

# Ghost Light

A short 10 minute play

By Gary Davis

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Gary A. Davis

1337 Forest Glen Dr.

Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

[artshop@artist-shop.com](mailto:artshop@artist-shop.com)

330-929-6535

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## SETTING

A bare, dark stage with only a ghost light and a leftover prop umbrella [*see Prop Note 1*].

## SYNOPSIS

A crew returns to a theater that's been empty for two years because of the pandemic to prep the stage for reopening.

## CHARACTERS

KAY	woman in her 50s or 60s, a stage manager
AL	man in his 60s or 70s, an actor
RAUL	younger man in his 20s or 30s, give or take, on the tech crew

16 pages; spoken word count 1,469

**SCENE OPENS**

*(Kay and Raul enter a bare stage and cross to the ghost light.)*

KAY

Wow, this ghost light has been standing here for almost two years and the bulb's still burning bright!

RAUL

Incredible! Two years and the bulb's still good.

KAY

That's what I just said. Why don't you go turn on some stage lights?

RAUL

*(Raul looks around and sees an umbrella on the stage)*

What's this?

KAY & RAUL

*(together)*

Looks like a prop from the last show.

KAY

*(she laughs)*

Jinx!

RAUL

*(Raul picks it up by the handle and a sword slides out)*

WOAH!!!!

*(Raul exits laughing taking the sword and umbrella with him)*

KAY

Careful with that!

*(Kay talks to the ghost light)*

We've been gone for two years. Got any stories to tell?

*(louder to the control booth)*

There's a superstition that ghost lights are here for the theater ghosts. Apparently some ghosts like to strut the boards when theaters are closed.

*(said as she 'struts the boards' in imitation)*

Well, two years is plenty of time for strutting. I hope they don't mind us coming back.

*(to herself)*

What's taking so long with those stage lights?

*(Kay steps away from the ghost light and starts to exit. The stage lights come up and reveal Al wondering upstage. His clothing looks a little dated. Kay turns and sees him for the first time and lets out a quick shriek, then takes a breath and laughs at herself.)*

Oh ... Jesus! You scared the shit out of me!

*(Al doesn't acknowledge or look at her.)*

I'm Kay. I'm a stage manager. I don't believe we've met. You look like you're running lines in your head. What's your name?

*(He still doesn't look at her or respond)*

I'm sorry, what exactly are you doing here? We're prepping the theater to open back up. You shouldn't be here.

*(He continues to look around and he can clearly see she's there, but still does not respond; finally getting irritated she walks right up to him and gets in his face)*

Hey, buddy! Who are you and what the hell are you doing here?

AL

Uh...uh

*(He is shocked and looks right at her with his mouth agape. He is definitely gobsmacked and looks around frantically to see if there's someone else on the stage she might be talking to)*

Are you ... talking to me?!

KAY

There's nobody else on the stage. So yeah, I'm talking to you! So who are you?

AL

*(still somewhat flustered)*

I'm ... I'm Al.

KAY

Why are you here, Al? I've never seen you before. Are you new on the crew?

AL

Crew? Uh, no.

KAY

*(after some reflection and with a little sympathy)*

You're some homeless fellow aren't you? How did you get in? Was there a door unlocked?

AL

No ... no, the doors are all locked as far as I can tell.

KAY

Have you been living here during the pandemic? You look like you raided the costume shop with that get up. Jasen's gonna be pissed at you!

AL

I'm sorry, the what?

KAY

The costume shop.

AL

No, no. You said something about ... a pandemic?

KAY

OK, now you're just messing with me!

AL

Is THAT why the theater's been closed all this time? I couldn't understand it. It's been so ... BORING!

KAY

*(her attitude softens as she suspects dementia)*

You've been hiding here for the last two years?

AL

More like 60 I think.

KAY

Sixt - that's a little ...

*('crazy' is the next word, but she can't bring herself to say it)*

Hold on a second.

*(Goes offstage and brings back a couple chairs. They sit down close to the ghost light and talk. Al seems to hesitate before sitting.)*

Look, Al, I feel for you. I really do. Life is hard for someone in your situation. To tell the truth, it's not been much easier for the rest of us. I wish I could let you stay here, but I can't. I'm afraid you'll have to leave.

AL

Oh, believe me I've tried ... a few times. It never works. I always end up back here.

KAY

And why is that?

AL

Because I'm a ghost.

KAY

*(pause, then bursts out laughing, but quickly stifles it)*

I'm sorry. It sounded like you said you were a ghost.

AL

I did. And I am. You don't believe me?

KAY

*(pause, not sure how to respond)*

Of ... course I ... do?

*(Of course she doesn't, but speaks with great sympathy for this poor crazy fellow.)*

AL

I don't think you do. I'll prove it.

*(stands and crosses to the ghost light; passes his hand through the light and as he does so the ghost light and the stage lights simultaneously blink on and off. [See Technical Note 1])*

KAY

*(looks around)*

Oh, crap, the gremlins!

AL

*(angry and very loud with echo [see Technical Note 2])*

I AM NOT –

*(pauses a moment while he regains his composure,  
voice back to normal)*

I am not ... ‘a gremlin.’

*(says the word with a touch of loathing)*

I am a ghost. Gremlins are ASSHOLES!

*(there are unnatural sounds from above; Al turns  
and calls out to the rafters shaking his fist)*

YEAH, I SAID IT! YOU WANNA MAKE SOMETHING OF IT?

*(sounds disappear; back to Kay and composed)*

So you’ll understand if we ghosts are ... offended ... by the comparison.

KAY

*(a bit stunned)*

Your hand went right through that light(!) ... could you do that again?

*(Al passes his hand through the ghost light again as  
it and the stage lights flicker on and off, Kay stands  
and paces, starting to freak out)*

Oh my god! I’m talking to a ghost!

AL

I like to think that ‘talking’ is the operative word here. I’m enjoying this conversation ... and your company.

KAY

*(very nervously)*

So you don’t want to scare me or hurt me?

AL

Oh heavens no! For a moment there you actually seemed to care about me. I really felt it. You’re a sweet person.

KAY

But I'm a stage manager.

AL

True, but you're not a gremlin.

KAY

So why are you here?

AL

I suppose the most likely reason is that this is where I died. In fact it was ...

*(looks around the stage; points)*

right where you're standing.

*(Kay jumps aside with a slight screech, Al looks at the spot)*

Don't worry ... stain's gone.

KAY

What happened?

AL

Oh, it was years ago. We were rehearsing "Carousel." I was always a bit of a practical joker. And knowing a few of my fellow cast were a bit superstitious I loudly proclaimed MAC-

KAY

*(Kay quickly interrupts)*

A – A – A – A! THE SCOT! We just say THE SCOT or THE SCOTTISH PLAY! Unless you're actually doing ... the Scottish play, then you're actually allowed to say ... the actual Scottish play title.

AL

Superstitious, are we?



KAY

I'm literally standing here talking to a ghost! If I wasn't superstitious before, I sure as shit am now!

AL

*(considers this)*

Fair point.

KAY

So after ... invoking the Scot, what happened?

AL

A Klieg light fell on me.

KAY

Oh my God! Did it hurt?

AL

Nope. Snapped my neck.

*(snaps his fingers and imitates a snapped neck with tongue sticking out)*

KAY

So you've been alone here all these decades?

AL

Oh, no. There have been plenty of other ghosts. Believe me, the theater was **party central** for ghosts. We got to see all the shows. And after each show we sat around critiquing it. We laughed so hard I think people heard us.

KAY

So after the shows you laughed at us behind our backs.

AL

That sounds so vicious the way you say it. But no, we love you! Critiquing is just a way to share the joy. We even got to watch all the rehearsals. Sometimes we

even messed with the staff to influence the next season. Just between you and me, sometimes the backstage drama was more entertaining than the show! Ha!

KAY

Really? Like what? Dish!

AL

There was that time in the musical, Memphis, when Adam had a long kiss on stage with his leading lady, Brooke. Next thing you know Adam's real life wife Mandy pops in the green room demanding that Adam take off his wedding ring! A bit harsh if you ask me! I mean it's not like the kiss wasn't in the script.

KAY

*(Kay laughs)*

I remember that, but it wasn't what you're thinking. Adam's on-stage character wasn't married, so he shouldn't have been wearing his wedding ring on stage. That's why Mandy said that.

AL

Oh ... well, that makes sense. I always felt that seemed out of character for an otherwise delightful person. And then there was the time that the prince took to the stage after an Into the Woods performance to propose to Cinderella – and still in costume! That was so romantic!

KAY

*(Kay sighs)*

That **was** beautiful!

*(then suspiciously)*

You didn't have any hand in that, did you?

AL

Oh, no! That was as real as real could be! They just didn't know the theater seats were filled with weeping ghosts who burst into applause when they kissed! It was the best show of the year!

KAY

If you don't mind my asking, what's the most mischievous thing you've ever done in the theater?

AL

Me, personally? Well ...

*(with a mixture of guilt and self satisfaction)*

I really hate to admit it ... but ... I, uh ... I rigged the voting at one of the short play festivals.

KAY

*(Kay stands up, shocked and a bit angry)*

WHAT?! You pushed a winning play out of the lead? But that's ... that's ... ooh, I'm so angry, I don't have words! I'm sorry, but that's terrible! Shame on you!

*(walks away from him)*

AL

No, no! I would never violate the integrity of the short "PLAYS!" That's ... that's sacrosanct! But I ... I did once pick the common prop for the next season. Honestly I don't know what the audience was thinking! The sock monkey was clearly the prop to go with.

KAY

Oh.

*(pause as she reflects)*

OK, I admit it. The sock monkey was the obvious choice.

AL

I have to say we often felt we were in heaven.

KAY

*(looking around a tad nervously)*

So there's lots of ghosts here ... right now?

AL

*(sighs)*

No. There were, but not anymore. These past two years with the theater empty, one by one they all vanished. I'm the last.

*(Raul comes out on the stage then suddenly stops with a puzzled or shocked look on his face.)*

KAY

*(awkwardly)*

Oh, Raul. You're probably wondering what I'm doing here with two chairs...

*(Raul picks them up and exits without responding)*

Well, that was weird.

AL

Uh oh!

KAY

Oh no! When I first talked to you, you didn't answer me. Is this the same? Oh my God! He's dead, too! Was it the sword? But, he's so young! He had his whole life ahead of him! He had a girlfriend ... or at least he had his eye on someone he wanted to be his girlfriend.

AL

Oooh boy! Um ... I don't think that's the situation here, Kay.

KAY

Of course that's the situation. What else could it be?

AL

I ... I really think you're overlooking the obvious here, Kay.

KAY

So what are you saying, Al?

*(still missing the obvious. Al give a facial expression that conveys “please don’t make me say it!” Kay returns a facial expression that conveys “what the hell does that mean?”)*

AL

*(long, groaning exhalation)*

Kay, how is it that you can see me?

KAY

*(frozen for a long while, can’t bring herself to answer the question)*

I ... I don’t know, Al.

*(catching the hint and getting scared, starts to tear up)*

Because I’m a really special and intuitive person?

AL

You are a really special and intuitive person, Kay. But that’s not why.

RAUL

*(Raul comes back on stage, talks to the control booth)*

As far as I can tell, everything’s working fine. I don’t know what that blinking was a few minutes ago.

KAY

*(desperately)*

Raul?

*(He still does not respond to her.)*

RAUL

*(sighs)*

I suppose it's time to get dressed for the service. It's hard to believe Kay's not with us anymore. I'm really gonna miss her.

*(lights go out and he exits the stage, the ghost light is still on; Kay approaches and as she touches it, the light blinks. Al approaches her. She reaches out and finds she can touch him.)*

KAY

I'm ...?

*(Al nods his head, she starts to cry and they hug)*

I remember now. I was in the hospital ... the pandemic. But if I died there, how did I get here?

AL

Because you're a stage manager. No matter where you are, your spirit is always here. You love this theater and it loves you, too.

KAY

It does?

AL

*(Al nods)*

Besides, no ghost wants to stay at the hospital!

*(The sound of a crowd gathering can be heard off stage. Kay looks, sadly and then surprised.)*

KAY

Hoooly shit! Is that Bob? And there's Scott, John and Earl! And Maggie! And Kitty and Sam!

*(several voices offstage call out, "Kay!" Kay runs offstage to greet them.)*

AL

They've all come back!

*(He goes to follow Kay, but stops before exiting; looks back at the ghost light. Al blows the ghost light out like a candle leaving the stage black. We hear quick steps and suddenly the ghost light comes back on. Kay is on stage with Al and she is the one who turned it back on with a touch.)*

KAY

Are you crazy? Safety, Al! Safety!

*(they exit together)*

## The End

Dedicated to Bob, Scott, John, Earl, Maggie, Kitty & Sam and so many more.

With special thanks to Jasen, Mandy, Adam and Brooke who gave permission to use their names.

Prop Note 1 – *[As is written in the script, this umbrella has a sword in it. This is not a hard to find object. There are loads of them available on the internet from very expensive models down to dirt cheap.]*

Technical Note 1 – *[To create the illusion of Al's hand passing through the light, have the ghost light and stage lights simultaneously blink to create a strobe effect. If the illusion doesn't work, just have him touch the light.]*

Technical Note 2 - *[Al's voice here is exceptionally loud with echo to give an impression of the supernatural. If the actors are mic'ed, turn the volume up on Al's mic for this phrase with loads of echo, if not mic'ed, pre-record this phrase and play it back at this point with lots of volume and echo. Al can either lip sync to the recording or speak with it, whichever gives the best effect.]*

Special Note to Producers and Directors – In general theaters are not allowed to make changes to a script. But there are some changes that I, as the author, will approve in advance. This script pays tribute to certain people who were the foundations of theater local to me and who have since passed. So where Kay says

“Hooooo shit! Is that Bob? And there's Scott, John and Earl! And Maggie! And Kitty and Sam!”

I give you permission (and even encourage you, actually) to change those names to reflect and pay tribute to the foundations of your own theater.

If you have a short play festival, feel free to use the name of your own festival. And if you have your own costume designer, then in Kay's line –

“Have you been living here during the pandemic? You look like you raided the costume shop with that get up. Jasen's gonna be pissed at you!”

you have permission to use your costume designer's name. Any other ideas you may have, please ask.

Gary Davis