

SHOWGHOSTS

Written By
JERRY ROBBINS

Songs By
JEFFREY GAGE

[SONG DEMOS and PITCH DECK](#)

jrscreenwriter60@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. LONDON SKYLINE - DAY

The iconic London skyline stretches across the frame -- Big Ben tolling faintly over a bustling, modern city.

EXT. REGAL SENIOR SCHOOL - DAY

A grim, soot-stained building looms in the heart of the city. The school bell RINGS sharply, echoing through the iron gates.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Students flood the hallway, laughing and shouting.

BEN BUTLER (14), skinny with glasses and well-worn clothes, weaves cautiously through the chaos. He hugs his books close, eyes on the floor.

A JOCK shoulders into him, sending his books flying.

JOCK BOY
Watch it, Benny Boy!

Ben scrambles for his books. Another FOOT kicks them farther away. Laughter echoes...

Ben crouches, flushed, gathering his books. His eyes drift to the wall, landing on a weathered poster:

AUDITIONS - ROMEO AND JULIET. OCT. 1 IN THE AUDITORIUM.

The bold letters gleam under the flickering light.

He's still staring when a shadow moves in front of him.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Are you going to audition?

Ben looks up to see HENRIETTA LAYTON(14), poised, pretty, and curious. She nods toward the poster.

BEN
Me?

HENRIETTA
Yeah! Ben, right?

BEN
Yeah. Ben Butler!

HENRIETTA
I sit next to you in math.

Ben fumbles with his books, his cheeks burning.

BEN
Oh! Right! Yes! Of course! Math.

Henrietta smiles, extending her hand

HENRIETTA
I'm Henrietta Layton.

He shakes her hand awkwardly.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)
So... are you going to audition?

BEN
Uh... no.

HENRIETTA
Why not?

BEN
I don't really... do acting.

HENRIETTA
Neither do I, but it'll be fun.

Henrietta studies him, then smiles.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)
What if you're great?

Ben fidgets as she turns to leave.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)
See you in math.

Ben watches her go, then turns back to the poster. A flicker of a smile crosses his face.

EXT. REGAL SENIOR SCHOOL - DAY

Students flood out the front doors as the final bell RINGS. Ben exits alone, head low.

He sees GRANDPA CLIVE BUTLER (80s), sharp in a slightly tattered three-piece suit, holding a travel bag.

EXT. EPOCH STREET - DAY

The late afternoon sun casts long shadows across the pavement as Ben and Grandpa Clive walk together. Ben stares intently at the ground, kicking at a loose pebble.

GRANDPA
Why the long face?

BEN
Same as always.

GRANDPA
You need to stand up to them, lad.
Keep your friends around you.

BEN
What friends?

GRANDPA
You've got me. Though, I suppose
I'm not much help when the school
bell rings, am I?

Ben's lips twitch into the shadow of a smile. Grandpa catches it and smiles back.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
There's the lad I know. Don't let
them keep that locked away. So...
what's been going on at school?

BEN
There's this girl...

Grandpa's eyebrows rise.

GRANDPA
A girl, eh? Go on.

BEN
She's auditioning for the school
play.

GRANDPA
And?

BEN
And she said I should try out.

GRANDPA
But...?

BEN

But it's not my thing.

Grandpa stops walking and turns to Ben, resting a hand on his shoulder.

GRANDPA

Not your thing? Or are you afraid someone might actually see you up there?

Ben frowns, avoiding Grandpa's gaze.

BEN

It's just... not my thing.

GRANDPA

There's more to life than blending into the background, Ben. You'll see.

Grandpa starts walking again. Ben hesitates, then hurries to catch up.

BEN

This isn't the way home.

GRANDPA

Nope. I've got a little surprise.

BEN

A surprise?

GRANDPA

I took a job.

BEN

A job? Grandpa, at your age?

GRANDPA

Age is a state of mind. Why, I'm younger than you!

Grandpa taps his temple, grinning.

Ben chuckles for the first time. The shadows of the two figures stretch ahead of them, framed by the golden hues of the setting sun.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

The Epoch Theater stands proudly on a quiet London street, a relic of a grander age.

Its weathered stone façade boasts ornate carvings dulled by decades of grime. A faded marquee hangs above the entrance, the letters barely legible: "Epoch Theater - Est. 1810."

To its left, an empty lot stretches, surrounded by a chain-link fence adorned with signs that read "Future Home of Mega Screen Multiplex Parking."

INT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

Pitch black.

The SQUEAK of an unseen door and cautious FOOTSTEPS echo through the cavernous space.

GHOST GUIDE (O.S.)
Welcome, ladies and gents, to the
most haunted theater in all of
London -- The Epoch Theater.

The murmur of nervous TOURISTS grows louder. Beams of flashlights cut through the gloom, revealing cobweb-covered red velvet seats, tarnished brass fixtures, and tattered wallpaper.

A GHOST GUIDE (20s), decked out in a Victorian suit and an ill-fitting top hat, steps into the dim light, leading a group of wide-eyed TOURISTS.

GHOST GUIDE (CONT'D)
Built in eighteen-ten, this fine
establishment was the crown jewel
of its day. Proper posh, I reckon.

He sweeps his arm theatrically toward the shadowy expanse of the room.

GHOST GUIDE (CONT'D)
But it's not its grandeur that
made it infamous -- it's the
tragedy.

The tourists glance at one another uneasily.

GHOST GUIDE (CONT'D)
Sir Ivan Frothmire, a legendary
Shakespearean actor, trod these
very boards until his untimely
death in eighteen-forty. Some say
he was done in.

AMERICAN TOURIST

Done in? What, like murdered

GHOST GUIDE

Spot on. The whispers say a
jealous rival stuck the knife
in... though some reckon it was
something darker.

The flashlight beams jitter slightly as the group's
nerves begin to fray.

GHOST GUIDE (CONT'D)

And Sir Ivan's just the start.
They say there are dozens of
restless souls rattling about. If
you're lucky -- or unlucky,
depending on your view -- you
might just catch one peeking at
you.

Several TOURISTS GASP as the guide pauses dramatically,
his eyes glinting mischievously in the faint light.

INT. THE MEZZANINE - DAY

FOUR PHOSPHORESCENT GHOSTS linger in the shadows, faintly
glowing green, their lower halves swirling like mist.

DAME FAYE FINCH (60s), dignified in a beaded Edwardian
gown and wide-brimmed hat, fans herself lazily.

SIR IVAN FROTHMIRE (70s), regal and brooding in his
Hamlet costume, reclines with disdain.

HAROLD HYDE (60s), a Cockney producer with a waxed
mustache and tilted bowler hat, leans forward, a smirk on
his face as he watches the scene below.

STUMPY LUMPY (50s), the jovial, rotund, deceased comedian
in a plaid jacket and bowler hat, is sound asleep.

HAROLD

Murdered? Blimey, if slippin' on a
banana peel counts as murder, then
sure.

FROTHMIRE

(haughtily)
I didn't - see - it.

ON STAGE

The guide lifts his flashlight, holding it beneath his chin. Shadows dance across his face, casting an eerie, ghostly glow.

GHOST GUIDE

Let us try to summon... a ghost.

The tourists glance at one another nervously, clutching their recording devices.

GHOST GUIDE (CONT'D)

Epoch Theater spirits! Give us a sign! Sir Ivan, are you with us?

THE MEZZANINE

Harold nudges Frothmire.

HAROLD

That's your cue, mate. Give 'em a show.

FROTHMIRE

At this hour? I do not perform at matinees.

DAME FAYE

Oh, for heaven's sake! Toss them a crumb before they bore us all to death.

ON STAGE

The group waits in tense silence.

GHOST GUIDE

Any sign at all...

THE MEZZANINE

Frothmire YAWNS, his chair CREAKING slightly.

ON STAGE

The group collectively GASPS.

SKEPTICAL TOURIST

Did you hear that!?

GHOST GUIDE

Sir Ivan! Is that you?

THE MEZZANINE

Frothmire smirks and flicks a finger.

ON STAGE

The Ghost Guide is yanked off his feet! His pants shoot up to his chest, then down, revealing heart-print boxers. He crashes to the ground with a loud THUD.

The ghost light sways ominously, its faint glow casting eerie shadows across the stage.

THE TOURISTS

(screaming)

Run!

They flee in chaotic terror, scattering up the aisle.

THE MEZZANINE

Frothmire reclines back in his chair, folding his hands smugly as the TOURISTS' screams echo in the distance and cut off with a DOOR SLAM.

FROTHMIRE

Voilà.

The ghost light on stage SWAYS back and forth, its glow casting eerie patterns across the theater.

Frothmire rises from his seat with a theatrical flourish, his ghostly form shimmering in the dim light.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)

And thus, the audience departs...

He gestures grandly toward the stage, his spectral form gliding forward off the mezzanine, floating effortlessly as he hovers above the ground.

LUMPY

Blimey, you're laying it on thick, even for you.

DAME FAYE

Lumpy, let him have his moment.

The Ghosts follow Frothmire, gliding smoothly down from the mezzanine, their swirling lower halves trailing behind them like wisps of mist.

ON STAGE

Frothmire strikes a Shakespearean pose.

FROTHMIRE

The show must go on!

He performs an exaggerated bow to an invisible audience.

The others reach the stage.

HAROLD

Oh, bravo, Sir Ivan. Truly, the
spirits are weeping with joy. Now
can we get back to rehearsing
before eternity ends?

FROTHMIRE

"To be...or not to be. That is the
ques..."

HAROLD

(Interrupting)

Oh, spare us the same ol'
codswallop!

He grabs a forgotten flashlight from the ground and holds
it under his chin, mocking Frothmire's dramatics.

He rattles off --

HAROLD (CONT'D)

"To-be-or-not-to-be-that-is-the-
question." See? No frills, no
nonsense.

FROTHMIRE

You call that acting? You're just
a producer!

HAROLD

Producer, yes. But I've got more
talent in my pinky than you've got
in your entire ectoplasmic ego!

Frothmire smiles with exaggerated patience.

FROTHMIRE

My dear Harold...

Frothmire SINGS.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)
I, THE GREAT FROTHMIRE,
SIMPLY MUST ENQUIRE
HOW SUCH GOBBLEDYGOOK
FROM AN AMATEUR ROOK
COULD SET THE STAGE AFIRE!

HAROLD
THIS IS SHAKESPEARE, PRAY,
NOT SOME CABARET!
YOU'RE OVER THE TOP,
A BELLOWING FOP
WITH EV'RY EGG YOU LAY!

BOTH
NEED I SAY MORE?
YOU'RE DESPERATE FOR ATTENTION!

Frothmire spins dramatically, his ghostly form casting shimmering trails in the air. Harold crosses his arms with a smirk.

FROTHMIRE
BUT I'LL CONCEDE

HAROLD
WE REALLY DO NEED

BOTH
AN AUDIENCE INTERVENTION!
GIMME THE CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD,

FROTHMIRE
THE CHEERS, THE BOOS,

HAROLD
AND EVEN THE MATINEE.

BOTH
GIMME THE CROWD,
WE'RE NOT SO PROUD!
GIMME 'EM STRAIGHTAWAY!
GIMME THE CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD,

HAROLD
THE ENDLESS QUEUES,

FROTHMIRE
THE DOUBLES ON SATURDAY!

BOTH
DON'T DISPENSE WITH THE AUDIENCE!
GIMME THE CROWD TODAY!

The Ghosts swirl around the stage in a chaotic yet spirited pattern. Suddenly, a commanding voice cuts through the melody:

VIOLA (O.S.)
Clear the stage, darlings. You've
had it long enough.

A spotlight flares to life, illuminating VIOLA ABBOTT (40s), her sequined, fringed flapper dress sparkling. Radiating confidence, she strides forward, the consummate jazz diva.

FROTHMIRE
Viola! Please! It's depressing
enough in here without you
warbling out the blues!

Viola ignores him, stepping to center stage. She commands the space effortlessly as she begins to sing.

VIOLA
Could you folks vamoose? I feel
like exercising my pipes!

She sings.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
BA-BADOO-WAH, BA-DOO-WAH,
BA-DOO-WAH, BA-DOO
WHY CARRY ON WITH THIS CHATTER?
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
WHEN JAZZ WAS KING
I WAS QUEEN OF PAREE!

Her voice silences any protests, captivating everyone.

FROTHMIRE
AND NOW YOU'RE STUCK LIKE ME,
IN THIS HALL WITH YOU ALL,
OH, I'D TRULY RATHER BE
STRUTTING THE STAGE ONCE MORE
AS JULIUS CAESAR AND KING LEAR.

HAROLD
BUT THAT'S ALL OUT THE DOOR
LIKE YOUR FANS AND YOUR CAREER.

BOTH
GIMME THE CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD,

VIOLA
THE BIG DEBUTS,

FROTHMIRE
THE FANS IN THE ALLEYWAY!

BOTH
GIMME THE CROWD,
WE'RE NOT SO PROUD!
GIMME 'EM STRAIGHTAWAY!

ALL THREE
GIMME THE CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD,

FROTHMIRE
THE BAD REVIEWS,

VIOLA
THE CRITICS WHO HAVE A SAY!

ALL THREE
LET'S COMMENCE WITH THE AUDIENCE!
GIMME THE CROWD TODAY!

Light applause interrupts them. They turn, startled,
toward --

THE CHANDELIER

Stumpy Lumpy lounges lazily on the huge chandelier above
the auditorium.

LUMPY
Hey, sing "Get Down Off the Stove,
Granny, You're Too Old To Be
Riding the Range!"

VIOLA
I don't sing lowbrow vulgarities.

LUMPY
Lowbrow? Fine --

Both of his eyebrows POP OFF his face and hover in the
air above him.

LUMPY (CONT'D)
 "Get Down Off the Stove, Granny,
 You're Too Old To Be Riding the
 Range!" High enough for ya?

VIOLA
 Comics.

Lumpy descends to the stage and sings as he spins
 theatrically in mid-air.

LUMPY
 Highbrow, Lowbrow,
 Whatever it takes
 to get 'em to laugh!
 When you got the know-how,
 you know how to get 'em good!

ON STAGE

He lands with a clumsy pirouette and winks. HAROLD glides
 in beside him, chiming in with mock seriousness:

HAROLD
 Highbrow, Lowbrow,
 The Blackpool crowds
 are better by half!
 Londoners are tough to wow,
 and wow, are they tough as wood!

THE MEZZANINE

GWEN OBERON (30), luminous and poised in her Juliet
 costume, rises gracefully from the floor. Her translucent
 gown ripples like liquid moonlight.

Dame Faye leans on the railing with a haughty air and
 SINGS out --

DAME FAYE
 How you ever played the epoch
 is perplexing!

GWEN
 Careful, Faye!
 Remember the way
 you tend to sway
 is vexing!

Dame Faye gasps and pulls away from the railing,
 straightening her hat with a nervous flourish.

DAME FAYE
 Oh! Oh, dear me!

The two Ghosts float downward, their movements
synchronized like a spectral ballet.

FAYE AND GWEN
OH! WE'D PLAY ALL THE CLASSICS
WITH CLASS AND GLAMOUR,
THE AUDIENCE WOULD CLAMOR

GWEN
FOR SHAKESPEARE AND BECKETT

DAME FAYE
AND LEHÁR

BOTH
AND HECK! IT'S NOT FAIR
THAT WE'RE HERE AND NOT THERE!

THE STAGE

The Ghosts gather around Lumpy.

+LUMPY
WITH THE CAST AND THE CREW
AND THE FANS WE ONCE KNEW,

+VIOLA
CURTAIN UP FOR ACT ONE,
TAKE YOUR BOWS AND YOU'RE DONE

+FROTHMIRE AND HAROLD
TILL THE NEXT MATINEE
WHEN YOU ONCE AGAIN PLAY

FAYE AND GWEN
TO A SOLD-OUT CROWD!

OTHERS
CROWD, CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD!
GIMME THE
GIMME THE
GIMME THE CROWD!

ALL
CROWD, CROWD,
GIMME THE CROWD!
GIMME THE
GIMME THE CROWD!

The Ghosts spiral in haphazard patterns, their harmonies
building to a joyful crescendo:

FROTHMIRE
 NOW LOOK HERE, YOUNG
 SQUIRE,
 MIGHT I THUS ENQUIRE
 HOW SUCH GOBBELDYGOOK
 FROM AN AMATEUR ROOK
 COULD SET THE STAGE AFIRE?

HAROLD
 THIS IS SHAKESPEARE, PRAY,
 NOT SOME CABARET!
 YOU'RE OVER THE TOP
 LIKE A BELLOWING FOP
 WITH EV'RY EGG YOU LAY!

LUMPY
 HIGHBROW, LOWBROW,
 WHATEVER IT TAKES
 TO GET 'EM TO LAUGH!
 WHEN YOU GOT THE KNOW-HOW,
 YOU KNOW HOW TO GET 'EM
 GOOD!

FAYE AND GWEN
 OH! WE'D PLAY ALL THE
 CLASSICS WITH CLASS!

VIOLA
 WHY CARRY ON WITH THIS
 CHATTER?
 IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER.
 WHEN JAZZ WAS KING...

VIOLA (CONT'D)
 I WAS QUEEN OF PAREE!

FROTHMIRE
 AND NOW YOU'RE STUCK LIKE ME,
 IN THIS HALL WITH YOU ALL!

OTHERS
 FROTHY, WE'D TRULY RATHER BE

ALL
 IN FRONT OF A CROWD!
 GIMME THE
 GIMME THE
 GIMME THE CROWD!
 GIMME THE CROWD,
 WE'RE NOT SO PROUD!
 GIMME 'EM STRAIGHTAWAY!
 GIMME THE CROWD,
 GIMME THE CROWD!
 THERE'S NOT A LIVING SOUL
 WE COULD TURN AWAY!
 WE WILL SMILE
 WHEN YOU WALK THE AISLE,
 WE'RE COMPLETE
 WHEN YOU TAKE YOUR SEAT,
 LET'S COMMENCE
 WITH THE AUDIENCE!
 GIMME THE CROWD TODAY!
 GIMME THE CROWD TODAY!

The Ghosts freeze mid-pose as a door CREAKS open.

GRANDPA (O.S.)
 Ah! Here we go!

BEN (O.S.)
Here's the light switch.

CLICK! CLICK! No lights.

The Ghosts exchange panicked glances before dissolving into the air, their forms unraveling like threads of shimmering mist.

GRANDPA (O.S.)
I'll check the fuse box in a moment. Well? What do you think!?

A flashlight beam sweeps across the theater.

BEN (O.S.)
Is this... your new job?

Grandpa and Ben step cautiously into the aisle, their faces illuminated by the flashlight's glow.

GRANDPA
Indeed it is! The Epoch Theater,
in all her dusty glory.

BEN
But it's been closed forever.

GRANDPA
Not forever, lad. Long enough,
though. I worked here once, many
moons ago.

Above them, the faint outline of Gwen Oberon's eyes
BLINKS open in midair, glimmering like distant stars.

BEN
So... is it re-opening?

GRANDPA
Not quite yet. The new owner hired
me to keep an eye on the place
until he's ready.

Gwen's eyes squint for a better look at Grandpa.

BEN
Ready for what?

GRANDPA
Oh, you know, worried about
vandals, hooligans, maybe a stray
ghost or two.

Grandpa winks, but his forced smile doesn't fool the curious eyes hovering above.

GWEN
(faintly)
I know those eyes...

Ben's head snaps up, scanning the ceiling. The eyes vanish in an instant.

BEN
Did you hear something?

GRANDPA
Nope. Just the sound of a grand old theater waiting to tell her stories.

Ben hesitates, glancing upward again.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Now then, how about this -- would you like to stay here for a week or two?

Ben turns, his face lighting up with excitement.

BEN
Would I!?

They climb the creaky steps to the stage.

Ben steps forward cautiously, his hand brushing the worn velvet curtain.

He looks out at the rows of cobwebbed seats and tarnished brass fixtures.

BEN (CONT'D)
Wow, Grandpa... It must've been amazing. All those people... the lights...

He stretches his arms wide, as if addressing an invisible crowd, his voice ringing out dramatically --

BEN (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Epoch Theater!

Grandpa brushes dust off an upright piano.

For a fleeting moment, Viola's eyes appear in the swirling dust. They WIDEN --

VIOLA

Ah-CHOOOO!

BEN

God bless you.

Ben doesn't notice the phantom eyes as he takes in the empty theater.

BEN (CONT'D)

Imagine what this was like, filled with people?

GRANDPA

Ah, she was the crown jewel of the city. Biggest stars, biggest shows... She was magic.

In the background, Gwen reappears in INVISIBLE MODE. Her shimmering, translucent figure hovers, unseen by Ben.

Her gaze locks onto Grandpa, and a wave of recognition crosses her face.

GRANDPA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Yes, sir. I've seen 'em all.

Gwen's expression softens, a trace of longing in her eyes, before she ZOOMS upward.

THE CHANDELIER

Gwen appears next to Lumpy, her ethereal glow casting faint glimmers across the chandelier's dusty surface.

GWEN

Lumpy! Does that old man look familiar to you?

Lumpy squints down at Grandpa, far below on the stage.

LUMPY

Can't say he rings a bell.

Gwen frowns and leans closer. Her shimmering form blends into the chandelier's soft radiance.

ON STAGE

Grandpa walks purposefully toward the wings.

GRANDPA

I'll go check the fuse box. Be back in a moment.

He disappears into the shadows.

Ben steps cautiously toward the edge of the stage, his sneakers squeaking on the dusty floor. He peers into the dark orchestra pit, the void swallowing any sound.

BEN
(to himself)
This place... feels alive.

THE MEZZANINE

INVISIBLE MODE Dame Faye and Gwen watch from the shadows.

DAME FAYE
That little boy is as invisible as
we are.

Gwen tilts her head, her spectral gaze studying Ben.

Suddenly, a booming voice shatters the stillness.

PHIPS (O.S.)
Oi! What are you doing on that
stage!?

Dame Faye and Gwen flinch, startled by the interruption.

ON STAGE

Ben spins around on stage, eyes darting frantically.

BEN
(uncertain)
Who said that!?

PHIPS (60s), wiry with thinning hair, steps out of the shadows. His rumpled button-down shirt and slacks suggest a practical man with little patience for nonsense. A clipboard rests firmly in his hand.

PHIPS
What are you doing in here?

BEN
Uh... I'm supposed to be here.

PHIPS
You don't look like a Clive
Butler...

A glance at his clipboard.

PHIPS (CONT'D)
Eighty-six years old.

BEN
That's my Grandpa.

As if responding to their exchange, the theater suddenly comes alive. Lights flicker, struggling to ignite, then flood the space with a warm, golden glow.

The hidden grandeur of the Epoch Theater reveals itself: intricate carvings, golden filigree, and a ceiling mural of angels playing harps and trumpets—all cloaked in layers of dust.

Ben's eyes widen, his breath catching in his throat.

BEN (CONT'D)
Blimey.

AT THE PIANO

In INVISIBLE MODE, Viola hovers near the piano, her translucent figure shimmering faintly. She trails a ghostly hand over the keys, her eyes sweeping the room with longing.

Nearby, Frothmire emerges dramatically from between two piano keys, his ectoplasmic form faintly glowing.

FROTHMIRE
I'd forgotten how splendid it was.

VIOLA
The shadows hid what we lost...
but now...

Tears shimmer in her spectral eyes..

VIOLA (CONT'D)
It feels like coming home.

THE MEZZANINE

In INVISIBLE MODE, Dame Faye and Gwen lean against the railing, taking in the illuminated theater.

GWEN
I didn't remember it being this
breathtaking.

DAME FAYE
This is why we stayed.

Her voice falters as she presses a hand to her chest..

DAME FAYE (CONT'D)
Oh, my sweet, beautiful
children... where are they now?

ON STAGE

Ben and Phips snap their heads to the mezzanine. Phips
clutches his clipboard like a lifeline.

PHIPS
What was that? Did you hear
something?

BEN
(grins)
Ghosts.

PHIPS
(panicked)
G-g-ghosts!?

THE MEZZANINE

Dame Faye quivers with righteous offense.

DAME FAYE
Ghosts!? How utterly cheeky!

GWEN
Faye, we are ghosts.

DAME FAYE
(ignores her)
This is our theater!

ON STAGE

Grandpa strides in from the wings, dusting his hands.

GRANDPA
Old buildings have their quirks.
Just history creaking and
groaning, Mr. Phips.

PHIPS
No ghosts?

GRANDPA
None at all!

THE MEZZANINE

Dame Faye exhales dramatically, fanning herself with an invisible fan.

DAME FAYE

Well, thank goodness for that.

ON STAGE

Phips regains composure.

PHIPS

You must be Clive Butler.

GRANDPA

Aye, that's me.

PHIPS

I am Wortzul Phips, Mister Zimmer's assistant.

BEN

Who's Mister Zimmer?

PHIPS

Marvin Zimmer. He owns this theater.

Ben nods, processing.

PHIPS (CONT'D)

Mr. Butler, your job is to keep those illegal ghost-hunting tours out of the building.

At the piano, Frothmire turns to Viola.

FROTHMIRE

Ah, a fellow with proper priorities at last.

BEN

Is Mr. Zimmer going to restore it?

PHIPS

No, he's tearing it down.

Frothmire's jaw literally drops, CLATTERING to the floor.

THE MEZZANINE

Dame Faye's ear detaches from her head, floating toward the stage like a satellite dish, straining to hear every word.

A BOX SEAT

Harold's ghostly eyes pop wide open.

ON STAGE

Phips tucks his clipboard under his arm.

PHIPS (CONT'D)
You'll be here until November
twentieth. That's when the
wrecking ball arrives.

GRANDPA
Tearing it down? Why?

PHIPS
Because Mr. Zimmer needs a parking
garage for his new multiplex at
the end of the block.

In INVISIBLE MODE, the Ghosts hover around the stage,
their faces a mix of shock and despair.

GRANDPA
You could restore this theater for
less than the cost of a parking
garage.

PHIPS
Not my call.

Phips strides toward the stairs.

PHIPS (CONT'D)
I'll check in tomorrow.

Lumpy zips to the edge of the stage and gives the stairs
a slight nudge.

PHIPS (CONT'D)
Oof!

Phips tumbles down the steps and scrambles up, brushing
himself off indignantly.

PHIPS (CONT'D)
Fix these steps!

He storms up the aisle, muttering.

BEN

They can't just tear it down,
Grandpa!

Grandpa places a calming hand on Ben's shoulder.

GRANDPA

Come along, lad. Let's get you
settled.

He leads Ben towards the wings.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

You'll get the star's dressing
room! The biggest in the theater!

The two disappear backstage as the theater settles into
silence, the Ghosts left in stunned disbelief.

Lumpy bursts into tears, wailing like a child.

LUMPY

BOOOOWAAAAAAA! We're going to be
tossed into the street! Winter's
coming! We'll freeze to death!

He pauses, his face scrunches in thought.

LUMPY (CONT'D)

Oh, wait. I forgot.

The Ghosts shimmer into their glowing green forms, their
edges softly flickering in the dim light.

HAROLD

They can't tear this theater down!
This is where I produced my first
hit play!

DAME FAYE

(with gravitas)
I died here!

GWEN

So did I.

DAME FAYE

And my children are here...
somewhere. I know they are. Oh, I
must find them before we're
evicted!

The other Ghosts exchange worried looks. Viola gently
pats Dame Faye on the shoulder.

VIOLA

Don't worry, dear. We'll help you find them.

Lumpy whispers into Viola's ear.

LUMPY

Poor thing. Her "children" are probably all grown up and haunting their own theaters by now.

Viola gives Lumpy a warning glare.

FROTHMIRE

This is our haunt and home!

DAME FAYE

We can't allow this to happen.

VIOLA

Maybe if we scare everyone they'll leave us alone.

HAROLD

It'll take more than that.

FROTHMIRE

You're the producer. Produce!

Harold points to the wings.

HAROLD

We need a mortal... or mortals, to help us.

LUMPY

Great idea! Let's go ask them!

FROTHMIRE

Not so fast, you two-bit hack! This calls for finesse. Timing.

GWEN

We need to break it gently.

VIOLA

Who should do it?

FROTHMIRE

Might I recommend... myself?

LUMPY

Why you?

Frothmire raises a hand to silence him, speaking with mock sincerity.

FROTHMIRE

I was a master of nuance. Soft tones, warmth, and a delicate touch with the complexities of human emotion.

HAROLD

Fine. Frothmire, it's on you.

BEN (O.S.)

I'll get it, Grandpa!

LUMPY

Mortal coming!

With a POOF, the Ghosts vanish into swirls of mist.

Ben steps onto the stage, scanning the shadows nervously. He picks up the travel bag. As he straightens, Frothmire materializes inches from his face.

FROTHMIRE

Kid, we're in trouble! Wanna help us!?

Ben GASPS.

BEN

AHHH!

THUD -- he faints.

FROTHMIRE

Oops.

The Ghosts reappear, hovering around Ben. Harold glares at Frothmire.

HAROLD

A master of nuance, you said.

DAME FAYE

Oh, poor little thing! Is he dead?

Lumpy turns his head in all directions.

LUMPY

I don't see him anywhere. He must still be alive.

INT. GRANDPA'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Sunlight filters through a grimy window, casting warm, dappled patterns on the worn walls. Grandpa naps on a creaky cot, his hat tilted over his face.

Gwen hovers beside him, her shimmering form faint against the daylight. Her ethereal gaze studies his face with disbelief and longing.

GWEN

Clive? Clive Butler... can it
really be you?

Her translucent hand trembles as she reaches for his cheek -- but it passes through, leaving a faint ripple of light. Gwen pulls back, her voice soft with wonder.

GWEN (CONT'D)

After all these years. My Clive...

Grandpa stirs, swatting at his cheek as if brushing away a fly. Gwen pulls back, startled. Her gaze shifts to a small table near the cot.

A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH catches her eye: ten-year-old Ben stands between Grandpa and a smiling man and woman.

Gwen leans closer, her shimmering form bending over the photo. Her hand hovers above it, trembling, before passing through. She retreats, a single tear glimmering on her cheek before dissolving.

Her eyes flick back to Grandpa, a deep longing etched in her spectral face.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - DAY

Ben MOANS.

HAROLD

He's coming to!

DAME FAYE

Everyone glide back! Give him
room.

The Ghosts hover away as Ben slowly opens his eyes. Viola kneels beside him, her expression warm and inviting.

VIOLA

Take it easy, honey. Don't be
afraid.

BEN

Are you... are you really...

VIOLA

The queen of Parisian cabarets?
Why, yes, darling. So kind of you
to notice..

BEN

No... are you... a ghost?

VIOLA

Well, yes, that too. But we're the
friendly sort, promise.

BEN

We?

Ben notices the Ghosts hovering nearby, grinning like
performers caught mid-bow...

BEN (CONT'D)

Is this a dream?

LUMPY

I wish it were. Then I'd be
scarfing down fish and chips
instead of floating around like
Tuesday's fog.

BEN

You're... kind of... see through.

Lumpy pouts.

LUMPY

See-through? Kid, this is premium
ectoplasmic quality. Stumpy Lumpy,
vaudeville comic extraordinaire.
Surely you've heard of me?

BEN

Can't say I have.

LUMPY

Played every top stage in London
from nineteen ten till 'twenty
eight?

BEN

I'm only fourteen.

VIOLA

Well, Sugar, you've got a lot to learn about history. Viola Abbott, darling. Jazz legend, queen of the Parisian cabarets.

Gliding forward with elegance --

DAME FAYE

And I am Dame Faye Finch, stage actress and leading lady of the early 20th century.

FROTHMIRE

Sir Ivan Frothmire, at your service. Hailed as the greatest Hamlet of my age.

HAROLD

Greatest? More like loudest. Harold Hyde, producer and the only sane one here.

BEN

So... all of you worked here?

FROTHMIRE

"Worked" doesn't cover it. We were the Epoch Theater.

VIOLA

And now we're stuck here, watching it crumble to dust.

Ben's gaze shifts to Frothmire.

BEN

You. What did you mean by "help us?"

FROTHMIRE

Exactly what I said. We need your help to save the theater.

VIOLA

I ain't about to haunt no parking garage, Sugar.

DAME FAYE

And without the theater, I'll never find my dear children.

Ben hesitates, glancing nervously at each ghost.

BEN

No. No way. This has to be a dream. It has to be a dream.

A shimmering puff of mist swirls, and Gwen appears in a graceful flourish.

GWEN

Clive is asleep, and I-- oh. He's awake!

Ben's eyes roll back into his head.

He falls forward -- THUD.

The Ghosts stare at the unconscious boy.

A long beat.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Did I miss something?

The other Ghosts slowly turn to her, a collective silence brimming with judgment.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

The theater looms quietly on its narrow street, shrouded in shadow. A flickering streetlamp casts uneven light across the weathered façade.

INT. ON STAGE - NIGHT

Ben stirs, one eye cracking open. He cautiously scans the dimly lit theater before opening the other eye. A pillow props his head. He tilts his head back to see Grandpa leaning over him, upside-down.

On the floor are two signs: WATCHMAN ON SITE.

GRANDPA

I couldn't lift you, so I thought the pillow would at least help.

Ben sits up, rubbing his temples.

He glances around nervously.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

You all right? Looking for something?

BEN

Have you seen anything... weird?

GRANDPA

No... no, I haven't.

INVISIBLE MODE Gwen rises slowly from the piano, her translucent form shimmering faintly. Her expression filled with longing.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

Though... I did have a dream.

Gwen's head tilts, a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

BEN

What kind of dream?

GRANDPA

It felt like... she was right here.

BEN

Grandma?

Grandpa blinks, snapping out of his thoughts, and looks at Ben, confused.

GRANDPA

No... not your Grandma.

He hesitates, his gaze drifting back into memory.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

Someone... from a long time ago.

BEN

Who?

Grandpa forces a small smile, shaking his head as if brushing off the thought.

GRANDPA

No one you'd know, lad. Just... a silly old man and his dreams.

Grandpa picks the signs up and exits into the wings.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)

I must get back to work. I need to get these signs on the front doors...

Ben stands up and looks around at the silent stage. A faint SNIFFLE breaks the quiet. He turns toward the piano just as Gwen flickers away.

BEN

Wait!

Ben takes a cautious step forward, his eyes sweeping over the shadowy corners of the stage.

BEN (CONT'D)

Don't go. Please, come back.

Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

Please.

A moment of stillness. Then, a soft mist swirls near the piano and solidifies into Gwen's full form.

BEN (CONT'D)

You... you're real?

She nods gently.

Ben lowers himself onto the piano stool in awe.

GWEN

There's no need to be afraid.

Ben hesitates, then extends his hand.

BEN

I'm Ben Butler.

Gwen smiles warmly, holding her hand out.

GWEN

I am Gwen Oberon.

Ben tries to shake her hand, but his fingers pass through thin air.

GWEN (CONT'D)

It never works, but it's polite to try.

Ben stares at his hand, amazed.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Do you... live with your Grandfather?

Ben nods, looking down.

BEN
Since my parents... they had an
accident.

Gwen's expression softens, her chin trembling.

BEN (CONT'D)
I was four. I don't remember
them... I wish I could.

He looks up at her.

BEN (CONT'D)
Where are the others?

A heavy silence. The piano lid creaks open slightly. Two
eyes peek out...

LUMPY
I'm here! Don't faint!

Ben lifts the piano lid, and Lumpy springs out with a
theatrical flourish, landing with a wide grin.

LUMPY (CONT'D)
Stumpy Lumpy, London's greatest
comedian -- until nineteen fifty-
eight.

BEN
What happened?

LUMPY
Let's just say the punchline came
with dessert.

Frothmire descends gracefully from the rafters.

FROTHMIRE
Ah, our young fainting hero. Sir
Ivan Frothmire, at your service.

Ben gives a weak wave.

Dame Faye glides onto the stage, regal and commanding.

DAME FAYE
Fainting? Really? Scene-stealer.
Have you seen my children?

Ben nods a bewildered "no."

Viola and Harold rise from the floor.

VIOLA

Sugar, do you think you can help us?

BEN

Help? I'm only fourteen.

FROTHMIRE

Age is immaterial. It's the spirit that counts!

VIOLA

Exactly! We're spirits, and you've got what we don't -- flesh, bones, and all that jazz.

Ben folds his arms, a glimmer of confidence surfacing.

BEN

Hold on. You're ghosts. Don't you have superpowers or something? Can't you just zap the bulldozers?

VIOLA

Scaring people is a temporary solution. It won't stop what's coming.

FROTHMIRE

This is about more than scaring mortals, young man. This is about strategy!

HAROLD

And for that, we need someone who can interact with the living world. Someone clever.

Ben raises an eyebrow, his confidence growing.

BEN

You mean... someone like me?

DAME FAYE

Precisely. You're young, clever, and, dare I say it, a bit cheeky.

His confidence fades.

BEN

I don't know if I can...

She SINGS:

VIOLA
WHEN I WAS ALIVE
I WAS JUST LIKE YOU,

Viola steps into the spotlight, her voice smooth and commanding. The Ghosts form a semi-circle behind her, swaying in sync.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
I UNDERESTIMATED ALL OF THE
WONDERFUL THINGS
I COULD DO.
LIKE STRUTTIN' THE STAGE,
SINGIN' MY SONG,
THE PEOPLE STOMPIN' THEIR FEET,
SINGIN' ALONG!

She struts across the stage, pointing to Ben, who watches with wide-eyed amazement.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
SO I SAID TO MYSELF,
"VIOLA, NO LIE,
THE CLOCK IS TICKIN',
YA BETTER GET KICKIN'
BEFORE YOU'RE TOO OLD TO TRY!"

SO I WORKED AND MADE A KILLING,
EV'RY SHOW I GOT TOP BILLING!
NOW MY ACT AIN'T WORTH A SHILLING,
'CAUSE I DIED!
WELL, PUTTING THAT ASIDE...

I GOT NO REGRETS,
MY ONLY WISH IS FOR YOU
TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF
AND ALL THE THINGS THAT YOU DO!

She spins dramatically, and the Ghosts snap their fingers in perfect rhythm, their harmonies blending seamlessly.

HEY, LOOK! YOU'RE ALIVE,
THAT PUTS YOU ONE STEP AHEAD,
THAT'S WHY YOU DO IT BETTER
'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

The Ghosts become her backup singers with Motown moves.

GHOSTS
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
YOU GOT TALENT TO SPARE!

GHOSTS
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
WE GOT NOTHIN' BUT AIR!

VIOLA (CONT'D)	GHOSTS
SURE, WE'D RATHER TACKLE	SURE WE WOULD,
THIS DILEMMA INSTEAD,	BUT WE KNOW!
BUT WE KNOW YOU DO IT	
BETTER 'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER	
THAN DEAD!	

GHOSTS (CONT'D)
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
BABY, PLEASE UNDERSTAND,

GHOSTS
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
BABY, YOU'RE IN DEMAND!

VIOLA (CONT'D)	GHOSTS
WHAT'S THE USE OF WAITIN'	OO,
WHILE WE HANG BY A THREAD,	WE'RE HANGING BY A THREAD,
WHEN WE KNOW YOU DO IT	WHEN WE KNOW!
BETTER 'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER	
THAN DEAD!	

The lights dim, and an old-fashioned cabaret scene materializes. Viola sashays to Lumpy and Gwen at a smoky table, sharing a playful wink before twirling back to center stage.

Frothmire plucks a ghostly bass, Harold belts jazzy notes on the trombone, and Dame Faye taps a drum with elegant precision. With a POOF, the cabaret vanishes, leaving Viola and the Ghosts back in their Motown formation.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
OH YEAH, WE GOT OURSELVES
A LITTLE PROBLEM INDEED,

She points directly at Ben, who fidgets nervously but begins to smile.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
 AND A REAL LIVE PERSON
 IS THE THING THAT WE NEED!

The Ghosts slide dramatically to either side of Ben,
 framing him as the center of attention.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
 SO GIVE US A HAND
 AND WE CAN PUT THIS TO BED!
 WE KNOW YOU DO IT BETTER
 'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

GHOSTS
 BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
 HONEY, YOU'RE THE BIG DEAL!

GHOSTS
 BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
 PEOPLE SEE YOU FOR REAL!

VIOLA (CONT'D)	GHOSTS
LIFE IS FOR THE LIVING	OO,
SO IT'S LIKE I SAID,	LIFE IS FOR THE LIVING,
WE KNOW YOU DO IT BETTER	WE KNOW!
'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER THAN	
DEAD!	

GHOSTS (CONT'D)
 YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
 SCOOBEE YAH-BA-DO-BA
 YAH-BAH DOO-WAH,

GHOSTS
 YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
 BOP BAH-BA-DOO-BAH
 YAH-BA-DO-BA

GHOSTS
 YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
 SKIB-A-DA-BOOP BAH-BA,
 SKIB-A-DA-BOOP BAH-BA-YOO-BAH!

GHOSTS
YOU'RE BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
BA-DOO BA-DOO BA-DOO BA-DOO,
BETTER THAN DEAD!
Go, Lumpy!

LUMPY
ZAH-BA DOO-WAH,
ZAH-BID-DY DOO-WAH!

VIOLA
Harold!

HAROLD
DO-WAH-BA DAH-BA DID-EL-DY DOO
DO-WAP DO-BAH!

VIOLA
Go, Ben!

BEN
ZOOM-BA-YAH DOOM
BAH-DEE-DE-LY DOOM-BOP!

VIOLA
Go, Faye!

DAME FAYE
YIPPY TI-YI YIPPY YIPPY YAY
YIPPY YAY!

VIOLA
Aw, Faye. You've done this before!

DAME FAYE
What can I say?

The Ghosts recover and launch into a powerful final refrain, their synchronized movements building to a dazzling finish.

GHOSTS
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
HONEY, YOU KNOW THE DRILL!

GHOSTS
BETTER THAN DEAD!

VIOLA
CHILD, WE'RE OVER THE HILL!

VIOLA (CONT'D)	GHOSTS
LOOKIN' AT THIS SORRY LOT	OO,
FROM A TO ZED,	LOOKIN' AWFUL SORRY,
WE KNOW YOU DO IT BETTER	WE KNOW!
'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER	
THAN DEAD!	

VIOLA (CONT'D)
YOU DO IT BETTER!
I SAY,
YOU DO IT BETTER!
'CAUSE YOU'RE BETTER,
BETTER THAN...

DEAD! VIOLA (CONT'D) DEAD! GHOSTS

The Ghosts strike a triumphant "ta-da" pose, glowing brightly against the darkened stage.

Ben stares at them, a spark of newfound confidence glimmering in his eyes.

BEN
I got it! We'll buy the theater!

The Ghosts exchange confused looks.

VIOLA
Buy the theater? Darling, that's a lovely dream, but... how?

BEN
We can raise the money somehow.
We're going to save this theater!
I mean, how much could an old
building like this really cost?

INT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben stands nervously before MARVIN ZIMMER (50s), a heavy, balding man slouched behind an imposing oak desk.

ZIMMER
Twenty million pounds.

BEN
Twenty million!? But it's falling
apart!

ZIMMER

The building's worth nothing. The
land is worth twenty million.

BEN

But it could be a theater again!

ZIMMER

Or a parking garage, which my
cinema needs.

HAROLD (O.S.)

A parking garage!?

Ben jumps, startled.

ZIMMER

Who said that?

BEN

Uh... me!

ZIMMER

Your lips didn't move. Are you one
of those dummy-puppet guys?

BEN

A what!?

HAROLD (O.S.)

The only dummy here is you, pudgy
popover!

BEN

(hissing)
Not helping!

ZIMMER

Now, wait just a minute!

BEN

It's... uh... part of my act!

ZIMMER

Your act?

HAROLD (O.S.)

The act of negotiating with a
brick wall!

BEN

(through gritted
teeth)
Stop it!

Zimmer smirks.

ZIMMER

Hey, that's not bad, kid. Didn't see your lips move.

BEN

Thank you... about the building --

ZIMMER

Twenty-five million.

BEN

But you said twenty!

ZIMMER

(with a smirk)

That was before the pudgy popover crack!

INT. STAGE DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

Grandpa steps into the dusty, cobweb-covered space. The faded CALL BOARD looms, its headers blank and forlorn.

Grandpa gazes around, a bittersweet smile softening his features.

The room TRANSFORMS. Dust dissolves into polish. The CALL BOARD fills: REHEARSAL 10:00 AM, CALL TIME 7:30 PM.

A calendar on the wall reads OCTOBER 1965.

Grandpa watches as his younger self, vibrant and energetic, appears behind the podium.

The door creaks open, rain pouring outside. DREAM GWEN OBERON steps in, radiant, holding a baby wrapped in a pink blanket.

DREAM CLIVE rushes forward, his face lighting up.

The baby laughs.

DREAM CLIVE

I think our little Molly likes the rain!

He kisses the baby, then hands her to her NANNY.

DREAM GWEN

Best put an extra blanket in the cot, Miss Barlow.

MAID

Yes, Ma'am.

The Nanny carries the baby out. DREAM GWEN turns back to DREAM CLIVE with a bright smile.

DREAM GWEN

Hello!

DREAM CLIVE

Hello. Have we met?

She LAUGHS, light and musical.

INVISIBLE MODE Gwen appears beside present-day Grandpa. Her gaze is full of longing as she softly sings, the melody echoing only in her own memory.

Gwen SINGS:

GWEN (V.O.)

SOMEONE I KNEW
IS STANDING BEFORE ME,

DREAM CLIVE

You look lovely tonight, Gwen.

She smiles and kisses him.

GWEN (V.O.)

COULD YOU BE REAL,
OR JUST AN ILLUSION OF
SOMEONE I KNEW,

DREAM GWEN

I didn't intend to spend our
first, and second, wedding
anniversary on stage.

GWEN (V.O.)

WHO USED TO ADORE ME?

DREAM CLIVE

Yes... well, you're just too
popular.

DREAM GWEN

I love you, you know.

They kiss again.

GWEN (V.O.)

TELL ME YOUR HEART IS STILL TRUE,

DREAM GWEN
Now and for always!

DREAM CLIVE
Now and for always!

DREAM GWEN hurries down the hall, glancing back with a smile.

GWEN (V.O.)
OR TELL ME I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO
WITH ONLY THE MEM'RY

DREAM CLIVE
Ah, Gwen.

GWEN (V.O.)
OF SOMEONE I KNEW.

As she vanishes, Grandpa's eyes well with tears, his expression heavy with longing.

GWEN
TIME DRAGS ALONG,
IT FEELS LIKE FOREVER,
FEELS LIKE WE'LL NEVER KNOW
WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN,

Invisible Gwen reaches out to touch his arm, her hand passing through him in a faint shimmer.

GWEN (CONT'D)
BUT YOU'RE SOMEONE I KNEW,
AND SOMEONE WHO LOVED ME!

Grandpa rubs his arm, as if it were in a cold draft.

GWEN (CONT'D)
TELL ME YOUR HEART IS STILL TRUE,
OR TELL ME I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO
WITH ONLY THE MEM'RY OF
SOMEONE I KNEW.

Music SWELLS.

EXT. 1965 LONDON - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rain pounds the building, illuminated by flashes of lightning. The marquee reads: TONIGHT - GWEN OBERON IN ROMEO AND JULIET.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - NIGHT

Dream Gwen reclines on a chaise, delivering her lines with elegance.

DREAM GWEN
(as Juliet)
I wish the sun would hurry up and
set --

A thunderclap ROARS, reverberating through the theater, mingling with the audience's uneasy murmurs.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

A jagged bolt of lightning splits the sky and strikes the theater's rooftop with a deafening CRACK.

INT. AIR VENT - NIGHT

The lightning races through an air vent, crackling and sparking as it hurtles downward.

INT. THE EPOCH THEATER STAGE - NIGHT

The thunderclap ROARS, echoing like a cannon blast inside the theater itself.

On stage, Dream Gwen sits gracefully on a chaise, delivering her lines as Juliet.

DREAM GWEN
I wish the sun would hurry up and
set and night would come
immediately.

INT. RAFTERS OVER THE STAGE - NIGHT

A sandbag dangles precariously from a thick rope tied to a pulley.

The lightning bursts from the air vent in a fiery shower of sparks, zigzagging through the rigging. It lashes out, ZAPPING the rope.

DREAM GWEN (V.O.)
When the night comes and everyone
goes to sleep...

The rope SNAPS and hurtles towards the stage.

INT. ON STAGE - NIGHT

Dream Gwen stretches out her arms and smiles as she looks to the heavens.

DREAM GWEN
Romeo will leap into my arms --

She sees the sandbag as it races towards her.

DREAM GWEN (CONT'D)
Uh-oh!

THE AUDIENCE

Gasps ripple through the crowd, followed by a collective, horrified MOAN as the sandbag crashes onto the stage with a resounding THUD.

On STAGE

Dream Clive watches from the wings, horrified, tears streaming down his face. Gwen's voice echoes hauntingly as she SINGS:

GWEN (V.O.)
NO USE IN TRYING,
THERE'S NOTHING TO DO.

END FLASHBACK

INT. STAGE DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

The vibrant past TRANSFORMS back to the dusty, cobweb-covered present.

Grandpa stands frozen, his eyes glistening with tears. Slowly, he lowers his head, shoulders heavy with memory. He shuffles toward the hallway.

Gwen fades, her figure dissolving like mist.

GWEN (V.O.)
I'M JUST AN ILLUSION
OF SOMEONE YOU KNEW.

Grandpa pauses, glancing back toward the empty space, as though sensing her presence.

Nothing. Only silence.

His footsteps echoing softly as he disappears into the hallway. Gwen's figure melts away into the shadows.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - DAY

Lumpy and Viola pace anxiously across the stage..

A DOOR CREAKS SHUT. The Ghosts peer out into the house, spotting Ben making his way down the aisle.

Harold glides out of Ben's shirt pocket, floating beside him as they approach the stage. Gwen steps out from the wings, her expression guarded.

LUMPY
How'd it go, then?

BEN
Twenty five million pounds to buy
the theater.

LUMPY
I'd die of shock, but that would
be redundant.

BEN
I don't know what else we can do.

DAME FAYE
Perhaps your grandfather might
have a bright idea?

Ben hesitates, considering.

BEN
Maybe. But we'll need to soften
the blow.

LUMPY
Right, leave it to me!

Lumpy WHOOSHES to the wings. A loud CLICK plunges the theater into total darkness.

Another WHOOSH, CLICK! The dim glow of the Ghost Light illuminates the stage.

Lumpy turns to Gwen with a sly grin.

LUMPY (CONT'D)
Time for a reunion, wouldn't you
say?

Gwen's face tightens with unease.

BEN
What reunion?

LUMPY
Oh, nothing, lad!

POOF! A box of tissues appears in Ben's hand.

BEN
What's this for?

LUMPY
Your Grandpa. He might need them.

INT. GRANDPA'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Grandpa sits on the edge of his cot, staring at the floor, stunned.

GRANDPA
Twenty-five million?

BEN
I just hate giving up without trying, Grandpa.

Grandpa lifts his gaze, studying Ben's determined face.

GRANDPA
Trying's all well and good, lad, but twenty-five million? That's barmy.

BEN
But they're counting on me.

Ben bites his lower lip, holding back frustration.

GRANDPA
Who's "they," then?

Ben offers him the box of tissues.

BEN
You might need this.

ON STAGE

Grandpa watches from the wings, his eyes fixed on Ben, standing alone under the dim glow of the ghost light.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's all right, Grandpa.

Ben steps backward, slowly fading into the shadows.

On the opposite side of the stage, Gwen shimmers into view, softly lit. A faint smile graces her lips as she gazes at Grandpa. For a fleeting moment, she sees him as the young man he once was.

Grandpa steps onto the stage, drawn to her.

GWEN

Don't faint.

GRANDPA

Gwen? Am I dreaming?

GWEN

No, Clive. You're not dreaming.

GRANDPA

I must be.

GWEN

I'm here.

He reaches out to embrace her, but his arms pass through her form.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(voice breaking)

You can't.

His eyes glisten with tears.

GRANDPA

What happened? Why did things turn out like this?

GWEN

We can't question what was. This is how it was meant to be.

GRANDPA

I've missed you so.

GWEN

It's been... so long.

They share a tender look.

BEN (O.S.)

Grandpa?

Grandpa turns, startled.

GRANDPA

Ben... this is your Grandmother.

Ben's eyes widen as he takes his Grandfather's arm,
staring at Gwen.

BEN

But... how?

GRANDPA

Gwen... have you been here since
that awful night? Why didn't you
leave? Why didn't you....

GWEN

Move on? I couldn't.
(a gentle smile)
I didn't realize I was gone...
until it was too late.

Eight sets of eyeballs appear in the dark behind her,
shifting and blinking. A surprised Grandpa GASPS!

LUMPY

It's not easy getting an actor out
of a theater.

HAROLD

Alive or otherwise.

GRANDPA

What's that!?

GWEN

My friends.

HAROLD

Kill the mood lighting!

DAME FAYE

Yes. The moment is over!

LUMPY

Roger that!

A CLICK, and the theater lights brighten, revealing the
Ghosts gathered on stage.

HAROLD

Harold Hyde, producer. Pleasure.

FROTHMIRE

Sir Ivan Frothmire, actor
extraordinaire.

LUMPY

Stumpy Lumpy -- comedian.

VIOLA

Viola Abbott. Jazz queen, darling.

DAME FAYE

Dame Faye Finch. Star.

Grandpa nods at each of them, and with hopeful eyes, turns to Gwen.

GRANDPA

Is Molly here?

BEN

Mum!?

Gwen touches his cheek, her gaze filled with longing.

GWEN

(sadly)
No, Clive.

DAME FAYE

Would you help us?

GRANDPA

Help?

VIOLA

To raise the twenty-five million?

Grandpa studies the anxious faces of the Ghosts and Ben's determined expression.

BEN

Please, Grandpa.

Grandpa's face brightens with an idea.

GWEN

You always had wonderful ideas,
Clive.

GRANDPA

A benefit for the theater!

BEN

A benefit?

GRANDPA

A one-night-only gala featuring
the biggest stars!

DAME FAYE

We can't raise that much from one show!

GRANDPA

We sell the broadcast rights!

DAME FAYE

The what?

GRANDPA

Television! A Sunday night special!

FROTHMIRE

What the devil is television?

GRANDPA

A place where one show can make millions.

FROTHMIRE

I was born in the wrong century.

DAME FAYE

Who are the big names these days?

BEN

Mimi Van Zolt, Jeffrey Davis Lewis, Lincoln Jackson Holmes, -- Hector Romero -- but he's huge. We'll never get him.

GRANDPA

That's where I come in.

Gwen gazes at him, her face radiating with pride.

MONTAGE: DOOR AFTER DOOR

INT. AGENT 1 DOOR - DAY

The frosted glass reads TIMMY TALENT. THEATRICAL AGENT.

TIMMY (V.O.)

You want Hector Romero for a benefit?

INT. TIMMY TALENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Timmy, a ferret-looking man, waves dismissively from behind his cluttered desk.

TIMMY
His benefit rate's twenty
thousand-minimum.

INT. AGENT DOOR 2 - DAY

The frosted door that reads: HARPER TALENT AGENCY.

HARPER (V.O.)
Not interested.

INT. AGENT DOOR 3 - DAY

A brass plaque reads: SIMMS THEATRICAL AGENCY.

SIMMS (V.O.)
Not for free, mate.

INT. AGENT DOOR 4 - DAY

The nameplate reads: LEO G. LIONS. MANAGER.

LIONS (V.O.)
You're wasting my time!

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Grandpa speaks to a stony-faced SECRETARY beside a door
marked: GARNER, GARNER, & CLYDE.

GARNER (V.O.)
No!

SECOND GARNER (V.O.)
Absolutely not!

CLYDE (V.O.)
Scram!

INT. DINGY HALLWAY - DAY

A faded sign on frosted glass reads: A. HOBBS - AGENT.

HOBBS (V.O.)
He doesn't do benefits!

INT. FANCY OFFICE - DAY

Grandpa sits before an oversized desk. Only the top of a bald head is visible.

AGENT 11
You want Mimi Van Zolt? For free?
The greatest singer in London?

GRANDPA
It's a benefit.

AGENT 11
Good luck with that.

END MONTAGE.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - DAY

The Ghosts hover around Grandpa and Ben, their expressions filled with anticipation.

GRANDPA
Sorry, everyone.

HAROLD
I haven't been this gutted since
they nailed my coffin shut.

GRANDPA
I really did try.

DAME FAYE
And you've our endless love for
it, darling. Truly.

Grandpa musters a faint smile and exits.

BEN
We'll figure something out. But
right now, I need to practice for
my audition.

The Ghosts freeze, then collectively light up, eyes wide and smiles gleaming.

GHOSTS
Audition!?

BEN
Yeah. My school's doing "Romeo and
Juliet."

GWEN

Oh, be cautious, dear! That play
can be... fatal.

BEN

It doesn't matter. I won't even
get a part.

Frothmire rushes to Ben and produces a script.

FROTHMIRE

Nonsense! I, Sir Ivan Frothmire,
King of Shakespearean Actors,
shall mold you into a star!

BEN

Thanks, but I'd rather do this on
my own.

FROTHMIRE

Just one line. One little line.
Let me hear it, and I'll offer the
gentlest advice.

Ben sighs, takes the script, and begins a monotone drone.

BEN

Alas, that love, whose view is
muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways
to his will!

Frothmire's confident expression falters. His face sinks.
The other Ghosts exchange nervous glances.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where shall we dine? O me! What
fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard
it all.

A long, heavy beat. The Ghosts' smiles freeze in place.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well?

Frothmire snaps out of his stupor with fake enthusiasm.

FROTHMIRE

Brilliant! No notes! You're a...
natural talent!

BEN

Really!?

FROTHMIRE

Inspiring, even! Just... keep
doing exactly what you're doing.

The Ghosts join in with forced cheers and clapping.

VIOLA

You're gonna blow 'em away, sugar!

Ben beams.

BEN

Thanks! I feel loads better now.

Ben exits. When they head the door CLOSE --

DAME FAYE

He's doomed.

LUMPY

We're going to need a miracle.

HAROLD

Or earplugs. Somebody find that
kid an acting coach. Fast.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Students are scattered across the theater seats. On
stage, an AUDITIONING BOY nervously delivers his lines.

AUDITIONING BOY

This love feel I, that feel no
love in this.
Dost thou not laugh?

MISS BARNES (30s), the mousy director, claps
enthusiastically from the front row.

MISS BARNES

Wonderful, Henry. Just wonderful!

Henry scuffs offstage.

MISS BARNES (CONT'D)

Next... Ben Butler.

Ben rises nervously from his seat, clutching his script
like a lifeline. As he makes his way toward the stage,
HENRIETTA turns and smiles warmly.

HENRIETTA

Good luck, Ben. You'll do great.

Ben hesitates, visibly flustered.

BEN

Gosh! Thank you, Henrietta!

He stumbles onto the stage, adjusting his glasses. As he opens the script, Frothmire's face stares up at him from the page!

BEN (CONT'D)

AHHH!

The students burst into laughter.

BOY STUDENT

Relax, Butler! The script isn't gonna eat ya!

Frothmire WHISPERS from the page.

FROTHMIRE

Deep breaths, feel the character!

Ben squeezes his eyes shut and inhales deeply. He delivers the lines flatly, awkwardly.

BEN

Alas, that love, whose view is
muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways
to his will!

The students BURST into laughter.

HENRIETTA

Be quiet! Let him finish!

Ben's gaze softens, locking onto Henrietta's encouraging face. A dreamy smile spreads across his lips.

ON THE SCRIPT PAGE

Frothmire morphs into an arrowhead, aimed and ready.

FROTHMIRE

Ready... aim... ACTION!

WHOOSH! The arrow SHOOTS off the page and strikes Ben in the chest.

ON THE HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

Ben jolts upright! His posture shifts, confident and commanding.

His voice transforms, rich and resonant, as he strides to the edge of the stage, delivering his lines directly to Henrietta.

BEN

Alas, that love, whose view is
muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways
to his will!

The students fall silent, stunned by the transformation.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where shall we dine? O me! What
fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard
it all.

The Frothmire arrow zips back into the script. Ben slumps slightly, returning to his usual self.

The auditorium ERUPTS into applause.

Ben glances around, his gaze settles on Henrietta, clapping with unrestrained enthusiasm, her eyes shining with admiration.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - DAY

Grandpa and the Ghosts are deep in animated discussion when Ben bursts through the doors, racing down the aisle.

BEN

I got the part, Grandpa!

GRANDPA

Benjamin! That's splendid news!

Ben bounds onto the stage, beaming. Frothmire discreetly materializes behind the others.

HAROLD

Bravo, lad!

DAME FAYE

Which role? Townsperson?
Stagehand?

BEN

Romeo! I got Romeo!

DAME FAYE

(shocked)

Huh? I mean, of course! Romeo!
Naturally! Born for it!

GWEN

Oh, Ben, that's wonderful!

VIOLA

And we've got some exciting news,
too!

BEN

You do?

LUMPY

We booked the stars for the
benefit!

HAROLD

Prepare yourself!

BEN

Who did you get!?

GHOSTS

Us!

FROTHMIRE

Wait -- what!?

BEN

You?

LUMPY

We're coming out of retirement!

BEN

But you can't fully materialize.
You don't have enough energy.

HAROLD

A-ha! That's where Halloween comes
in!

LUMPY

Load's of positive spirit energy
on Halloween night.

HAROLD

We'll perform the show on
Halloween!

BEN
That's brilliant!

VIOLA
What do we charge for tickets?

GRANDPA
Two hundred and fifty pounds per
seat.

LUMPY
Oh. We better be good then.

HAROLD
And for the first time in ninety
years, the marquee will proudly
read: "Harold Hyde Presents!"

BEN
Before anything else --
The Ghosts lean in, expectant..

GHOSTS
Yes!?

BEN
We need to clean this place up.
Their faces fall flat.

DAME FAYE
Housework?

A collective groan fills the theater as the excitement
evaporates into reluctant resignation.

MONTAGE: CLEANING THE THEATER

- Lumpy swings in the chandelier, polishing crystals with
exaggerated flair.

- Viola dusts a faded "Now Appearing" poster of herself
in a dressing room, her expression wavering between pride
and nostalgia.

- Harold inspects the theater's ancient lightboard. A
puff of smoke and sparks erupts, and Lumpy's head pokes
out of the lever slot, grinning sheepishly.

- Grandpa screws in new bulbs on the orchestra wall
sconces, stepping back with a satisfied nod.

- A washcloth glides over a lobby mirror, revealing Dame Faye beside Ben. She smiles warmly as he scrubs.
- Grandpa pulls on stage ropes, smoothly closing the heavy velvet curtain.
- Dame Faye hovers over the mezzanine, carefully dusting the rail. She freezes, her face tense, as she glances into the seats below.
- Viola scrubs carved cherubs on the proscenium arch.
- Lumpy eyes the dusty orchestra seats, takes a deep inhale, and vacuums up the dust. His body inflates comically, floating upward like a balloon.
- Lumpy zooms on stage and PUNCHES the floor. A trap door creaks open.
- Beneath the stage, Lumpy peers into the trap door to reveal a cluttered mess of junk and broken props. He exhales, releasing a massive dust cloud that settles over everything.
- Back on stage, Lumpy leaps out of the trap door only to meet Frothmire's withering glare.
- Lumpy sheepishly tips his hat, then zips away in a blur.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE LOBBY DOOR - DAY

Mister Phips unlocks the doors and steps inside.

His eyes widen as floating water bottles spritz the glass walls. Rags glide through the air, wiping them clean with ghostly precision.

Phips SCREAMS, stumbles backward, and fumbles with the door before bolting outside, SLAMMING it shut behind him.

INT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY

A trembling Mister Phips cowers before Zimmer, his face pale, teeth chattering.

ZIMMER

Ghosts?

Phips nods frantically.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

Real ghosts?

Another panicked nod from Phips.

PHIPS

Y-y-yes, sir! Cleaning supplies...
floating in midair!

Zimmer's skepticism falters, replaced by intrigue as he studies Phips' genuine terror.

ZIMMER

Ghosts... This could be bad.

PHIPS

You should tear the place down
right away!

Zimmer leans back in his chair, a calculating glint in his eye.

ZIMMER

And let them haunt my parking
garage? No, Phips. First, we get
rid of the ghosts.

Zimmer picks up his phone and scrolls through his contacts or typing on a search bar.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

I had a problem like this years
ago with another property... here
it is... Zoey Knight, Ghost
Huntress... Upton Snodsbury near
North Piddle.

Zimmer taps to call, his lips curling into an evil grin as he waits for the line to connect.

EXT. A SMALL, UNKEPT HOUSE - DAY

A sagging roof, peeling paint, and an overgrown lawn give the house an air of neglect. A crooked mailbox, barely hanging on, reads: "Z. Knight - G.H."

INT. ZOEY'S DINING ROOM - DAY

The room is a chaotic hub of technology. Monitors blink and buzz, wires snake across the floor, and a faint hum of machinery fills the air.

ZOEY KNIGHT (30s), dressed in an oversized t-shirt and black leggings, leans into a glowing computer screen.

Her dark-rimmed glasses magnify weary, bloodshot eyes. She chomps on a candy bar, crumbs tumbling onto her cluttered keyboard.

INSERT - COMPUTER MONITOR

A night vision image of a man sleeping in his bed.

BACK TO SCENE

Zoey, slouched in her chair, yawns.

ZOEY

Six hours of sleep and not a single ghost.

(sips ginger ale)

Told this bloke a hundred times, his place ain't haunted.

Her phone BUZZES. Without looking, she picks it up

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Zoey Knight, Ghost Huntress... Oh, Hello, Mister Zimmer!

She perks up, swiveling her chair away from the monitor.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

The Epoch Theater? Of course, I know it!

On the monitor, the man levitates suddenly, bobbing mid-air like a helium balloon.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Uh-huh...

The man spins, slamming into the ceiling and ricocheting off the walls.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Uh-huh... right...

The man is flipped upside down, shaken like a salt shaker, then hurled back into bed.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

(serious tone)

Leave it to me, Mr. Zimmer. If there are ghosts, they won't stand a chance.

She ends the call and spins back to the monitor, which now shows the man peacefully unconscious.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

No ghosts here. What's he on about?

She shrugs, clicks off the camera, and the screen BLIPS to black.

INT. EPOCH THEATER STAGE - DAY

The theater gleams under the stage lights. Grandpa, Ben, and the Ghosts stand in awe.

LUMPY

Blimey, it's just like I remembered it.

GWEN

Who knew it could still look this beautiful?

VIOLA

All it needed was a little love.

DAME FAYE

I thought once the dust was gone, I'd find my children.

Lumpy twirls his finger around his temple, eyes spinning comically. The others give him exasperated looks.

BEN

Grandpa, what about the reporters?

GRANDPA

I'll ring them now that the theater's looking proper.

BEN

And I'll post it on social media!!

HAROLD

Social what now?

BEN

On my laptop!

DAME FAYE

You put something social on your lap? And here I thought you were a gentleman.

BEN
No, it's a computer.

LUMPY
Right, I'm out of my depth here.

BEN
I can post about the benefit, and millions of people will see it in minutes!

FROTHMIRE
Millions? Can I have a page? The world deserves my Shakespearian magnificence!

DAME FAYE
You're not a ham -- you're the whole smokehouse!

GRANDPA
Are you sure you want to show yourselves to the world?

HAROLD
If it fills the seats, absolutely.

Ben checks his watch.

BEN
I've got to leg it -- school!

He bolts for the aisle.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll be back late! Rehearsal after class!

With a theatrical sigh, Frothmire backs into the shadows, his form dissolving into a discreet puff of smoke.

HAROLD
Now, where is Frothmire off to?

DAME FAYE
Probably practicing eyebrow raises again. The man's obsessed.

VIOLA
(slightly serious)
I've caught him at it.

Grandpa's phone RINGS. He pulls it out, frowning.

GRANDPA
Hello? Oh, it's you, Mister
Zimmer.
 (he covers the
 receiver)
It's the tosser who's tearing the
building down.

Back to the call:

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Zoey Knight? Ghost Huntress?
Why?... What!? We don't have any
ghosts here!

The Ghosts freeze, exchanging alarmed glances.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
I haven't seen a thing, promise!

Lumpy leans toward Harold, whispering.

LUMPY
Smooth as a pint of Guinness.

HAROLD
Should have been an agent.

GRANDPA
All right... goodbye.

He ends the call.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Mister Phips saw you cleaning and
told him the place is haunted.

HAROLD
And?

GRANDPA
He's sending a Ghost Huntress to
get rid of you.

Dame Faye swoons, catching herself dramatically.

GWEN
Then we'll make ourselves scarce.
She won't find us.

HAROLD
Move out?

LUMPY

After we cleaned the place and everything!?

VIOLA

What choice do we have?

A tense pause.

POOF! Harold wears a World War One military uniform.

HAROLD

Right, everyone. Here's the plan.
Go invisible and keep quiet until she's gone.

LUMPY

(salutes
dramatically)
Aye, aye, Captain! But if she
brings a psychic, I'm scarpering!

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

The skeletal framework of the set stands tall.

Henrietta perches on the balcony as Ben stands below,
clutching his script.

MISS BARNES

Ben, we shall start with your
monologue. Act two, scene two.

Ben clears his throat, visibly nervous.

BEN

But, soft! What light through
yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the
sun.

He takes a step toward Henrietta, trips, and his script
flies out of his hands.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

HENRIETTA

Don't be so nervous. You got this.

BEN

Sorry.

Frothmire appears in INVISIBLE MODE, slipping into Ben's body. Ben's posture straightens, his voice rich and confident, his acting -- flawless.

BEN (CONT'D)
 But, soft! What light through
 yonder window breaks?
 It is the east, and Juliet is the
 sun.

Henrietta leans forward, spellbound.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Arise, fair sun, and kill the
 envious moon,
 Who is already sick and pale with
 grief,

Ben climbs the latticework with surprising agility.

BEN (CONT'D)
 It is my lady, O, it is my love!
 O, that she knew she were!

Henrietta can't stand it any longer. She kisses him!

Ben's eyes widen like saucers, and he topples backward --
 THUD -- onto the floor.

Ben's lips move, but Frothmire's voice emerges:

FROTHMIRE (V.O.)
 Blimey! Wasn't expecting that!

HENRIETTA
 What?

Ben's normal voice returns, but Frothmire's commanding presence remains.

BEN
 (voice cracks)
 What?

MISS BARNES
 Are you hurt?

BEN
 Who? Me!? Ha! Not at all.

MISS BARNES
 All right then. When you're ready.

Ben straightens up, his posture regal.

HENRIETTA

Ben... you're incredible.

BEN

Well, naturally! My vast
experience and unmatched talent...
ah, yes... thank you, my dear!

Henrietta, charmed, continues with renewed intensity.

HENRIETTA

My ears have not yet drunk a
hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I
know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

BEN

Neither, fair saint, if either
thee dislike.

MISS BARNES

Very good, students. Very good.
That is all for today. Ben, I am
amazed you are off book already.

Frothmire jumps out of Ben in INVISIBLE MODE.

HENRIETTA

Miss Barnes? Could we do the scene
just one more time?

MISS BARNES

Of course!

Ben starts again, his delivery awkward and stilted as he
stumbles through his lines.

BEN

By a name... uh... line?

MISS BARNES

I know not how to tell thee.

BEN

I know not how to tell thee...
what?

Henrietta facepalms as Frothmire darts back into Ben.
Instantly, he transforms.

BEN (CONT'D)

Excuse me! Only jesting. Ha! Ha!
By a name

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I know not how to tell thee who I
am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to
myself --

Henrietta throws her hands up.

HENRIETTA

What is wrong with you!?

BEN

What do you mean?

HENRIETTA

One minute you're amazing, and the
next you're just... Ben!

Frothmire, in INVISIBLE MODE, jumps out of Ben and
nervously chews his fingernails.

Ben relaxes into his normal self.

BEN

It's called "acting!"

HENRIETTA

No, it's called "weird!"

She storms off the stage. Miss Barnes pats Ben on the
shoulder sympathetically.

MISS BARNES

Go home, Ben. Study your lines.

Ben watches as Miss Barnes exits.

He SINGS:

BEN

WEIRD!
SHE CALLED ME WEIRD!
BUT I'M NOT WEIRD,
I'M JUST CONSISTENT
WITH REMEMB'RING AND FORGETTING
ALL MY LINES AND ALL MY BLOCKING,
MY CUES, THE WAY I'M TALKING!
IT'S LIKE WALKING
ON A VERY NARROW LEDGE!
PLAYING ROMEO
WILL THROW ME
OVER THE EDGE!
OKAY, I'M WEIRD.

Ben paces the stage, shoulders hunched, his hesitant steps echoing softly.

In the shadows, Frothmire, in INVISIBLE MODE, watches from the wings, his gaze focused intently on Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)
 I KNOW I GOT THIS ROLE
 DOWN TO THE LETTER!
 BUT I SUPPOSE SOME OTHER KID
 COULD DO IT BETTER.

Frothmire strokes his chin, clearly scheming.

BEN (CONT'D)
 I'M JUST A SHADOW IN THE SPOTLIGHT
 OF SOMEBODY ELSE,
 SOMEBODY I WISH I COULD BE,
 BUT I'M ME!
 JUST A SHADOW OF SOMETHING
 MUCH MORE!
 DEEP DOWN INSIDE,
 WHERE DOES IT HIDE?
 WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?
 I COULD BE MORE THAN A SHADOW.

IF I COULD TURN MYSELF INSIDE OUT
 THAT WOULD BE GROSS,
 BUT YOU'D SEE ME
 LIKE NEVER BEFORE.
 YOU'D GET WHAT ROMEO
 WAS REALLY ABOUT,
 AND SO MUCH MORE!

Ben's shadow morphs into a daring, theatrical version of himself, taking bold, Elizabethan strides. Ben hesitates, shrinking into himself.

BEN (CONT'D)
 DEEP DOWN INSIDE,
 WHERE DOES IT HIDE?
 WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?
 I'M JUST A SHADOW IN THE SPOTLIGHT
 OF SOMEBODY ELSE,
 SOMEBODY I WISH I COULD BE,
 BUT I'M ME!
 JUST A SHADOW OF SOMETHING
 MUCH MORE!
 DEEP DOWN INSIDE,
 WHERE DOES IT HIDE?
 WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?

Ben freezes mid-verse, staring into the wings. Frothmire retreats, silent and unseen, though his gaze remains fixed on Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)
I COULD BE MORE THAN A SHADOW.

Ben exits into the wings, leaving the stage empty. Frothmire reappears, brimming with determination.

FROTHMIRE
Oh, young Benjamin, you will be
more than a shadow. You will be a
star.
(smiling slyly)
With just a little... nudge.

EXT. A LONDON STREET - SUNSET

The sun dips low, casting long shadows across the cobblestones. Ben trudges home, head down, the weight of the day heavy on his frame.

Frothmire, in INVISIBLE MODE, materializes beside him, keeping pace.

FROTHMIRE
Act casual. Pretend you don't see
me.

BEN
(flatly)
I don't see you.

FROTHMIRE
Oh, right. Forgot.

BEN
I wish I had an invisible mode.

FROTHMIRE
Something troubling you, lad?

BEN
I don't get it. Sometimes I'm
great on stage, but other times...
it's like I forget how to speak.
Henrietta only likes me when I'm
good.

FROTHMIRE
Now, now, that's poppycock.

BEN
Doesn't feel like poppycock.

FROTHMIRE
Trust me, lad. She likes you --
quite a lot.

BEN
What makes you so sure?

FROTHMIRE
Experience! I wasn't always a
ghost, you know. And let's be
honest, you're not doing this play
just for her.

Ben stops walking, eyeing him skeptically.

BEN
Then why am I doing it?

FROTHMIRE
Ah, the eternal question. Only you
can answer that.

Ben stares at the pavement, his voice barely audible.

BEN
I guess... I just don't want to be
me anymore.

FROTHMIRE
Impossible, lad.

BEN
I know.

FROTHMIRE
No, you don't. Let me explain. You
can't run from yourself -- not
even on stage. Whoever you're
playing, there's always a piece of
you in the role. That's what makes
it real. That's what makes it
yours.

Ben blinks, his expression shifting as Frothmire's words
sink in.

BEN
You think so?

FROTHMIRE
I know so!

Ben's expression softens... until he stops abruptly.

BEN
Wait. Why are you here?

Frothmire hesitates, his spectral form flickering.

BEN (CONT'D)
Have you been helping me?

FROTHMIRE
(innocently)
Helping?

BEN
Tell me the truth.

Frothmire sighs, caught.

FROTHMIRE
Perhaps a teensy weensy bit.

Ben's face hardens, his disappointment clear.

BEN
So that "part of me" you said
makes the character real... wasn't
even me. It was you!

FROTHMIRE
Well, technically --

BEN
I thought you were my friend!

Ben's voice cracks, his anger barely masking the hurt.

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't help me any more! I mean it!

Ben storms off. Frothmire lingers, his usually confident posture deflated.

INT. EPOCH STAGE - NIGHT

Grandpa plays the piano as the Ghosts attempt to dance to the song IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE.

Their movements are hilariously disjointed, with arms flailing and torsos bobbing out of sync.

HAROLD
All right! All right! Enough!

The piano abruptly stops. The Ghosts stumble to a halt.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You gotta get some life into this number!

LUMPY

Life? Harold, we're dead. That's what they're paying to see!

DAME FAYE

We don't need a singing and dancing finale. I can recite a famous poem... like... "Trees."

HAROLD

It's gonna be this song, so you better learn it!

Ben steps onto the stage from the wings.

GRANDPA

Hello, Ben! How was rehearsal?

BEN

Awful.

A distant DOOR CREAK echoes ominously through the theater. The Ghosts freeze, wide-eyed, before vanishing in a collective POOF, leaving behind a swirling mist on the stage.

At the back of the auditorium, ZOEY KNIGHT strikes a dramatic pose, silhouetted in the doorway, her gear glinting faintly in the dim light.

ZOEY

Fear not, mortals. I am here --
Zoey Knight, Ghost Huntress.

The mist swirls upward, weaving through the towering rigging, brushing past sandbags and frayed ropes. It glides over the catwalk, a faint shimmer casting eerie reflections against the dark, dusty beams.

The swirl ascends higher, slipping through cracks in the rafters, until it spills into --

INT. THEATER ATTIC - NIGHT

The mist reforms into the Ghosts, who hover near a round window.

Moonlight streams through, illuminating the cluttered space. Stacks of forgotten props and packing boxes cast long, jagged shadows across the room.

DAME FAYE

Why did we have to retreat up here?

GWEN

Because they always start in the basement.

ON STAGE

Zoey enters, bristling with gadgets: a gold and silver amulet, a pouch tied with string, cameras slung around her neck, and a sleek silver spray can labeled "Ectoplasmic Eraser."

She holds an EMF meter with several small lights on the top as she strolls into the wings.

GRANDPA

What's that doohickey?

ZOEY

Electromagnetic field meter. Ghosts give off energy -- this tells me when they're near.

GRANDPA

How does it work?

ZOEY

The lights flash when a ghost is close.

Frothmire peeks cautiously through the wall behind her, his eyes widening.

In an instant, he slips into INVISIBLE MODE.

Zoey spins sharply, thrusting the meter forward. It halts inches from Frothmire's invisible nose as he flattens himself against the wall.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

If the ghost is right in front of you, the lights stay on.

The meter stays dark.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Nada. Ghost-free zone.

GRANDPA

Oh, well, that's... comforting.

Zoey pulls small stones from her pouch.

BEN

What are those?

Frothmire floats closer, inspecting them with curiosity.

ZOEY

Chakra stones, charged with protective energy. Ghosts won't come near them.

FROTHMIRE

Hmm. I like the red one.

Zoey glances at Ben, confused.

ZOEY

Red is powerful.

She pulls out the silver Ectoplasmic Eraser and holds it like a trophy.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

But not as powerful as this.

BEN

What's that?

ZOEY

"Ectoplasmic Eraser." Patent Pending by Zoey Knight.

Frothmire leans in, squinting to read the label.

FROTHMIRE

What, pray, does it do?

Zoey turns to Grandpa.

ZOEY

Huh?

GRANDPA

What does it do?

ZOEY

It emits pulses that disrupt ghostly energy. No spooky power means they get bored and leave.

FROTHMIRE
Floating pulses? Around me? Gads!

ZOEY
With this, they're powerless—and
gone for good. The basement. Lead
the way.

Grandpa hesitates, then nods and heads backstage, Zoey
and Ben following close behind.

Frothmire materializes out of INVISIBLE MODE as they
disappear.

FROTHMIRE
Chakra stones.

He wiggles his hands in fake fright.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)
Ooooooooo!

THEATER ATTIC

The Ghosts huddle in a dusty corner, their faces etched
with worry.

LUMPY
This doesn't add up.

HAROLD
What doesn't?

LUMPY
Why are we hiding?

DAME FAYE
Because the ghost hunter is
downstairs!

LUMPY
So? Let's float down there and
scare the life out of her!

DAME FAYE
Please. We're fully booked
already.

GWEN
You're forgetting something.

They turn to her.

GWEN (CONT'D)
She has the power to banish us
from the theater.

LUMPY
That's just a rumor.

GWEN
Care to test it?

Lumpy fidgets nervously..

LUMPY
Uh --

Frothmire fades in, trying to appear casual.

LUMPY (CONT'D)
No, but Frothmire will!

HAROLD
(skeptical)
Where have you been?

FROTHMIRE
I was... assisting young Master
Benjamin with his theatrical
endeavors.

HAROLD
Assisting? Or meddling?

FROTHMIRE
Yes.

HAROLD
You possessed him!

The Ghosts erupt in outrage!

VIOLA
Only bad ghosts do that!

FROTHMIRE
It was harmless! Just a touch of
theatrical flair. No head spinning
or projectile regret, I assure
you.

HAROLD
Why would you risk it!?

FROTHMIRE

Well... he's not the world's... I mean, who is -- besides me! It's just that... and so I thought that perhaps... and then he found out.

GWEN

And now he won't talk to you.

Frothmire crumbles into melodramatic sobs.

FROTHMIRE

I really bungled it!

VIOLA

Stop that.

DAME FAYE

Yes. Even ghosts have their dignity.

HAROLD

Did the Ghost Hunter detect you?

FROTHMIRE

Unlikely. Her tools seem more showbiz than substance..

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Grandpa and Ben stand near the open basement door, the faint flicker of Zoey's flashlight casting eerie shadows up the stairs.

BEN

(whispers)

What's she doing down there?

Grandpa leans closer to peer into the gloom but hesitates to step forward.

INT. THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dim, buzzing lightbulb casts an eerie orange glow over the cluttered space, filled with forgotten props, moldy costumes, and cobwebs so thick they cling to the walls like curtains.

ZOEY

(low, determined)

I know you're down here.

The sleek Ectoplasmic Eraser glints in her grip, ready for action.

She freezes, her gaze landing on a dusty SUIT OF ARMOR tucked into a shadowed corner.

A sly smile curls on her lips.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Gotcha.

BACKSTAGE

Grandpa and Ben wait by a door as they hear FOOTSTEPS clomp up the stairs.

Zoey emerges, a mess of dust and cobwebs clinging to her clothes and hair. She brushes herself off with a huff.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

I'll review the data at home, but I'm confident it's nothing. Didn't pick up a single vibe..

BEN

Vibe?

ZOEY

My Ghost Radar.

She taps her temple with a knowing smirk.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

If there's a spirit within a mile, it goes off like fireworks. Never fails.

Grandpa and Ben exchange a glance, clearly unconvinced.

ON STAGE

Grandpa and Ben follow Zoey as she strides confidently from the wings onto the stage.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

I'm done here.

GRANDPA

Aren't you going to check the mezzanine and balcony?

Zoey pauses, tilting her head back to peer at the darkened upper levels. She lets out a muffled groan.

ZOEY
Is there an elevator?

BEN
(flatly)
No.

Zoey sighs, pulling out her chakra stones with an air of exaggerated determination. She shuffles to the edge of the stage, clutching the stones dramatically in her outstretched hands, as though banishing unseen spirits.

THE MEZZANINE

The Ghosts, in INVISIBLE MODE, hold their breath, fingers crossed, their expressions tense.

ON STAGE

Zoey closes her eyes dramatically, clutching her chakra stones as she begins to chant.

ZOEY
Oooooommmmm! Oooooommmmm!

With a flourish, she tucks the stones back into her pouch and plants her hands on her hips.

ZOEY (CONT'D)
Absolutely, positively ghost-free.

BEN
You're sure?

ZOEY
Not a trace of ectoplasm.

THE MEZZANINE

The Ghosts exhale in a collective WHOOSH as their puffed-up cheeks deflate.

ON STAGE

Zoey strides toward the stairs, her gadgets jangling.

ZOEY (CONT'D)
I'll let Mister Zimmer know it's safe for the wrecking ball.

GRANDPA
The front door locks behind you.

Zoey bustles up the aisle, disappearing toward the exit.

Grandpa turns to Ben, noticing his downcast expression.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Is something wrong?

BEN
No. I'm fine.

PUFFS of smoke swirl as the Ghosts reappear around them.

HAROLD
I just had a dreadful thought!

VIOLA
What now?

HAROLD
If Zoey tells Zimmer there are no
ghosts and the press finds out...

LUMPY
No ticket sales!

The Ghosts GASP in unison with panicked expressions.

GRANDPA
I just had another terrible
thought.

LUMPY
What?

GRANDPA
Zimmer hasn't given permission to
us to use the theater.

VIOLA
Oh, dear!

DAME FAYE
I simply can't work without a
contract!

She glares at Harold.

DAME FAYE (CONT'D)
This is on you, Producer!

HAROLD
I'm a little rusty. It's been
decades!

GWEN

First things first -- we have to
stop Zoey!

LUMPY

Leave it to me.

PUFF! Lumpy vanishes in a swirl of smoke.

HAROLD

I'm coming too!

PUFF! Harold's gone.

Frothmire drifts toward Ben, his expression apologetic,
but Ben avoids his gaze and walks off, leaving Frothmire
hanging in midair.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Zoey CHOMPS on a candy bar as she approaches the front
door, her footsteps echoing in the silent lobby.

LUMPY (O.S.)

Yoo-Hoo!

Zoey spins around to look behind her -- nothing.

ZOEY

Hello?

HAROLD (O.S.)

Leaving so soon, Zoey? We just
want to play!

Harold materializes inches from her face, his features
grotesquely twisted into a horrifying grin.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Don't choke!

Zoey stumbles back, gasping. Before she can react, LUMPY
pops up beside her.

LUMPY

Bet you can't do this!

He spins his head like a top, his booming LAUGHTER
echoing eerily.

Zoey SCREAMS, stumbling to the floor.

HAROLD AND LUMPY
(bone chilling
laughter)
Boooo-waaaaaa-ha-ha-ha-ha...

Zoey scrambles to her feet, flings the door open, and bolts outside, her SCREAM fading into the night.

EXT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Rain streaks down the grimy windows of a plain brick building. A modest brass plaque by the door reads: MARVIN ZIMMER, PROPERTY DEVELOPER.

ZIMMER (V.O.)
Let me get this straight -- you want to use the theater for one night to raise money... to buy it?

BEN (V.O.)
That's right.

INT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Zimmer, cigar clamped between his teeth, leans back in his chair with a smug grin.

ZIMMER
No.

BEN
But it wouldn't hurt anything, Sir...

ZIMMER
Health and safety liability.

BEN
We've cleaned it up -- good as new! Honest!

ZIMMER
"We" who?

BEN
Uh... me and... some helpers.

ZIMMER
Oh! That reminds me.

He picks up his phone and dials, puffing on his cigar.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

I'm waiting on a report.

Ben fidgets, shifting nervously. He bites his lip, glancing at the cluttered desk piled high with papers and property brochures.

INT. ZOEY'S DINING ROOM - DAY

The dining room remains a chaotic mess of monitors, cameras, and tangled wires. A couple of monitors flicker with screen savers, while others display random stills of grainy footage, untouched and forgotten.

Zoey sits at the table, frozen in place. Her eyes are wide and unblinking, her hands gripping the edges of the chair as though anchoring herself to reality.

ZOEY

(flat, robotic)

No ghosts, they said. Easy job,
they said.

Her phone VIBRATES on the table, jerking with each buzz.

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Not a single ghoul. Definitely...
not... a... single... ghoul...

The phone VIBRATES one last time, toppling into her cereal bowl.

EXT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Zimmer SLAMS the phone down, his face a storm cloud.

ZIMMER

Have you seen Zoey Knight?

BEN

Yes, sir.

ZIMMER

What did she say?

BEN

Uh... she said there were
absolutely, positively no ghosts
in this theater. A ghost-free
zone.

Zimmer pauses, his expression shifting from suspicion to sly amusement. He leans back in his chair, steeping his fingers smugly.

ZIMMER

My boy, I would be delighted to let you have the marvelous Epoch Theater. For one night.

BEN

Really? You mean it?

ZIMMER

Of course! Why, it's the least I can do in honor of the legends who graced that stage. Especially the great Shakespearean master... Sir Ivan Frothmire.

Suddenly, Frothmire darts out of Zimmer's ear, flailing his translucent arms frantically at Ben.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

What am I say I saying!?

Frothmire ZOOMS back in to the ear.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

What I meant to say is... the theater is all yours! From the box office to the star dressing room, which will, naturally, belong to Sir Ivan Frothmire... the greatest actor of his, or any other generation.

Ben forces a smile.

BEN

Thank you.

ZIMMER

Anytime! I'll just stay... "in here" until showtime.

BEN

"In here" where?

Ben tilts his head, puzzled.

Frothmire's arm SHOOTS out of Zimmer's ear, pointing directly at Zimmer's head. His fingers form the "A-Okay" sign before zipping back inside the ear.

Ben's forced smile turns genuine as he quickly backs out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Zimmer strikes a dramatic pose.

ZIMMER

To be -- or not to be! That is the question!

MONTAGE - BUILDING THE BUZZ

- A spinning newspaper headline: "FAMOUS GHOSTS STAR IN UPCOMING BENEFIT!"

- Another headline: VIOLA ABBOTT: 'I MAY BE DEAD, BUT I'M STILL KICKING!'"

- A vibrant poster: "DECEASED THEATER LEGENDS RETURN FOR ENCORE PERFORMANCE!"

A NEWS ANCHOR delivers the scoop.

NEWS ANCHOR

Tickets are selling fast for the "Showghosts" benefit to save the historic Epoch Theater. Is it real, or a hoax? Tune in on Halloween night.

- Tickets fly into eager hands.

- Vintage posters of Dame Faye Finch and Gwen Oberon dissolve into modern images of their ghostly forms.

- A spinning headline: "MUSICIANS UNION AGREES TO PLAY GHOST SHOW PRO BONO!"

- The cover of "Show Biz Today" spins into view: "BTV TO BROADCAST 'SHOWGHOSTS' SHOW LIVE!"

- At school, Ben struggles in rehearsal. Henrietta folds her arms, clearly unimpressed.

- A newspaper headline: "ONE WEEK TILL SHOWTIME!"

- Scalpers outside the theater wave ticket bundles: "Get your ghostly gala tickets here!"

- Rehearsal chaos shows ghostly rehearsal bloopers:

- Lumpy accidentally floats through a prop wall

- Viola's jazz hands create small whirlwinds.

- Harold struggles to control the theater lights.
- A blackboard at Ben's school has "GHOST BENEFIT: Halloween Night!" as students chatter excitedly.
- The theater's marquee lights up: SHOWGHOSTS. SOLD OUT.

END MONTAGE

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

The auditorium is dark except for a work-light over the stage. The finished set for the play looms in the shadows. Ben sits on a step, head in his hands, struggling with his lines.

BEN

If I may trust the flattering
truth of sleep,
My dreams presage some joyful news
at hand.

He sighs, defeated.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)

Hey, Romeo.

Henrietta emerges from the wings with a gentle smile on her face.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

What's going on? One moment,
you're brilliant. The next...

BEN

A disaster?

She sits beside him.

HENRIETTA

Pretty much.

BEN

It's complicated.

HENRIETTA

I've got time.

BEN

I'm sorry about the other day. You
were right -- I've been all over
the place.

HENRIETTA

No, I was the jerk. I shouldn't have snapped.

BEN

You had every reason to. I'm terrible.

HENRIETTA

You're not! I've seen you. When you're on, you're amazing.

BEN

You'd never believe me.

HENRIETTA

Is it true? About the ghosts?

BEN

(quietly)
Yes.

Her eyes widen.

HENRIETTA

That's... a lot. No wonder you've been all over the place.

BEN

You have no idea.

HENRIETTA

You'll figure it out. I believe in you.

She leans in and kisses his cheek softly..

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

We're going to be the best Romeo and Juliet this school's ever seen.

Henrietta exits through the wings. Ben watches her go, stunned and overwhelmed.

Suddenly, he stands taller, his shoulders squared. Stepping to center stage, he takes a deep breath, his voice ringing with passion.

BEN

Did my heart love till now?
Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till
this night.

His delivery is perfect, each word resonating with conviction. A gentle smile spreads across his face.

BEN (CONT'D)

Maybe I can be someone after all.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

The theater sparkles with renewed life, its marquee blazing: "SHOWGHOSTS - ONE NIGHT ONLY!" A massive crowd of spectators thrums with excitement, cameras flashing as ticket-holders file inside.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dame Faye sits at the vanity, dabbing her face with makeup powder. It sifts straight through her translucent form, settling uselessly on the floor. She scowls at her reflection, exasperated.

Viola floats through the wall, radiating confidence

VIOLA

Full house, Sugar!

DAME FAYE

I can't go on! Look at me -- my face is... it's nonexistent!

VIOLA

Oh, honey, relax. Tonight's not about looking perfect -- it's about feeling fabulous. We're dead -- live it up!

DAME FAYE

I've never stepped on stage without knowing where my children were! How can I perform...

Viola tries to place a comforting hand on Dame Faye's shoulder, but it slips through with a faint shimmer. She smiles gently.

VIOLA

They'd want you to shine. Now pull yourself together, darling. Tonight, we dazzle.

Dame Faye stares at her reflection a moment longer, then straightens her posture.

DAME FAYE

You're right. I am a star. Once played a sold-out house in Little Snoring, Kent -- snowstorm and all. They were wide awake that night, I'll tell you!

INT. EPOCH THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The murmur of the unseen audience buzzes like a hive of bees. Harold peers through the parted curtain, his expression grim.

Lumpy POPS into view in a PUFF of smoke.

LUMPY

That's bad luck, you know.

HAROLD

Only for the living. Our luck ran out decades ago.

LUMPY

Have you seen Frothmire? He swore he'd make curtain.

HAROLD

Not a word. Probably floated off to King's Theatre, Hammersmith. Velvet curtains.

LUMPY

They tore that down back in sixty-three.

HAROLD

Yeah? Well, then where could he be?

INT. BOX OFFICE IN LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby hums with excitement as Henrietta works briskly at the Will Call window, handing out tickets.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Grandpa adjusts his bow tie, pacing nervously near the curtain. Ben watches, fidgeting.

GRANDPA

Where is Frothmire? He hasn't shown up for a single rehearsal, and he's supposed to open the show!

Ben steps forward hesitantly.

BEN

(quietly)

Grandpa, I need to tell you something.

Grandpa stops pacing and turns to Ben, concerned.

BEN (CONT'D)

I got mad at Frothmire. Told him to leave me alone.

GRANDPA

What?

BEN

He's been keeping Zimmer away so we could have the show.

GRANDPA

Ben... Zimmer never gave us permission for this!?

BEN

(nods)

Frothmire made him say it.

GRANDPA

Why would Zimmer listen to Frothmire!?

BEN

He kinda got into his head.

Grandpa sighs heavily, his face filled with worry.

GRANDPA

Let's just hope he gets here in time. We need him tonight more than ever.

INT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Zimmer, dressed in full Hamlet regalia, dramatically holds a skull aloft.

ZIMMER

To be, or not to be, that is the
question --

A shrill WATCH ALARM sounds. Zimmer jerks his arm up,
eyes darting to his wristwatch.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

Gadzooks! The show is starting!

Suddenly, Frothmire bursts out of him, leaving Zimmer
wobbly and disoriented.

FROTHMIRE

Ah, poor Yorick, thou art spent!
Two whole weeks without rest,
little man!

Zimmer teeters before Frothmire gives him a gentle shove.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)

To sleep --

Zimmer topples over with a resounding THUD.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)

Perchance to dream!

With a mischievous grin, Frothmire vanishes in a swirling
POOF of smoke.

INT. THE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Every seat is packed, the crowd chatters with excitement.
A single spotlight illuminates the plush red curtain.

INT. A DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The Ghosts gather, visibly anxious. Grandpa bursts in.

GRANDPA

The house is full -- the audience
is excited! It's Halloween night!
The electricity in the air will
never be greater. Try.

The Ghosts exchange determined looks, focusing intently.
Slowly, silver sparkles shimmer around their ethereal
forms. Their lower halves begin to materialize.

DAME FAYE

My dress! Oh, look!

(squints)

I never had the hem fixed.

GWEN

We're whole again!

Viola twirls, admiring her shoes.

VIOLA

I forgot I died in these shoes!

GRANDPA

Places everyone!

LUMPY

But... what about Frothmire? He
opens the show!

GRANDPA

They're broadcasting live, so we
have to start. Improvise, Lumpy!

Grandpa exits in a hurry.

HAROLD

(to Lumpy)

Oh, don't fret about Sir Showboat
Frothmire. That preening peacock
wouldn't miss a solo spot if his
afterlife depended on it.

INT. ON STAGE - NIGHT

Grandpa steps into the spotlight to polite applause.

GRANDPA

Good evening, ladies and
gentlemen! Tonight, as promised,
theater legends of the past will
perform once more.

(he scans the
audience)

Skeptics, take note—there are no
special effects at work. What
you're about to witness are real,
live... ghosts!

The polite applause grows, mingled with murmurs of
intrigue and disbelief.

The curtain rises, unveiling a stage steeped in mystery. Wardrobe trunks, cobwebs, and forgotten set pieces create a tableau of faded grandeur.

With a POOF, Frothmire materializes atop a large trunk, legs crossed, his posture exuding effortless charisma. He tips an imaginary hat to the audience, his confident grin lighting up the stage.

FROTHMIRE

Ladies and gentlemen, prepare
yourselves for an evening unlike
any other!

THE AUDIENCE

They gasps in awe, a few scattered claps growing into
thunderous applause.

IN THE WINGS

Harold, arms crossed, leans toward Lumpy, a smirk curling
on his lips.

HAROLD

Told you he'd showboat.

Lumpy HUFFS.

LUMPY

He's the Ghost of Ham Past, Ham
Present, and Ham Future.

ON STAGE

Frothmire strikes a pose and SINGS:

FROTHMIRE

LIFE UPON THE STAGE WAS GRAND
WITH EV'RY ROLE WE UNDERTOOK,
AND THOUGH OUR COURSE WAS QUITE
WELL-PLANNED,
WE GOT THE HOOK!

A giant hook appears and YANKS Frothmire into the wings.
As he disappears, Lumpy glides out through the keyhole of
the trunk, prompting GASPS from the audience.

LUMPY

AND SO WE HAD TO CHUCK IT,
THE LIFE WE HELD SO DEAR,
BUT SINCE WE KICKED THE BUCKET,

ZAP! Lumpy is sucked into a bucket.

LUMPY (CONT'D)
 (muffled)
 IT STILL REMAINS QUITE CLEAR!

A female leg, elegant and poised, KICKS the bucket. The leg belongs to Gwen, who rises gracefully through the stage floor.

GWEN
 A LOVE SONG SEEMS
 TO FLOAT IN THE AIR,
 GUESS WHERE!
 IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE!

She glides effortlessly across the stage.

GWEN (CONT'D)
 A TRAGIC PLAY FILLED WITH
 ROMANCE AND DESPAIR,
 GUESS WHERE!
 IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE!

The men march in single file with perfect lock step, joining her.

MEN
 MAKE THE MUSIC HALL
 YOUR PROTOCOL
 FOR PLEASURE!

POOF! Dame Faye materializes, striking a dramatic pose, and joins Gwen and Viola.

WOMEN
 BOOK A NICE RETREAT
 WITH A FRONT-ROW SEAT
 JUST FOR GOOD MEASURE!

ALL
 CAST OFF ALL YOUR
 TROUBLES AND CARE!
 GUESS WHERE!
 IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE!

HAROLD
 ON THE STAGE JOKES FLY,

WOMEN
 ON THE STAGE BLOKES TRY
 TO WAGE WAR

MEN
 IN THE BATTLES
 OF VALHALLA.

WOMEN
ON THE STAGE CADS LIE,

MEN
ON THE STAGE LADS PLY
THE AUDIENCE WITH JOCULARITY,

LUMPY
HENCE ME AWESOME POPULARITY!

ALL
YOU'RE IN FOR
A ROUSING AFFAIR,
GUESS WHERE!
IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE!

They launch into a soft-shoe routine, their movements smooth and rhythmic.

THE AUDIENCE

They sit stunned, mouths agape, eyes open wide, as the spectacle unfolds.

ON STAGE

The Ghosts conclude their spirited tap routine with a synchronized flourish.

ALL (CONT'D)
CAST OFF ALL YOUR
TROUBLES AND CARE!
GUESS WHERE!
IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE!

The lights shift as Harold takes center stage.

HAROLD
THE STAGE AIN'T JUST
FOR ACTORS, YOU KNOW!
THERE'S A LOT PRODUCERS
PUT INTO THE SHOW.
STAGEHANDS, MAKEUP,
WARDROBE AND LIGHTS.
WE ALL SET OUR SIGHTS
ON OPENING NIGHTS!

HAROLD (CONT'D)	OTHERS
THAT'S HOW THE EXCITEMENT	OO...
BEGINS WHEN THAT ORCHESTRA	AHH!
PLAYS A FANFARE!	BA-DA DAT DAT!
THE SWEAT YOU POUR IN IT	BA-DA DAT DAT!
IS WORTH EV'RY MINUTE,	OO...

HAROLD (CONT'D)
AND IT HAPPENS...

OTHERS
WHERE?

HAROLD
OFF THE STAGE!

OTHERS
HEAR, HEAR!

POOF! A cloud of smoke engulfs them, revealing the Ghosts in glittering top hats, tails, and evening gowns. They launch into a dazzling waltz.

POOF! Back in their normal attire.

MEN
ON THE STAGE SCENES PLAY,

WOMEN
ON THE STAGE QUEENS PRAY
FOR SLAIN DRAGONS

MEN
BY KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOR!

ALL
ON THE STAGE, PLOTS FAIL.

FROTHMIRE
ON THE STAGE, TOTS WAIL
WITH CRIMINAL INTENT
TO WRECK THE SCENE.

HAROLD
WAIT! THAT HAPPENS
IN THE MEZZANINE.

OTHERS
OH YES. OH YES!

ALL
MARK WELL!
THAT'S THE BURDEN WE BEAR!
GUESS WHERE!
GUESS WHERE!
GUESS WHERE!
IT HAPPENS ON...

HAROLD
AND OFF...

ALL

THE STAGE!
HEY!

The audience erupts into wild APPLAUSE, cheering and whistling as the Ghosts bow triumphantly.

INT. ZIMMER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Zimmer jolts awake, blinking at his Shakespearean costume, bewilderment written all over his face.

ZIMMER

Phips! Get in here, now!

The office door creaks open, and a groggy Phips stumbles in, buttoning his jacket.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

What am I doing in this ridiculous getup!?

PHIPS

For two weeks, you've been quoting Hamlet, raving about the Epoch show tonight, and refusing to leave.

ZIMMER

What show!?

PHIPS

"Showghosts." You approved it.

ZIMMER

I did no such thing!

Zimmer's eyes narrow

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

Get me the keys to The Monster.

Phips snaps to attention and bolts out the door.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

Thunderous applause echoes from within the theater, mingling with the rumble of distant thunder. Lightning streaks across the stormy sky.

INT. THE THEATER - NIGHT

The Ghosts strike a triumphant pose as the orchestra hits its final chord.

They SING:

GHOSTS

FOR THE CROWD!

FOR THE CROWD!

FOR THE CROWD!

WE DO IT ALL FOR THE CROWD!

The audience bursts into a standing ovation, cheers and whistles filling the theater. The Ghosts, glow with pride, bask in the crowd's energy.

BACKSTAGE

Ben and Grandpa carefully peek out from the wings at the jubilant scene.

BEN

They did it, Grandpa. They really did it!

On stage, the Ghosts take another bow. They wave and blow exaggerated kisses to the ecstatic audience.

INT. EPOCH THEATER LOBBY DOOR - NIGHT

Ben locks the front door, pockets the key, and turns off the lobby lights.

INT. ON STAGE - NIGHT

The Ghosts gather around Grandpa as he counts the money.

DAME FAYE

How much is it!?

HAROLD

Almost there.

VIOLA

Oh, it was heavenly to sing for a real audience again.

Ben joins them.

DAME FAYE

A touch loud, though, don't you think?

VIOLA

At least I was on pitch, unlike certain ghosts.

DAME FAYE

Leave Gwen out of this!

Gwen narrows her eyes with a sharp, wordless look that says it all.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

Zimmer arrives in a massive wrecking crane, with THE MONSTER painted boldly on the side. He parks ominously in the lot beside the theater.

INT. ON STAGE - NIGHT

Grandpa slams the final stack of bills onto the pile with a triumphant thud.

GRANDPA

One million pounds!

DAME FAYE

And the money from the television people?

GRANDPA

Seven million.

FROTHMIRE

Still a shortfall.

VIOLA

Oh, dear.

A DOOR SLAMS offstage. The Ghosts vanish in a swirl of glittering mist.

ZIMMER (O.S.)

Ah ha! Caught you red handed!

Zimmer bursts in, tie askew, eyes wild.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)

You pulled a fast one, old geezer!

GRANDPA
What are you on about?

ZIMMER
Your dodgy illegal show!

GRANDPA
You approved it!

ZIMMER
That scruffy kid hypnotized me!

BEN
I did not!

ZIMMER
Doesn't matter. Seven-thirty sharp
tomorrow-wrecking ball. Kaboom!

Zimmer jabs a finger toward them.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)
And just so there's no mucking
about, I'll swing it myself!

He spins on his heels and storms off into the wings,
SLAMMING the door behind him.

Frothmire materializes, and yells after him.

FROTHMIRE
You were a rubbish Hamlet!

The Ghosts reappear, dejected

LUMPY
I wonder if there's room at the
Castle Theater?

GWEN
They're not accepting any more
ghosts.

HAROLD
This is worse than closing out of
town.

DAME FAYE
If only I had my children.

Dame Faye floats away, dabbing at invisible tears.

Ben sidles up to her, hesitant.

BEN
I'm sorry about your children,
Dame Faye.

DAME FAYE
Thank you, love.

BEN
How old were they?

DAME FAYE
I haven't the foggiest.

Ben frowns, puzzled.

BEN
What were their names?

DAME FAYE
Sparkle, Twinkle, Crystal, and
Chunk. Chunk was the biggest.

BEN
Nicknames?

DAME FAYE
Proper names.

BEN
Boys or girls?

DAME FAYE
Oh, don't be daft. They were
diamonds!

BEN
Oh. What!? Diamonds!?

Ben jolts upright.

BEN (CONT'D)
Diamonds!?

The others flock to them.

HAROLD
Your children were -- diamonds!?

DAME FAYE
What did you think they were?

BEN
Kids!

DAME FAYE

Good heavens, no. They were gifts from the Maharaja of Zani in 1899. Big as goose eggs, each one. I carried them with me everywhere.

BEN

What do you mean "everywhere?"

DAME FAYE

Wherever I played. I was not about to leave them at home.

BEN

You mean they're in this theater!?

DAME FAYE

Naturally. But I've forgotten where.

HAROLD

Rack your brains, Faye! Think!

GWEN

If we find them, we can save the theater!

GRANDPA

Right then. All hands on deck! We'll turn the place inside out.

The group springs into action, a renewed determination lighting their faces.

MONTAGE - THE SEARCH

- Grandpa rifles through the Box Office, yanking open drawers and scattering ticket stubs.
- Ben taps along the lobby walls, pausing to press his ear against them, listening for hollow echoes.
- Viola's glowing head detaches and extends into a lightbulb socket in the dressing room.
- Gwen swings through the rafters with the agility of an acrobat, narrowly avoiding a swinging sandbag.
- Grandpa peeks behind paintings in the lobby.
- Lumpy dives headfirst into a sink, his body squeezing impossibly down the drain.

- Ben, under the rows of theater seats, winces as he accidentally bumps his head.
- Gwen examines the cherub statues on the proscenium arch, her sharp gaze scrutinizing every detail.
- Harold stumbles in the basement as ripples of spectral energy shimmer from a dusty suit of armor. .
- Frothmire, flattened paper-thin, slinks behind the light board.
- Harold grips Lumpy's legs as Lumpy morphs into a buzzing metal detector, his head scanning the floor

LUMPY

Beep-beep-beep-beep beep beep...

- The lobby clock reads 2:00 AM. Grandpa wipes his brow.
- The clock fast forwards: 3AM... 4AM...5AM... 7:20AM.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE MEZZANINE - DAY

The group sits slumped in the first two rows, faces glum.

BEN

Ten minutes to go.

GRANDPA

Best gather our things.

VIOLA

I'll miss this old place.

The Ghosts nod in agreement.

DAME FAYE

My children must be here! I always hid them... brilliantly.

BEN

Too brilliantly.

DAME FAYE

Where anyone would never think to look -- plain sight.

Her eyes widen as realization dawns.

GWEN
It's coming back to her!

DAME FAYE
The day I died! I was hiding
Chunk... my darling last one!

Everyone leans towards her.

DAME FAYE (CONT'D)
I remember... finding the perfect
place... it was ingenious... I
remember... I remember...

INT. THE MEZZANINE - FLASHBACK

Dame Faye, alive and regal, strolls along the mezzanine,
clutching a worn carpetbag.

DAME FAYE (V.O.)
I hid Sparkle, Twinkle, and
Crystal first. Chunk, my precious
darling, was last.

She stops at the brass railing, opens the carpetbag, and
carefully extracts a gleaming diamond the size of an egg.
With precision, she places it into a concealed niche
within the ornate molding.

DAME FAYE (V.O.)
The perfect hiding spot for my
month long engagement. Safe and
sound.

As she adjusts her grip on the railing, her gloved hand
slips on the polished brass.

DAME FAYE
Whoops!

She tumbles over the railing in a flurry of petticoats.

END OF FLASHBACK.

The Ghosts, Grandpa, and Ben gaze at Dame Faye with
sympathetic expressions.

DAME FAYE (CONT'D)
And that, as they say, was that.

A beat of quiet reflection.

The Ghosts leap into the air and SCREAM in unison.

ALL

The niches!

INT. THE MEZZANINE FAÇADE - DAY

Lumpy, Frothmire, and Harold ZOOM to the façade, their eyes scanning the ornate niches. Lumpy hovers near an egg-shaped object nestled in one.

LUMPY

That's got to be one of them!

HAROLD

Clean it up!

He swipes at the grime, but his hand passes right through the dust-covered egg. He bursts into tears.

LUMPY

I can't do it!

Ben's arm reaches down in front of him and grabs hold of the egg. He lifts it from the niche.

THE MEZZANINE

Ben brushes away the thick grime, his hand moving carefully. As the dust clears, a dazzling diamond emerges, gleaming like frozen fire.

DAME FAYE

Chunky! My baby!

She swoops forward, planting a kiss on the diamond with dramatic flair.

DAME FAYE (CONT'D)

Mother's here!

BEN

I'll grab the others!

Ben hands the diamond to Grandpa and sprints toward the next niche, as a deep RUMBLE shakes the theater. The sound of a wrecking crane grows louder, the vibrations rattling the mezzanine.

GRANDPA

The wrecking ball!

The Ghosts zoom towards the wall to escape and SPLAT against it like pancakes.

LUMPY
Hey! What the hey!?

Lumpy and Harold try again. SPLAT!

HAROLD
We can't go through the wall!

DAME FAYE
But, why!?

GRANDPA
It must be the Ectoplasmic Eraser!

VIOLA
The what now!?

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

Zimmer sits behind the wrecking crane's controls, grinning wickedly. He shoves the lever forward, and the wrecking ball begins its slow, menacing rise.

INT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

The Ghosts swirl in chaos, their panic echoing through the empty theater.

HAROLD
Where did she hide it!?

FROTHMIRE
What does a Ectoplasmic Eraser
look like, anyway!?

Ben hurries on stage carrying the rest of the diamonds in his arms.

BEN
Got them!

GRANDPA
We've got to stop Zimmer!

Clutching the diamonds, they sprint toward the exit.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

The wrecking ball climbs higher, its chains creaking ominously. Zimmer jams the lever forward, his face twisted with determination.

EXT. THE LOBBY DOOR - DAY

Grandpa and Ben skid to a stop at the door. Grandpa yanks the handle. It doesn't budge.

GRANDPA

The key, Ben! The key!

Ben fumbles in his pocket, then freezes. He pulls it inside-out, revealing a gaping hole.

BEN

The stage door!

Ben spins on his heels and bolts toward the auditorium, Grandpa close behind.

INT. THE BASEMENT - DAY

The Ghosts, except Gwen, whip through the cluttered basement, tossing tarpaulins, toppling chairs, and rattling open drawers with bursts of spectral energy.

DAME FAYE

It's not here!

VIOLA

Grandpa Butler swore she brought it down here!

Frothmire spots the dusty SUIT OF ARMOR in the corner.

FROTHMIRE

Well, knock me for six! My old Richard the Third armor! Let's see if it still fits.

Before anyone can stop him, he dives into the armor.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)

Ah, snug as a -- oh, no.

A LOUD HUM erupts from inside the armor. It begins to shake and rattle violently. Frothmire's eyeballs jitter in their sockets.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)

This feels dreadful!

The Ghosts ZOOM to him in alarm.

HAROLD
Get out of there, you daft
plonker!

FROTHMIRE
I'm stuck!

The armor clangs and vibrates, Frothmire flailing helplessly inside.

FROTHMIRE (CONT'D)
Something's definitely not right!

EXT. THE THEATER - DAY

The wrecking ball arcs outward, its momentum building with every swing. It hurtles closer and closer to the wall, groaning under the strain.

INT. STAGE DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

Gwen rushes to the door and tries to fling it open but her hands pass right through.

GWEN
Oh!

Grandpa and Ben skid to a stop beside her. She YELLS after them --

GWEN (CONT'D)
The Ectoplasmic Eraser doesn't
push us out, it keeps us in!

INT. THE BASEMENT - DAY

The loud HUM continues as Harold GRABS Frothmire's nose and YANKS him out of the helmet with a loud POP.

FROTHMIRE
That was dreadful! Worse than my
Manchester reviews!

HAROLD
Wait a tick... There's something
in here!

With a determined grunt, Harold YANKS off one of the armor's legs. A HUMMING cylinder tumbles out, spinning on the floor.

GHOSTS

That's it!

LUMPY

The Ecto-whatsit thingy!

DAME FAYE

Turn it off! Quickly!

Harold lunges forward, presses a button on the cylinder, and the HUM abruptly STOPS.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

Grandpa and Ben wave frantically, shouting at Zimmer.

BEN

No! Wait! Wait!

The crane, looms like a monstrous beast, its wrecking ball swinging back with deadly precision.

ZIMMER

This will do it!

Gwen bursts out of the stage door, planting herself in front of the "Monster" with a defiant stance.

GWEN

Stop!

INT. INSIDE THE CAB - DAY

Harold and Lumpy materialize, SCREAMING in Zimmer's ear

LUMPY

BOOOOO!

HAROLD

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE
DOING!?

Zimmer SCREAMS and turns ghostly pale as he lets go of the lever.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - DAY

The wrecking ball drops with a heavy THUD, landing squarely on Gwen.

GRANDPA

Gwen!

Grandpa rushes to her. She slides out from under the wrecking ball.

GWEN

Don't worry. I'm used to it.

Ben, Grandpa, and the Ghosts gather around the panic-stricken Zimmer.

BEN

Mister Zimmer! It's all right!

ZIMMER

You trying to scare me to death!?

LUMPY

No. We'd hate to have you hanging around with us.

BEN

Mister Zimmer...

ZIMMER

I'm going to sue the lot of you!

GRANDPA

Or we can buy the theater.

ZIMMER

With what!?

Ben pulls out the gleaming, egg-sized diamond.

BEN

With this.

Zimmer stares at the diamond in Ben's outstretched hand, eyes narrowing. He leans in, scrutinizing the massive, gleaming gem.

ZIMMER

(scoffs)

It's not real.

Before Ben can respond, an excited SHOUT cuts loudly through the air --

PROF. WENTWORTH (O.S.)

The Epoch Theater Diamond!

DR. HEPBURN (O.S.)

Is that the Epoch Theater Diamond!?

A tall, scholarly man in a tweed coat and round glasses (PROFESSOR WENTWORTH), and a middle-aged woman in a smart blazer (DR. HEPBURN,) come sprinting toward them, knees high, arms flailing in sheer excitement.

PROF. WENTWORTH
By heavens! It's true!

DR. HEPBURN
We've been searching for this for years!

They SKID to a halt in front of Ben, practically drooling over the diamond.

PROF. WENTWORTH
A lost artifact of the Victorian stage!

DR. HEPBURN
It belongs in a museum!

Zimmer's eyes bulge as he watches them fawn over the gem.

ZIMMER
What!?

PROF. WENTWORTH
It's worth a fortune!

DR. HEPBURN
This should be preserved for history!

Zimmer's jaw tightens. His face flushes red as steam practically shoots from his ears.

ZIMMER
(getting in their faces)
Get lost!

The professor and Dr. Hepburn GASP.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)
You're on private property! I'll have you arrested!

He waves wildly toward the street, fuming.

ZIMMER (CONT'D)
Go on! Scram!

PROF. WENTWORTH
But the diamond --

ZIMMER
I said scram!

The professor and Dr. Hepburn yelp and dart away, rushing around the corner of the theater.

EXT. SIDE OF THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

The professor and Dr. Hepburn lean against the wall, panting, hands on their knees.

Suddenly -- POOF! Two glowing misty forms swirl out of their bodies -- Frothmire and Dame Faye!

FROTHMIRE
Perfect!

DAME FAYE
Oh, that was rather fun!

She twirls gleefully, her ghostly form shimmering before they both ZOOM away into the sky.

The professor and Dr. Hepburn blink.

PROF. WENTWORTH
What just happened?

They stare at each other, utterly bewildered.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - BACK TO ZIMMER

Zimmer stands there, GOGGLING at the diamond. He licks his lips, rubbing his hands together greedily.

ZIMMER
(whispering, to
himself)
A fortune....

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REGAL SENIOR SCHOOL - NIGHT

A sign over the door reads "REGAL H.S. DRAMATICS PRESENTS ROMEO AND JULIET"

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

BEN (V.O.)

The doors of breath, seal with a
righteous kiss.
A dateless bargain to engrossing
death!

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

On stage, Ben stands beside Henrietta, who lies "dead" on a stone sarcophagus. Tears stream down his face as he delivers his lines with raw emotion.

SNIFFLES echo from the unseen audience.

BEN

Thou desperate pilot, now at once
run on the dashing rocks thy sea-
sick weary bark!
Here's to my love!

He raises a small bottle of poison to his lips.

In the front rows, Grandpa and the Ghosts sit on the edge of their seats, spellbound. Lumpy sobs uncontrollably.

LUMPY

(wailing)
Don't do it, lad!

AUDIENCE

Shhhhh!

On stage, Ben drinks the poison.

BEN

O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a
kiss I die.

He kisses Henrietta gently and collapses, lifeless.

Lumpy struggles to muffle his bawling as he streams tears like a broken faucet.

INT. CORRIDOR IN SCHOOL - NIGHT

Ben and Henrietta are surrounded by well-wishers.

Jock Boy and his Girlfriend approach Ben.

JOCK BOY

Hey, Butler.

Ben is apprehensive. Jock Boy offers his hand.

JOCK BOY (CONT'D)
Didn't think you had it in you,
Butler. Not bad.

He disappears into the crowd leaving Ben stunned.

Henrietta beams.

HENRIETTA
He's right. You were brilliant!

BEN
Was I? How do I know it wasn't...
someone else?

FROTHMIRE (O.S.)
Because I was in the audience.

Ben turns, startled, to see Frothmire leaning casually
against the wall.

BEN
Frothmire!? So... I did all that
myself?

Frothmire offers a warm smile.

FROTHMIRE
You always had it, lad. Just
needed... a nudge.

BEN
Thank you, Frothmire.

Ben's expression shifts from doubt to joy.

BEN (CONT'D)
I did it!

He spins to Henrietta, grinning.

BEN (CONT'D)
It was all me, Henrietta! I did
it!

HENRIETTA
Oh, Ben!

They embrace, and Ben kisses her. Both pull back,
surprised, before breaking into shy smiles.

Nearby, Grandpa watches the scene with a nostalgic glint in his eye. He leans toward Gwen.

GRANDPA
Memories of you in that role.

He COUGHS suddenly, harsh and deep.

GWEN
You all right, love?

Another COUGH.

Gwen's expression darkens with concern.

Meanwhile, the Ghosts revel in their newfound fame, signing autographs for eager students. Lumpy dramatically flourishes a spectral quill.

EXT. EPOCH THEATER - NIGHT

A long line snakes to the Box Office. The marquee glows brightly: "SHOWGHOSTS - SECOND BIG YEAR!"

INT. THE THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT.

The Ghosts, now with fully-formed legs, wait in the wings as the OVERTURE plays.

LUMPY
Two years, and we've still got our legs!

HAROLD
That's the electricity in the air!
Ain't that right, Grandpa Clive?

He nods toward the Stage Manager's desk, where Grandpa stands, now in GHOST FORM, looking a youthful thirty. Gwen stands beside him, their arms entwined.

GRANDPA
Spot on, Harold! All right, Ben --
your turn!

Ben, wearing Grandpa's flat cap, steps forward, joined by Henrietta. Together, they pull the curtain rope.

Grandpa turns to Gwen, his smile soft.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Now and for always.

Gwen presses a kiss to his cheek.

GWEN
Now and for always.

She glides toward the stage to join the others.

INT. THE THEATER - NIGHT

The curtain rises to thunderous applause. The Ghosts take the stage.

The Ghosts SING:

GHOSTS
OPENING NIGHT,
LOOK WHO'S APPEARING!
WE ARE!
SHOWGHOSTS!

SHOWGHOSTS ARE DOING IT RIGHT
FOR THE CHEERING CROWD, CROWD,
WE GOT A CROWD!
OH, WHAT A SIGHT!
WHO'S WORLD-PREMIERING?
WE ARE!

SHOWGHOSTS!
SHOWGHOSTS ARE BOUND TO DELIGHT
ALL THE CHEERING CROWD!
WE GOT A CROWD!

NOTHIN'S GETTIN' US DOWN,
'CAUSE WE'RE TEARING IT UP UP UP
LIKE NOBODY BEFORE!
GONNA TAKE THIS TOWN
WITH A FIRST-CLASS ENCORE!

ENCORE!
WHO'S AT THE HEIGHT
OF THEIR CAREERING?
WE ARE!
SHOWGHOSTS!

SHOWGHOSTS ARE DOING IT RIGHT!
SHOWGHOSTS ARE BACK
IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

GHOSTS (CONT'D)
SHOWGHOSTS ARE DOING IT RIGHT
FOR THE CROWD!
FOR THE CROWD!

(MORE)

GHOSTS (CONT'D)

FOR THE CROWD!

WE DO IT ALL FOR THE CROWD!

The audience erupts into a standing ovation with cheers and bravos echoing through the theater.

The Ghosts hold hands and bow as the applause roars. Gwen glances backstage, catching Grandpa in the wings, clapping and whistling proudly.

Ben stands beside him, cheering and applauding their ghostly friends.

The Ghosts take one final bow, their smiles radiant, as the curtain falls.

FADE OUT.