

# THE GIRL WHO MARRIED A GHOST

*By Tim Wright*

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## **DEDICATION**

*This play is dedicated to My Father ... who always helped me dream my dreams...*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

The actual legend of a girl who married a ghost, which has been passed down from generation to generation among the Nisqualli Indian Tribe of southern Washington, is now brought to life on stage for the first time. As told by a “tribe” of actors, this play is rich in its surreal images, hypnotic, poetic language and ancient Native American mythology. The daughter of an Indian chief accepts the marriage proposal from a Prince who rules a great nation many miles from her shore. Once she arrives to “the other side,” it is too late to return, for the Princess realizes she has become Queen of Ghost Land; a place where the spirits of the dead go to play out eternity. However, the jealousy of the Shaman, who also loved her in life as he does in death, creates a situation where she will be his and his alone. The safety of her newborn child (part human, part ghost) is in peril. It is only through the wisdom of the great Screech Owl, the only living creature which can fly freely between the land of the living and the land of the dead, that the Princess is able to prevent the Shaman's evil plan from robbing her of her Ghost Husband and newborn son.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*4 m, 6 w, 1 child, flexible chorus*

The Great Chief  
Mother  
Princess  
Middle One  
Younger one  
Prince  
Shaman  
Screech Owl/Hag  
Ghost Man  
Ghost Woman  
Ghost Boy

**The Ensemble**

Troupe Actor #1  
Troupe Actress #1  
Troupe Actor #2  
Troupe Actress #2  
Troupe Actor #3  
Troupe Actress #3  
Troupe Actor #4  
Troupe Actress #4  
Troupe Actor #5  
Troupe Actress #5

Designed to be a very organic theatrical production, the Troupe Actors/Actresses may be consolidated or expanded.

This Nisqualli Indian legend takes place in what is now referred to as southern Washington, as well as the past horizon and halfway to tomorrow in Ghost Land.

The time is long, long ago.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(The theatre is dark. A FEMALE vision faintly appears, as if floating. The SOUND of the screech owl echoes. After a pause, the LIGHT is out on the vision. The theatre is in darkness. Stage LIGHTS up to reveal a troupe of actors [the ENTIRE CAST], dressed in contemporary street clothes to suit their individual personalities. The costumes could even be the actual clothing the actors wore to the theatre for that performance. Only actor who will play Ghost Boy is dressed in what could be an Indian costume, but at first sight does not register as such. They stand together on a set, which reflects the artwork of the Nisqualli, a Native American Indian tribe from the Northwest. Large, colorful designs of birds, animals and symbols painted on huge buffalo-like canvases to be used for entrances and exits, frames the acting area. On the floor, center stage, is an abstract red and orange design, representing fire. The troupe is relaxed and speaks directly to the audience with honesty, intelligence. A true "tribe" of actors they, during this "out of character sequence," often touch one another with love and support while speaking or making entrances and exits.)*

**GREAT CHIEF:** You look like you have just seen a ghost. Don't worry ... you have. *(HE looks about the stage and gestures.)* This is a beautiful and sacred land - the land of my people: the Nisqualli Tribe here in southern Washington. For many centuries, they lived in harmony with all things living and all things dead.

*(Upon concluding, the GREAT CHIEF smiles gently to the AUDIENCE, and exits behind a buffalo canvas. EACH TROUPE MEMBER also exits once they complete the first monologue. ACTORS who are silent in the opening sequence, or any additional non-speaking actors added for production, will also exit at specific points determined by the director.)*

**GHOST WOMAN:** Before the effects of pollution destroyed the rivers, huge salmon swam up these inlets. So numerous, they filled the river from bank to bank. "You could walk across the backs of the fish," my great-grandmother was told by her great-grandmother. And, in the spring, there was candlefish, so rich in oil all you need do was run a wick through the water. Cod and halibut swarmed in unbelievable numbers just offshore. Smelt sparkled in the surf. And, shellfish ... well, shellfish could be gathered all along the beaches and rocks, wherever anyone so desired. *(SHE exits.)*

**PRINCE:** Today, all of that has changed. Mankind has broken partnership with Earth. And, what once was, is now mere myth and legend. *(HE exits.)*

**MIDDLE ONE:** But, if you find what we have told you to be too fantastic, too unbelievable ... then what is the truth? The real and honest truth? *(SHE exits. The SCREECH OWL is heard again.)*

**PRINCESS:** A screech owl. Crying in the night. Possibly on its way to Ghost Land. *(SHE exits.)*

**YOUNGER ONE:** Oh, yes. Ghost Land. There is such a place. It is spoken of frequently ... in legends passed down by my people from generations to generations. *(SHE exits.)*

**SHAMAN:** How do we know this tale is true? How do we not? No living creature has ever been able to travel to Ghost Land ... no living creature, that is, except –

*(The SCREECH OWL is heard.)*

**SHAMAN:** – except the Screech Owl, who flies to Ghost Land and back whenever she so desires. *(HE exits.)*

**MOTHER:** However, one tale does tell of an actual living person who did travel to Ghost Land and returned to tell the tale, so to speak. She is quite famous in our legends ... for this girl even married one from the other side. *(Pause.)* The girl who married a ghost.

*(SHE exits.)*

**GHOST MAN:** If you have time and are interested in the real and honest truth, we will tell you a tale our great-great-grandmothers told me before I could walk. A legend about a world so different from the one we know. A magic land where everything and anything was possible and new. *(HE exits.)*

**ACTOR #1:** She said that few tribes were as fortunate as the Nisqualli. Here, families possessed riches of dried salmon, robes, carved dishes, blankets, canoes and copper ornaments. And, in the winter, when their work was complete for the year, the people enjoyed elaborate ceremonies.

*(HE exits. At this point, in the organically theatrical style, ACTORS who exited earlier in street clothing now re-enter dressed in Nisqualli costume. THEY do not re-enter at the same time, but at specific, separate moments and do so unobtrusively so as not to steal focus or disrupt dialogue being delivered.)*

**ACTRESS #1:** They were called World Renewal Ceremonies. Dances, dramas ... plays, if you will, in which a spirit would kidnap a mortal, bestow supernatural powers upon him and then return him to the village. The spirits were performed by mass dancers and were only enacted at night - lit by a blazing fire in the center of the ceremony.

*(SHE exits. Soft DRUM beats begin, played onstage by TWO of the TROUPE MEMBERS who re-entered with the authentic-looking props. As the Troupe Members continue to speak, the drum beats increase in volume and energy.)*

**ACTOR #2:** There was the cannibal dancer, the fire-throwing dancer, the grizzly bear, the wood spirit, the changing spirit, and ... the ghost dancer.

*(Many of the ACTING TROUPE, now dressed in Nisqualli garb, are assembled, as the LIGHTS change into a dim, reddish hue.)*

## **End of Freeview**

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