Tombstone Terror Stories

Tales from a Haunted Grave Yard

By Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Ever wonder why people whistle in a graveyard? Because, it scares away the bogeyman. Here's a little gang of stories that not only don't scare him away, but invite him in and sets a place for him at the table. Listen gentle reader, while the Caretaker spins spooky tales like autumn smoke. And watch in horror while one couple decides what to do with an old uncle who vowed he'd come back from the dead. Or two buddies who want to find out exactly what it's like to bring someone out of a grave. Listen to an actual interview with a ghost or find out what happened to the last of Captain Bedford.

These tales from the haunted graveyard will have you sitting on the edge of your seat and laughing out loud when some of the specters don't behave exactly as you thought they would.

This easy to stage show is perfect for Halloween, or any other time, when you just want to scare your audience for no apparent reason. With a flexible cast and easy scenery, it can be any length you want. But ask yourself, how long do you want to be scared?

NOTES ABOUT THE PLAY

The following is a variety of scary stories, ideal for Halloween, most with a humorous twist. This is an extremely versatile anthology. The show may be done completely as written, or some of the stories may be rearranged or deleted completely, allowing for any time frame desired by the producing theater. For this reason, each vignette is labeled by scene numbers and titles for easier juxtaposition. Again, if the show is to be done as written, then simply omit any lighting changes between the scenes, since most of them start and end with the CARETAKER. Other variety acts, such as singers, dancers, jugglers, etc., may be interposed to give the production more variety if needed.

Also, many of the characters are simply titled with generic names, such as INTERVIEWER, CARETAKER, GHOST, and so on, allowing either a man or a woman to play the part. All of the scenery is very sparse, usually calling for no more than one or two set pieces or props, The show is very skeletal, in that respect. In the second act, the three stories call for the front of an old house. This may be done with a simple platform and a door frame. Of course, the spookier you make it, the better.

One other note. The scene that begins Act I, "The Last of Captain Bedford," is condensed from a short play by the same name. This play is available from Eldridge Publishing and may be acquired and performed as a full one act.

With this in mind, have fun with the show...but don't come alone!

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I

PROLOGUE
Scene 1: About Face
Scene 2: A Few Parting Words
Scene 3: Clothes Make the Corpse
Scene 4: Scavenger Hunt
Scene 5: Coming to You, Ghost-to-Ghost
Scene 6: A Long Distance Call
Scene 7: A Little Un-Real Estate
Scene 8: A Fugue for Talbot Menniger

ACT II

Scene 1: The Last of Captain Bedford
Scene 2: The Dowser
Scene 3: A Stranger Comes A' Knocking
EPILOGUE

PROPS

CARETAKER - A long-handled shovel, harmonica, lantern, dousing rod.
DELIVERY PERSON - A large pizza box.
NATALIE - Handkerchief.
LEM - A legal document/ will.
CHARACTER 1 - Sack.
CHARACTER 2 - List, small box.
MAN - Pistol (used in several scenes).
GHOST - A pair of phony glasses, big nose and mustache.
MIKE - An old book.
REAL ESTATE AGENT - A cellular phone, legal papers.
TONDELAO - A knife, a stick of wood for whittling, a glass of tea, bloody axe handle.
SHERIFF - A wanted poster.
OLD MAN - Several dousing rods.
LOU - A rifle.
CADAVER - An old-fashioned scythe.

SOUND EFFECTS

Loud wind, thunder, moaning, several gun shots, harmonica notes, howling and wailing of wind, sound of several large hogs, offstage noise, loud scratching, chorus of loud shrieks.

ACT I

PROLOGUE

(BEFORE RISE: We hear a loud WIND BLOWING, wailing as if some sad and lamenting creature is trying to find it's way. THUNDER also accentuates the atmosphere, but it is far away. AT RISE: The LIGHTS come up SR on the CARETAKER, leaning on a long-handled shovel. He (or she) is standing near two or three tombstones. There is also a very old rickety bench nearby. The Caretaker looks around and finally "sees" the audience.)

CARETAKER: Oh, you scared me there for a minute. We don't get many visitors here. At least, not after the sun has gone down. But you're the brave sort, I can tell. Else you wouldn't be here. Glad to have you join us. 'Course, there are lots of folks here that ain't what you'd call brave. They's what you'd call...dead. I swear, you'd be surprised what comes outta here. Stories, I mean. Now, just what did you think I meant? *(The CARETAKER sits on the bench.)* Oh, I know. What's it like to be caretaker to a town graveyard? Well, it's kinda calm, if you know what I mean. Quiet, if you don't let it get to you. Peaceful, in a sort of skin-crawling fashion.

Scene 1
"ABOUT FACE"
(1 M, 1 F, 2 Flexible)

CARETAKER: Narrator.
BROTHER: Of woman.
WOMAN: Concerned their uncle is not really dead.
COUSIN: Of brother and woman.

CARETAKER: Some of the stones there date back to early last century. That was back before they used to embalm people. Did you ever wonder why they do that now? Well, the way I get it, I heard once, in the last century like I says, there was a funeral out here where they was burying a Confederate officer. A sergeant he was, and something of a real cruel type. Oh, nobody would ever admit to being afraid of him, just like folks say they ain't afraid to come in here. No, they'd all say that one...in the daylight. Trying to save face, I guess. And that's what you'd call this story, I suppose. It's about face.

(LIGHTS fade out on the CARETAKER and come up SL on another bench. A WOMAN, dressed in early nineteenth century black, sits on the bench and looks around, somewhat frightened. Her BROTHER enters and sits next to her.)

BROTHER: Well, it's over. We got him in the ground and they's just about to lower him down.
WOMAN: Now, Brother, I hope this ain't prying none, but it's something that's been eating at me.
BROTHER: What is it?
WOMAN: I mean we done got him a nice funeral and a real tombstone and all...
BROTHER: Yeah?
WOMAN: And I probably should'a spoke up before now...
BROTHER: What is it?
WOMAN: Well, I meant to ask you earlier.
BROTHER: What?!

End of Freeview

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