

# Funny Thing About Ghosts

*By Sam Havens*

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*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 2 -

## **DEDICATION**

*To my wonderful wife, Gretchen Havens*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

What do you get when you put a married couple, a butler, an evil owner of an estate, a local spiritualist, and five ghosts in a mansion overnight? Kenny and Janelle are a determined couple, willing to spend the night in the haunted Gottlieb Mansion to become the new owners. Consuela Gottlieb has other plans, while the ghosts are just trying to get the key to their spirit home. With a group hug at the end, this witty comedy is sure to keep the audience laughing. About 75 minutes.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*Cast of 9 or 10: 5 m, 3 w, 1 or 2 flexible*

**Kenny Drake:** 25 to 40. Husband, ready to take a dare.

**Janelle Drake:** 25 to 40. Wife, not so ready to take a dare.

**Morris Hefferton:** 40 or so. Archetypal butler, but prefers to be referred to as the steward of the manor.

**Maggie the Magnificent:** 30 to 50. Local spiritualist who performs séances.

**Consuela Gottlieb:** 30 to 50. Devious owner of the estate.

**Ghost Wexley:** 30 to 50. Informative, helpful (and hungry) ghost.

**Head Ghost Goyle DeFarge:** 40 to 50. Narcissistic, threatening, king of all ghosts...but has a weakness or two.

**Ghost Gilliam Gottlieb:** 60 or so. Beloved grandfather ghost.

**Ghost One, Professor Milkins:** Any age. A mad scientist ghost.

**Ghost Two:** Any age.

*(Ghost One and Ghost Two may be played by the same actor, male or female, with change of costume.)*

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 4 -

**DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

The play may be performed in one act with no intermission. For a two act production, please place the interval following Scene Three.

**SETTING**

The main room of the Gottlieb estate. The space is in considerable disrepair with dust and cobwebs everywhere. Gray sheets cover the heavy furniture. A big hearth. Family portraits on the walls. For simpler productions, furniture and props can be arranged before a background of dark draperies. A larger table with a minimum of 3 chairs is required. A smaller table or sideboard is needed for the snacks.

## Funny Thing About Ghosts

### Scene 1

*(BEFORE RISE: In the black, FX of eerie organ music and a crack of lightning. AT RISE: JANELLE and KENNY DRAKE, with overnight bags, enter the main room.)*

**KENNY:** Wow! Honey, just look at the place!

**JANELLE:** I'm looking. I'm also sniffing. Meh.

**KENNY:** It's not so bad, Janelle.

**JANELLE:** Smells like your special omelets.

**KENNY:** My Sunday morning omelets are unforgettable.

**JANELLE:** That's what I'm saying.

**KENNY:** Hmm.

**JANELLE:** *(Looks at her cell phone.)* No cell phone signal in this crazy house.

**KENNY:** You don't need your cell phone tonight.

**JANELLE:** What if I need to call 911?

**KENNY:** You won't. Just trust me.

**JANELLE:** Okay, Kenny. What's your big surprise?

**KENNY:** Well, you've heard of the wealthy landowner, Consuela Gottlieb?

**JANELLE:** Of course. She is known for eating small birds.

**KENNY:** I met with Mrs. Gottlieb and she offered me, well, a bet.

**JANELLE:** This sounds bad. What kind of bet?

**KENNY:** A very sweet bet. You and I spend the night here and she gives us the title to the place.

**JANELLE:** What?

**KENNY:** House, property, all of it. We can't lose.

**JANELLE:** This place? This creepy place that looks like a mausoleum?

**KENNY:** Just imagine, Janelle. We become owners of this house. We refurbish it and sell it for two million.

**JANELLE:** Refurbish? You mean burn it down.

**KENNY:** Maybe three million.

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 6 -

**JANELLE:** Listen, honey, I'm not about to spend the night in this crazy house. It's probably haunted.

**KENNY:** That just gives the place character.

**JANELLE:** What?

**KENNY:** By that I mean, the house is rumored to be haunted. I'm sure it's not.

**GHOST:** (O.S.) Whooooooooooooooooooooo.

**JANELLE:** Did you hear that?

**KENNY:** That whoooing sound?

**JANELLE:** Yes.

**KENNY:** No.

**JANELLE:** Kenny...

**KENNY:** We can do it, Janelle. And by morning, the place is ours.

*(CONSUELA GOTTLIEB enters.)*

**CONSUELA:** There they are!

**JANELLE AND KENNY:** Yiiiiiiiiiii.

**CONSUELA:** Just checking up on you, my optimistic little couple.

**KENNY:** Mrs. Gottlieb, this is my wife, Janelle.

**CONSUELA:** Greetings, Mrs. Drake. So glad to be in business with you.

**JANELLE:** Business?

**CONSUELA:** Mr. Drake, I failed to get your signature on the contract. *(Produces a contract.)*

**KENNY:** Fine.

**JANELLE:** Don't sign that, Kenny!

**KENNY:** Why not?

*(SFX: A crack of lightning and thunder. A shriek from above.)*

**JANELLE:** You need to ask?

**KENNY:** Piffle. Are we not strong? Are we not brave?

**JANELLE:** Are we not cowards?

*(SFX: A lamp falls over with a loud crash.)*

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 7 -

**JANELLE AND KENNY:** AUUUGGGGHHHHHH!

**CONSUELA:** Mr. Drake? Please.

**KENNY:** Very well.

*(SFX: As he signs, a hideous laugh from above.)*

**GHOST:** (O.S.) Bahwahheeeeeehaaaaaaahheheeeeeee

**KENNY:** Once again, I did not hear that.

**JANELLE:** I did.

**CONSUELA:** Don't forget, Mr. and Mrs. Drake, if you fail to stay until dawn, you must give me fifty thousand dollars.

**JANELLE:** What?

**KENNY:** Oh, did I forgot to mention that tiny detail?

**JANELLE:** Kenny!

**CONSUELA:** Goodnight, you crazy, kids. See you in the morning. Maybe. *(SHE exits.)*

**JANELLE:** I smell sulfur.

**KENNY:** That's the sweet smell of money after we sell for big bucks.

**JANELLE:** But if not, we owe Consuela money we don't have.

**KENNY:** Don't worry. All we have to do is stay all night.

**JANELLE:** What a nutty idea.

**KENNY:** It's just a test. To see if we have the bravery to inherit the old Gottlieb mansion and its legend.

**JANELLE:** Legend? What do you mean?

**KENNY:** Well, you know...

**JANELLE:** Kenny, what are you not telling me?

**KENNY:** The thing is, sweetie, there is a myth, just a myth...

**JANELLE:** What kind of myth?

**KENNY:** That the place is cursed.

**JANELLE:** Haunted and cursed? Perfect!

**KENNY:** Janelle...

**JANELLE:** I'm not staying all night in a cursed ghost house with a loon laughing in the attic.

**KENNY:** It's merely a folktale. Nobody believes in ghosts. You don't, do you?

**JANELLE:** Only if one taps me on the back and says good evening.

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 8 -

*(HEFFERTON appears from behind a drape and taps JANELLE on the shoulder.)*

**HEFFERTON:** *(Sepulchral voice.)* Good evening.

*(SFX: A crack of lightning.)*

**JANELLE:** Aiiiiigggeeeeeeeeeeee!

**KENNY:** Who the heck are...?

**HEFFERTON:** Beg pardon, madame, sir. I am Morris Hefferton.

**JANELLE:** Did it suddenly get cold in here?

**KENNY:** Oh, right. You're the man Consuela retains to keep an eye on the place.

**JANELLE:** The butler?

**HEFFERTON:** Not a butler, Mr. and Mrs. Drake. I am the steward of the manor.

**JANELLE:** Steward?

**KENNY:** Are you the steward or the manor?

**HEFFERTON:** I'm the main man.

**KENNY:** The manor?

**HEFFERTON:** I'm the steward of the manor.

**JANELLE:** Drop it, Kenny.

**HEFFERTON:** Thank you, madame. My assignment is to make certain all is well. *(He laughs in a chilling way.)*

**JANELLE:** Is that funny?

**HEFFERTON:** Pardon, madame?

**KENNY:** You laughed, Hefferton. Why did you laugh?

**HEFFERTON:** Did I, sir? Beg pardon.

**KENNY:** Oh. Well, thank you, Hefferton. It's good to have you.

**JANELLE:** It is?

**HEFFERTON:** If you'll pardon me, I will see that your chamber is ready.

**KENNY:** Chamber?

**HEFFERTON:** Bedroom.

**JANELLE:** Boudoir?

**HEFFERTON:** Boudoir.

**JANELLE AND KENNY:** Bedroom.



*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 9 -

**HEFFERTON:** Bedroom.

**KENNY:** Is it nice, Hefferton?

**HEFFERTON:** Is anything in this house nice?

**JANELLE:** How's that?

**HEFFERTON:** By that I mean, isn't everything in this house nice?

**KENNY:** Is it?

**HEFFERTON:** Isn't it?

**JANELLE:** What is?

**HEFFERTON:** What is what?

**JANELLE:** This place.

**HEFFERTON:** Yes.

**KENNY:** What?

**HEFFERTON:** You want to do that again?

**JANELLE:** No.

**HEFFERTON:** Your bedchamber is quite appealing. There have been no incidents there for years.

**KENNY:** Years?

**HEFFERTON:** Months.

**JANELLE:** Months?

**HEFFERTON:** Days.

**KENNY:** Incidents? What kind of incidents?

**HEFFERTON:** The usual kind. Episodes that will turn your spinal column to ice and send you fleeing into the night toward a pit of terror.

**JANELLE:** Oh, that kind.

**HEFFERTON:** One point to consider, please. The ghosts don't really wish to be here.

**KENNY:** What does that mean?

**HEFFERTON:** They want to go home. They are stuck in this mansion, but they want to return to Gothorium.

**JANELLE:** Gothorium?

**HEFFERTON:** Gothorium is their home floating in the black clouds and darker forests. It is a spectral residence for ghosts.

**KENNY:** Then why don't they just go home?

**HEFFERTON:** They are trapped here.

**JANELLE:** Trapped? That's crazy.

**HEFFERTON:** Is it?

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 10 -

**KENNY:** But Hefferton...

**HEFFERTON:** I'll say no more. *(Exits subtly.)*

**KENNY:** Nice guy, huh?

**JANELLE:** Yes, if you like mummies.

**KENNY:** Aw, come on, babe. We stay the night, the title is given to us. We sell it for a pot of gold.

**JANELLE:** But if we fail, we have to give Consuela fifty thousand dollars.

**KENNY:** That's the deal.

**JANELLE:** She drives a hard bargain.

**KENNY:** But just think, honey. We'll be rich!

**JANELLE:** Oh, Kenny, let's go home to our little shanty on Bluebird Lane. This place gives me the willies.

**KENNY:** Oh, it's just the lightning and the dust and...

**JANELLE:** And Hefferton.

**KENNY:** Aw, he's okay. He—

*(SFX: A scream from above.)*

**JANELLE:** And that? What was that?

**KENNY:** I didn't hear that.

**JANELLE:** I did. It was a terrifying scream.

**KENNY:** Just a sneeze. Hefferton sneezed. *(Loudly.)* Right, Hefferton?

*(FX: Lightning and thunder.)*

**JANELLE:** Come on, Kenny. You just be a sweet high school teacher and I'll be a nice investment broker. We'll talk about having kids and a vacation to Azusa.

**KENNY:** Azusa?

**JANELLE:** Cucamonga?

**KENNY:** Wow! Look at this, Janelle. This old table must be worth a fortune. See the detail work, the filigree?

*(FX: The lamp goes on and off. Loud organ music.)*

**JANELLE:** Auugggghhhhhh! *(Dashes away in a panic.)*

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 11 -

**KENNY:** Honey? Janelle? Come back, babe. We'll be fine. Really.

*(SFX: More organ music.)*

**KENNY:** *(Cont'd.)* But that's nice, really. Organ music.

*(GHOST ONE in a white lab coat enters. The coat is splattered with blood.)*

**KENNY:** Who...are you?

**GHOST ONE:** I am Professor Milkins.

**KENNY:** Professor? Are you...?

**GHOST ONE:** May I assist you?

**KENNY:** Assist me? In what way?

**GHOST ONE:** I am a scientist. Do you desire anything from the laboratory?

**KENNY:** Laboratory? We have a lab?

**GHOST ONE:** Indeed. A place for experiments. Do you enjoy experiments?

**KENNY:** Exactly what kind of experiments?

**GHOST ONE:** On the brain, of course. Oh, what a magnificent organ. *(Touches KENNY'S head.)* I'm guessing you have a very interesting brain in there. One evening I would like to take a look.

**KENNY:** From the inside or the outside?

**GHOST ONE:** Yes.

**KENNY:** Huh?

**GHOST ONE:** *(Gazing upward.)* Oh, look. Zephyr, our new ghost, just entered the room. Do you not see him?

**KENNY:** No...

**GHOST ONE:** I do. All blue and purple.

**KENNY:** Blue and...?

**GHOST ONE:** Zephyr does love to fly about, here and there.

**KENNY:** Where?

**GHOST ONE:** But then again, I have superior vision and cat-like hearing.

**KENNY:** I'll bet.

**GHOST ONE:** How's that?

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 12 -

**KENNY:** Hmm.

**GHOST ONE:** By the way, have you seen the key?

**KENNY:** What key?

**GHOST ONE:** The key to Gothorium, naturally.

**KENNY:** I have no idea what you're talking about.

**GHOST ONE:** Of course not. Well, I must be off.

**KENNY:** I'd say you are.

**GHOST ONE:** So many scalpels, so little time. Farewell for now, stout fellow.

**KENNY:** Yes, good-night.

**GHOST ONE:** I'll be back.

**KENNY:** Oh, don't bother.

*(GHOST ONE begins to exit.)*

**GHOST ONE:** Wait for me, Zephyr. I will accompany you to the torture chamber.

**KENNY:** We have a torture chamber?

**GHOST ONE:** Oh, yes, the very latest. Big screen TV, a spa.

**KENNY:** Hmm.

**GHOST ONE:** Until later. *(Exits.)*

**KENNY:** Hold on. Was that a human or a...? Or a... Or a...

**GHOST!** Weird. Maybe Janelle is right. Things are a little odd around here.

*(SFX: A bell rings. GHOST TWO, clad in gray, enters and moves through the room. He carries a long, crooked stick.)*

**GHOST TWO:** Helloooooooooooooo.

**KENNY:** Helloooooooooooooo.

**GHOST TWO:** It's a pleasure to see you.

**KENNY:** It's weird to see you.

**GHOST TWO:** Thank you.

**KENNY:** Uh, are you a ghost?

**GHOST TWO:** Am I a ghost? Oh, I don't know. *(Hideous laugh.)* Yahehaahehehehee....ZAP a-rooney!

*(GHOST TWO points the stick as KENNY who shudders, spins and falls in a heap. SFX: Eerie organ music. BLACKOUT.)*

## **Scene 2**

*(AT RISE: A few minutes later. The room is empty except for KENNY who is still on the floor. JANELLE enters cautiously.)*

**JANELLE:** Kenny? Kenny? *(Sees him on the floor.)* Oh! Kenny! Wake up.

**KENNY:** Wow, we made it. It's morning and we stayed the night!

**JANELLE:** It's still night, honey. I think you fainted.

**KENNY:** Fainted? Me? *(Remembers.)* Oh, right. A ghost zapped me.

**JANELLE:** A ghost!

**KENNY:** That's right, honey.

**JANELLE:** Are you sure, sweetheart?

**KENNY:** It was all gray and moaning and acting scary.

**JANELLE:** Sounds like a ghost.

**KENNY:** Or your mother.

*(HEFFERTON appears.)*

**HEFFERTON:** Good evening.

**JANELLE and KENNY:** AIIIIEEEEEEE!

**HEFFERTON:** Pardon?

**KENNY:** Hefferton, please quit scaring us.

**HEFFERTON:** Very good, sir. Are you not in the mood for bed?

**KENNY:** Hefferton, we're staying up all night.

**HEFFERTON:** How quaint.

**JANELLE:** Hefferton, will you please prepare some snacks? Maybe coffee and sandwiches.

**HEFFERTON:** Very good, Mrs. Drake. *(Exits, chuckling.)*

**KENNY:** Weird guy.

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*

- 14 -

**JANELLE:** Weird with a cherry on top.

**KENNY:** Look, babe, I read an article about spells. Let's cast a spell against the ghosts. That way we'll be protected.

**JANELLE:** Hmm, what kind of spell?

**KENNY:** You know, magic words and powder. Incantations.

**JANELLE:** Powder? Where do we get powder?

**KENNY:** *(Finds urn on shelf.)* Hey! In this urn. Here's powder.

**JANELLE:** There's a label on the urn.

**KENNY:** Oh, yeah. *(Reading.)* "The earthly remains of J. Gilliam Gottlieb."

**JANELLE and KENNY:** Remains!!

*(KENNY drops the urn.)*

**JANELLE:** Now you've done it. You dropped the urn.

**KENNY:** What urn?

**JANELLE:** The vase.

**KENNY:** The jar?

**JANELLE:** The pot.

**KENNY:** The vessel with the... Never mind.

**JANELLE:** Don't even go there.

**KENNY:** So I dropped the urn. Is that bad?

**JANELLE:** Isn't everything?

**KENNY:** *(Returns the urn to the shelf.)* Wait! Gottlieb? The patriarch of the house! Consuela Gottlieb's grandfather. This is bad.

**JANELLE:** It's worse than bad, it's bad.

**KENNY:** How are they different?

**JANELLE:** They just are.

**KENNY:** Okay...

**JANELLE:** Find other powder. Not that powder. Other powder.

**KENNY:** Right. Other powder.

*(THEY search about the room and come up with a collection of guns, knives, a hangman's noose, a saber, a musket.)*

**JANELLE:** Wow, look at this assortment of...of...

*Funny Thing About Ghosts*  
- 15 -

**KENNY:** Assortment of...

**JANELLE:** The Gottliebs collected some strange toys.

**KENNY:** Not toys. Weapons. And you use weapons to...

**JANELLE:** Kill Kenny and Janelle!

**KENNY:** Yeah. Oh, wait. Here's a salt shaker.

**JANELLE:** A salt shaker in the living room?

**KENNY:** True, but we can use the salt as magical powder.

**JANELLE:** Right. Now what about incantations?

**KENNY:** We'll make them up. You know, the same way you  
make up stuff all the time.

**JANELLE:** What?

**KENNY:** Never mind. Let's just stand in a circle.

**JANELLE:** How can two people stand in a circle?

**KENNY:** It could happen.

**JANELLE:** Fine. I'll face this way, toward the fireplace. You  
face that way toward the...toward the...

*(GHOST TWO rushes through the room.)*

**JANELLE and KENNY:** Toward the ghost!? Yieeeeeee!

*(GHOST TWO exits.)*

**KENNY:** This is getting bizarre.

**JANELLE:** Getting bizarre?

**KENNY:** Quick, the spell. You begin.

**JANELLE:** Fine. Double, double, toil and trouble.

**KENNY:** Hold on. That's from *Macbeth*.

**JANELLE:** You mean the Scottish play.

*(KENNY scatters some salt about and utters a spell.)*

**KENNY:** This little piggy...

**JANELLE:** Kenny, I'm going to use that musket on you.

**KENNY:** Fine. Ghosties and goblins and all creatures here.  
Stand back and be silent and keep us from fear.

**JANELLE:** Be gentle and tender and hide all your pranks.  
We're frightened and jumpy and longing for franks.

**KENNY:** Franks? Hot dogs?

## **End of Freeview**

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