen is standing there, holding her  
fists up like a boxer and punching the air.)*

SALLY: You're right, there's a ghost in there. *(Slams the door shut.)* Michael, you've gone and bought a haunted house! Can't you do anything right?!

MIKE: *(Taken aback.)* What? *(Rushes over, opens the closet door, and Helen is gone.)* There's no one there.

SALLY: *(To herself.)* And on top of everything else, she was very pretty. What have I gotten myself into...wanting to marry a poor scientist who buys a house haunted by a pretty ghost? *(To a female audience member who is sitting next to a man.)* You can feel my pain, can't you? I mean, look who you ended up with. *(Points to the male audience member sitting next to the woman. To herself.)* Why must love hurt this way?!

*(Knock at the front door. Mike swings around.)*

MIKE: What was that?

SALLY: I asked Jane to meet me here.

*(Sally opens the front door. Jane enters, talking on her phone. She is dressed like an old-fashioned gypsy fortune teller.)*

JANE: *(Into phone.)* They are delicious. You should try some.

SALLY: Jane, get off the phone.

JANE: *(Into phone.)* Bye, Samantha. *(To Sally.)* I was just telling Samantha Stephens about a new herb I discovered.

MIKE: Is Herb your new boyfriend?

JANE: I didn't say "Herb," I said "herb."

SALLY: Don't be silly, Michael, weird girls like Jane don't date.

JANE: *(Insulted.)* Weird? I am *unique*.

SALLY: Boys don't want unique. They want beautiful, popular, and rich. *(To Mike.)* Isn't that right, future hubby-wubby?

MIKE: *(Under his breath.)* Right, but I settled for you.

SALLY: What?!

MIKE: I said, "I wuv you, my little sprinkle-winkle."

JANE: *(To Sally.)* Did you invite me over to insult me?

SALLY: No, so you can help me talk Mike out of buying this repulsive house.

JANE: I think it's quite charm— *(Steps farther into the room but stops herself.)* Whoa.

MIKE: What's wrong?

*(Jane slowly crosses to the center of the room.)*

JANE: I just sensed a very strange presence.

SALLY: Presents? Oh, Mike, you were planning to surprise me with expensive presents?! That's so sweeeeet!

JANE: I said "presence," not "presents."

SALLY: That's what I said, "presents."

JANE: *(Correcting.)* "Presence."

SALLY: "Presents."

JANE: "Presence," like existence.

SALLY: Presents like diamond earrings.

MIKE: Jane, you're fighting a losing battle. Since when can you feel any kind of presence?

JANE: I inherited the gift from my mother. She's a retired medium, you know.

MIKE: Medium? *(Under his breath.)* You're bananas.

JANE: What did you say?

MIKE: I said, "You're a peach." *(Fake smile.)*

JANE: I hate to say this, Mike, but the presence feels angry.

SALLY: Now that you mention it, she was giving me a dirty look just now.

JANE: You saw something?!

SALLY: Yes, a beautiful ghost in the closet. *(Makes sure Mike hears.)* Not as beautiful as I am, you understand, but certainly not ugly. And I'm sure she isn't rich because what do ghosts need with money?

MIKE: *(Rolling his eyes.)* Can we change the subject, please?

JANE: Sally, are you sure you actually saw it?

SALLY: By the hair of my chinny-chin-chin.

MIKE: Sally, that doesn't make any sense. *(Knock at the front door. Mr. Buggs sticks his head in. To Mr. Buggs.)* Yes?

MR. BUGGS: Here for a termite inspection.

MIKE: Okay. Let's start in the kitchen.

MR. BUGGS: See this here? *(Holds up a handheld contraption.)* It's brand new. It's a termite detector. If there are termites in this house, this dandy gadget will beep like there's no tomorrow. Watch. *(Holds the contraption up to Mike.)* Good news, you're not a termite.

MIKE: *(To himself.)* I'm surrounded by crazy today. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

MR. BUGGS: *(To Sally and Jane.)* Most women like a man in uniform, am I right?

SALLY: As soon as a man comes in, we'll let you know.

MR. BUGGS: Don't you worry your pretty little head. "When Barney Buggs is on the loose, all your termites turn to juice." *(Proudly.)* I wrote that myself.

JANE: Is your last name really "Buggs"?

*(Mr. Buggs crosses behind the sofa.)*

MR. BUGGS: That's right. I was born for this job. Whoops, got a bouncy floorboard there. Probably a million termites underneath. This place is a goldmine for yours truly.

MIKE: *(Offstage, calls.)* Mr. Buggs?!

MR. BUGGS: Comin'! *(Shouts.)* Another room, here I come!

*(Mr. Buggs exits into the kitchen. Sally rushes to Jane.)*

SALLY: Jane, you've got to get rid of that ghost. The last thing I need after I'm married is competition with a beautiful apparition. I will require all of Mike's attention when I convince him to sell this dilapidated dwelling and work for my father so that I can continue to live in a

manner to which I have grown accustomed. (*Takes a breath.*) Whoa, that was a long sentence.

JANE: Tell me exactly where you saw the ghost.

SALLY: Standing in the closet.

JANE: Stands to reason. Small, closed-in spaces make ghosts feel safe. If only I had a Ghost Conjure Incantation so I can see her. (*Sees the parchment Mike left behind.*) Oh, look, here's one right here. (*Picks up the parchment.*)

SALLY: Let me see that. (*Reads.*)

"Bone of white. Candle tall.

Enter ghost within these walls.

Moan by night, roam by day.

Enter spirit, I'm not afraid." (*Sally and Jane look around but nothing happens.*) Maybe she's shy.

JANE: Wait! That incantation reminded me...it's all coming back to me now...a story my mother told me about this place when I was a kid.

SALLY: You mean a ghost story?

JANE: It was kept a secret. There was a murder that happened here. Soon after, a ghost started showing up. All the Realtors in town were afraid that if the legend got out, it would destroy property values in the neighborhood. (*Realtors 1-4 enter, wearing black hoodies. They stand in a semicircle, holding candles.*) So, the local Association of Realtors met one night and made a pact that the legend of the haunted house would be forever quieted.

REALTOR 1: As we travel our lives pillar to post...

REALTOR 2: We vow never speak of the stubborn ghost.

REALTOR 3: If it gets out that a murder took place...

REALTOR 4: Buyers will simply laugh in our face.

REALTOR 1: Standing together here and now...

REALTOR 2: Holding fake candles, made from the fat of a sow.

REALTOR 3: Never, ever, speak of this murder. We vow.

REALTOR 4: Right now.

REALTOR 1: Cotton towel.

REALTOR 2: Milking cow.

REALTOR 3: A cat goes "meow."

JANE: *(To Sally.)* I forgot to mention the Realtors were also poets. They went on to say that...

REALTOR 1: If any Realtor in town from this day forward spills the beans about the murder and possible haunting, they shall have the hair of their arms pulled until they utter the sad word, "Ouch!"

REALTOR 1-4: Sad word, "Ouch!" *(They blow out their "candles" and exit.)*

SALLY: *(To Jane.)* Chanting rhymes? Secret meetings? Pulling arm hair? This is making me sick to my stomach.

JANE: I didn't mean to upset you. Let me fetch you a glass of water. *(Rushes to the kitchen.)*

SALLY: *(Shouts.)* Hurry up! *(Floor lamp starts blinking on and off.)* Please hurry! *(As the floor lamp continues blinking, the closet door squeaks open. Rushes to the floor lamp.)* Hello, nice ghost. *(Rushes to the closet.)* Please, beautiful ghost, leave us alone. I've got a lot of work to do to convince my fiancé to make lots of money so he can spoil me with the finer things in life. You're a beautiful girl, so I'm sure you understand my plight. Hello?

*(As Jane enters carrying a glass of water, everything returns to normal.)*

JANE: Here we go, drink it all up.

SALLY: *(Shaken.)* She was here.

JANE: You saw her again?

SALLY: No, but she was doing stuff. This feeling that she isn't too fond of me is getting stronger.

JANE: Very strange. Listen, Sally, you and Mike can't begin your marriage with a ghost on the loose. We have got to get rid of her once and for all.

SALLY: How?

JANE: Well, we could burn the house down.

SALLY: Is there a plan B?

JANE: I know someone who specializes in ghost busting.

SALLY: Good, because I refuse to play second fiddle to a banshee.

*(Mike enters with Mr. Buggs. Sally and Jane try their best to look innocent.)*

MR. BUGGS: I looked that termite in the eye, and I says to him, I says, "How dumb can you be?" And the termite says to me, he says, "What do you mean?" And I says, "Look around, you're eating yourself out of house and home." *(Laughs.)* Get it? *(Laughs.)* I got a million of 'em!

MIKE: *(Sarcastic.)* Yeah, that's real funny.

MR. BUGGS: A termite walks up to a lady termite and says, "Hey, what do you say later we go out for some coffee table." *(Laughs. Mike ushers him to the door and opens it. To Mike.)* The husband termite sits down to dinner and says to his wife, "Honey, not particle board again."

*(Mr. Buggs laughs. Mike slams the door in his face.)*

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**