

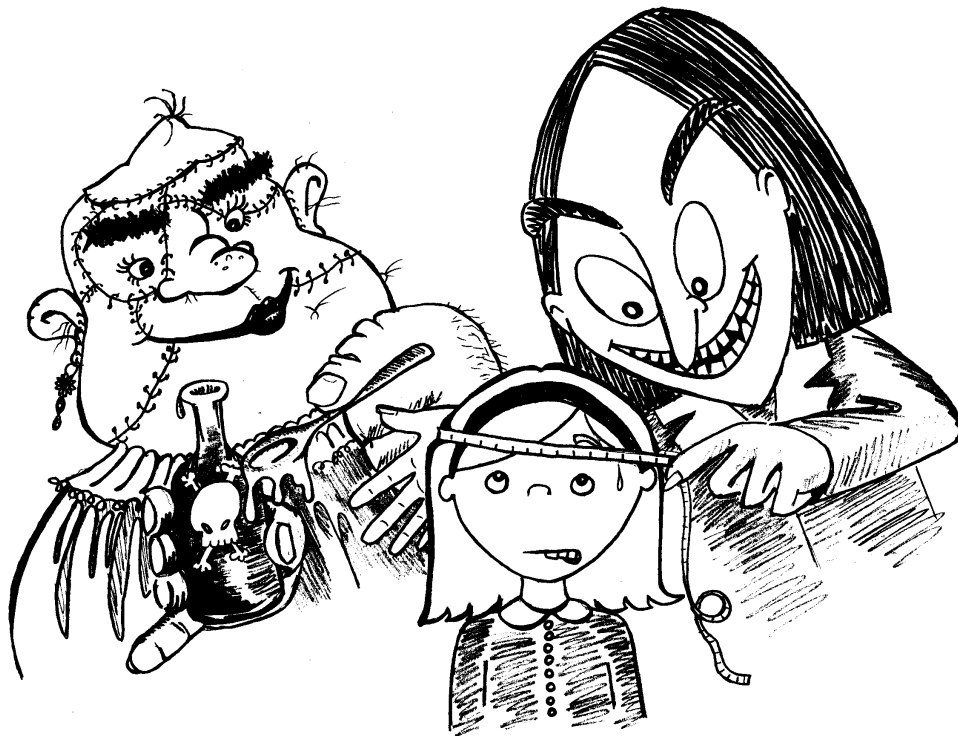
Even Talking Frogs Forget Their Lines

Selected scenes from 6 plays and adaptations for age 13 and older

by J.R. Jaquish

www.theaterfunscripts.com

for classroom, workshop, scout troop, home and drama club readings and performance



Scenes from:

Who Framed Lucky the Leprechaun?

It's a GOOD Life, by Jerome Bixby

Alice in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

You Don't Bring Me Flowers Anymore

Auditioning a Ghost, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens

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Entire scripts and royalty information at: www.theaterfunscripts.com .

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Excerpt from **WHO FRAMED LUCKY THE LEPRECHAUN?**
by Jeannette Jaquish ©2009
Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

7 CHARACTERS: Lucky the Leprechaun (tall), Parent, Smart Mouth Kid, Attacker/Rabbit, Neighbor, Cop, Detective

Excerpt from SCENE 2: BREAKFAST ATTACK

(Begin with CURTAIN CLOSED)

(LUCKY ENTERS the stage apron or audience, seemingly drunk, drinking from a bottle in a paper bag and speaks to audience.)

LUCKY Whadd're you lookin' at! Ain't you never seen a drunk leprechaun before? You think a leprechaun's life is all rainbows and pots of gold? Huh? Huh? All dancin' the jigs and swinging the shillelagh *(garbles the word.)*

(PARENT & SMART MOUTH KID approach looking at him strangely.)

PARENT Excuse me. May we pass?

LUCKY No, no... Excuuuuuse me! Am I in your way? *(Bows exaggeratedly stepping aside so they can pass.)* After yooooou.

SMART MOUTH KID Nice suit, weirdo. Maybe you could get a job at Chucky Cheese.

PARENT Don't talk to him. He might follow.
(KID & PARENT EXIT.)

LUCKY *(sobbing)* I already applied. They turned me down.... They don't want me... Nobody wants a washed up leprechaun....

(he stands straight, instantly sober)

Oh, who am I fooling? This stuff has no effect on me.

(He takes a bottle of Trix drinkable yogurt or Strawberry Quik out of the bag. To audience:)

It takes pretty potent stuff to slosh a leprechaun.

(starts to shuffle off)

And now I have to find a recycle bin. Oh, will the torment never end?

(EXITS)

(CURTAIN OPENS)

It is late night. Lucky's living room, with small couch or stuffed chair and small table (TV dinner tray-table) kiddie chair.. LUCKY ENTERS feeling lousy. He stares at a framed cereal box of himself on the wall, catches a sobby breath, then abruptly goes and uncovers his secret hiding place, looks all around, and pulls out a box of Lucky Charms, hugs it lovingly.)

LUCKY Tonight, it's just you and me.

(Lucky EXITS, RETURNS with large bowl, carton of milk. He sets it on a small table and tries to sit in the small chair but it is too small)

LUCKY I'm NOT growing!

(He kicks the chair aside, drags the table to the couch arranges pillows, sits, pours cereal into the bowl, pretends to pour milk then realizes:)

LUCKY No spoon. *(to cereal)* I'll be right back. Don't go awaaaaay. *(EXITS to kitchen)*
(HOODED RABBIT ATTACKER ENTERS with a baseball bat.)

ATTACKER *(Inhales deeply-smelling. To cereal, intensely, lovingly:)* I knew you were in here. I could smell you. If I can't have you, nobody can.

(and in 3 swings obliterates the meal, EXITS.)

LUCKY *(ENTERING)* Aaack! *(Pulls out vacuum, turns it on and frantically tries to clean up.)*

LENNY'S VOICE *(Knocking)* Hey Lucky!

LUCKY Who is it?

LENNY'S VOICE It's me, Lenny from next door. Are you alright, dude? I just saw a guy in a color raincoat HOP out your window and run away! Are you OK, man?

LUCKY Oh, yeah, I'm fine, Lenny. That was a friend of mine. He was taking a shortcut home, and uh, he was having a bad hair day.

LENNY Are you sure, Lucky? He looked pretty suspicious.

LUCKY No, it's fine, Lenny. Thanks and good night.

LENNY Is someone holding you hostage in there?

LUCKY No, I'm fine, really!

LENNY Lemme see you're fine, Lucky! Open the door!

LUCKY *(fidgets trying to figure what to do)* Oh, all right.
(opens the door. LENNY ENTERS)

LENNY *(a burned out hippie)* Nobody here? Wow! Didja have a fight, man?

LUCKY Oh, no! Just a rough-housing, a pillow fight. Horsing around, you know. Silly stuff. Ka-pow! Hit the cereal box. Big mess.

LENNY *(looking at him strangely)*

Pillow fight. Yeah, well see ya, Lucky.

Oh, Lucky! Hey, man, sorry but I called the cops when I saw the guy go out your window. They'll be here soon. You can tell 'em it's OK. Sorry, dude. *(EXITS)*

LUCKY Cops coming! Aaaack! (*Vacuums chairs.*)

COP VOICE (*KNOCKING*) Open up! This is the police!

LUCKY Everything is fine, officer!

COP'S VOICE We have to verify that, ma'am. Open the door please, or we'll break it down.

LUCKY Just a minute! (*Vacuums more.*)

COP'S VOICE Open the door or stand back – We have stun grenades!

LUCKY Coming! (*stashes vacuum, opens door*)

COP (*disappointed as he puts grenade away*) Oh, good evening, ma'am – uh, sir. We had a report of a suspect hopping out your window.

(*COP & DETECTIVE ENTER.. Detective examines, measures and takes samples. Cop & Detective will retrieve things knocked into audience..*)

LUCKY Oh, no, that was just a friend of mine.

COP Why was he going out your window?

LUCKY It's a game we were playing.

COP A game. Mind if I have a look around?

LUCKY Oh, I'm sure you have more important things to do. Plenty of crime other places..

COP No. Actually it's a slow night.

LUCKY Well, sure, please ignore the mess. I'm a bachelor, you know, bit of a slob.

COP No, no, your apartment looks nice and tidy. Except for the cereal.

LUCKY Yeah, uh, we had a pillow fight, and it spilled the cereal.

COP Pillow fight. (*gesturing toward's Lucky's clothes*) Oh, yes, thus the pajamas. Strange how the pillows wound up nicely arranged on the couch afterwards.

DETECTIVE Officer, look at this. See the splatter pattern? 20 foot wide at least. And the impact sprays? I'd say 3 swings. The evidence has been destroyed here at the epi-center, where the resident cleaned up. (*nods with a fake smile toward Lucky*)
I'm sure the victim didn't realize he was destroying evidence, Did you, Mr....?

LUCKY Lepre.....kinsky..

DETECTIVE *(writing it down)* Mr. Lepperkinsky... Sir, is there any information you would like to offer to this investigation?

LUCKY Oh, no, no, no. There's nothing to investigate. It was just a childish game. I'll have it cleaned up in a jiffy.

DETECTIVE Mr. Lepperkinsky, I just find it curious that the circumstances of your "game" match similar crimes happening around town.

LUCKY Oh, is that so? What a coincidence.

DETECTIVE Except in those cases, it was TRIX CEREAL, not LUCKY CHARMS being obliterated. Can you explain?

LUCKY Hmm... Curious.

COP Detective!
(Hands battered Lucky Charms box to Detective)

DETECTIVE That pillow packed quite a punch, Mr. Lepper....
(DETECTIVE does a double-take seeing the similarity of Lucky on the box to Lucky who is also standing near the framed cereal box.)
...kinsky. Thank you for your time. Here's my number. *(hands Lucky a card)*
We'll let you get back to cleaning up all this cereal rolling around your floor.

COP *(snapping on rubber gloves)* Uh, I got a few questions, Detective. Maybe do a "search".

LUCKY Eeeek!

DETECTIVE No, officer, our work here is done. Good night, sir.

LUCKY Uh, goodnight.
(DETECTIVE and Disappointed COP EXIT.
Alone, Lucky resumes cleaning as

~CURTAIN CLOSES.~

Sounds of cleaning continue behind curtain.
COP & DETECTIVE ENTER stage apron.)

COP So, do you think he's --

DETECTIVE The cereal killer? No, I just can't see that wimpy little guy, sneaking into homes and smashing bowls of cereal...
But there's a reason why he'd destroy evidence. Maybe he's afraid to finger the culprit, or maybe he's protecting him. But there's more to it than that.

COP What else?

DETECTIVE Lucky Charms don't roll.

COP *(gasp!)* He had Trix in a Lucky Charms box?

DETECTIVE And something else besides Trix was rolling on the floor.

COP What?

DETECTIVE *(holds up chocolate covered raisin)* Recognize it?

COP *(eats it)* Hmm... Tastes nutritious.... and... and...! A hint of basil!?

DETECTIVE That's rabbit droppings, you idiot!!!! You don't "taste" evidence, you moron!
How did you graduate from the academy???? *(Grabs him by the collar and drags him, EXIT)*

See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from **It's a *GOOD* Life!**

by Jerome Bixby, adapted for stage by Jeannette Jaquish ©2010
Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

5 CHARACTERS: Aunt Amy, Mother, Hank, teen Henry Jr., 5 year old Anthony
Excerpt from SCENE 2

MOTHER: (*sitting on the porch peeling potatoes*) Television tonight.

AUNT AMY: (*shucking corn*) I'm glad. I look forward to it so much every week. It's so nice for everyone to have a good meal and visit together. I wonder what we'll see tonight?

MOTHER: I don't know, dear, but I'm sure Anthony will make it real good.

AUNT AMY: Yes. (*stops shucking corn, leans back and fans herself*) Goodness, it's so hot. I wish Anthony would make it just a little cooler--

MOTHER: Amy!!!

AUNT AMY: Oh! I'm sorry, Mary. (*Her eyes shuttle around, right and left*)

MOTHER: Anthony doesn't have to be near, Amy. You know that. This weather's just *fine*.

AUNT AMY: Oh, yes. It's a wonderful day. I wouldn't want it changed for the world!

MOTHER: It's good that Anthony is getting older and understands better that we need things just the way they are. That having a sun is important. If you go thinking that the sun is too hot, well, think what might happen? (*meaningful pause*) You don't want that.

AUNT AMY: Oh, no. Like when Anthony killed the pigs and I said the air smelled bad.

MOTHER: Yes, Anthony tried to fix the air. You remember that, Amy, don't you? The choking? And all the people who were outside? Anthony is such a good, caring, helpful child, who might be listening, and that is why everything is just fine, just the way it is.

AUNT AMY: Oh, Mary. I did forget. (*sincerely*) How could I forget that day? What is wrong with my mind? You're right. Everything is just fine. It's a good day!

MOTHER: Yes, Amy. A real good day. Everyone forgets things, Amy. Your mind is just fine. It's easy, just remember: Every day is a good day.

AUNT AMY (*drifting to a memory*) I remember when Anthony made the cat rug. I'll never forget that day. I shouldn't have yelled. I guess I hurt Anthony's feelings.

MOTHER It's good for you to remember the cat rug, but let's not talk about it. Let's talk about the surprise birthday party for Dan Hollis!

AUNT AMY: I can remember everything BEFORE the cat rug but not after. Since then it's all confused, big holes, and what's left doesn't make sense..... Did Anthony do something to....

MOTHER (*interrupting*) Amy, do you remember the cake we made this morning?

AUNT AMY The cake? Yes! We made a cake! For...

MOTHER (*teasing smile*) For?...

AUNT AMY Don Hollis's surprise birthday party! Oh that will be fun! Nobody's told him?

MOTHER: Everybody swore they wouldn't.

AUNT AMY: That'll be real nice. (*nods, rocking*) A birthday party.

MOTHER: Well, I'd better get the roast in the oven. Then we can set the table.

(*MOTHER sees Hank and his son Henry, Jr. approaching.*

Hank carries a hammer which ANTHONY has permanently fastened to his hand.)

Looks like we have company, that's unusual. (*Goes to meet them.*)

HANK & HENRY JR. Good afternoon, Mrs. Fremont.

MOTHER Good afternoon, Hank, Henry, Jr. What brings you clear out here? I see, you.... haven't misplaced your hammer again.

HANK Nope, and real good thing, too. Whatever, I'm doing, if I need a hammer, I've got it.

MOTHER Henry Jr., I.... I haven't gotten the chance to tell you in person that I'm sorry about your dog.

HANK That's OK, Mrs. Fremont, we didn't want that dog no more. He was a bad dog. A bad digging dog.

HENRY JUNIOR Yeah, it was good that Anthony made Jasper choke to death... eating his own paws.

HANK (*chuckle*) Real good. We're just taking the long way home. The Johnson's silo and the Wallace's barn both... uh, rolled into the river and tore out the downtown bridge, so we took the scout bridge to get back home.

MOTHER (*looking afar*) Why you're right! They're gone! I didn't think Anthony wandered that far. Anthony's getting older.....

(*ANTHONY ENTERS by, it seems, suddenly appearing and runs to his mother who pets his head.*)

HANK And there he is! Hey cowboy!

HENRY JUNIOR (*less enthusiastic*) Yeah, hey, cowboy.

HANK You having fun today, Anthony?

HENRY JR (*less enthusiastic*) Yeah, stayin' out of trouble?

MOTHER Anthony dear, did you put the Johnson's barn and the Wallace's silo into the river?

ANTHONY (*grinning with pleasure*) I rolled them in! (*acts it out*) Boingy boingy boingy. It was funny! The animals fell out but I rescued them.

HENRY JUNIOR Some of 'em drowned.

ANTHONY (*pointing accusingly at Henry, Jr.*) You're thinking I did a bad thing, Henry Junior!

HANK (*swoops in and grabs his boy by the shirt roughly*) I'll take him home and spank him, Anthony. He's a good boy, he just had one bad thought. I'll take him home and whup him real hard! Come on, boy, you're in big trouble!

(*THEY EXIT, the father yanking the son along quickly, saving his life, of course.*)

ANTHONY Use the belt! I'll be watching.

HENRY JR Not the belt! (*crying*)

See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll

adapted for stage by Jeannette Jaquish ©2007

Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

4 CHARACTERS: Alice, The Duchess, The Cook, The Hidden Crying Baby Voice- squall between other actors' lines and sniffle during their lines.

Excerpt from SCENE 7: THE DUCHESS'S HOUSE

(INTERIOR of Duchess's Kitchen

COOK stirs kettle over a fake fire on a table, or a fake stove, stage opposite of door. COOK has lots of throwable objects: plastic bowls, spoons, plastic food, food boxes, real and fake potatoes, carrots, cooked spaghetti, things that won't put an eye out or hurt much to be hit with.

The DUCHESS, sits near center, roughly feeding a bottle to a doll baby as the hidden Baby's Voice actor squalls behind her, and the Cook throws things towards her. She occasionally sneezes. To protect the Duchess actress, she sits in a high-backed chair and wears a fancy throw pillow as a protective decorative hat, tied under her chin, her back to the Cook. The CHESHIRE CAT lounges upstage center.

We hear sneezing, knocking, baby squalling and pot rattling as the curtain opens.)

DUCHESS It was all wrong in the dailies! They never get the story right! What really happened was when the Prime Minister made the announcement that the waterworks should be-

COOK Full of Pepper! *(grinds pepper)*

DUCHESS and paid for with monthly installments of -

COOK Moldy Cheese! *(throws it)*

DUCHESS The Parliament went into-

COOK A Leaky Teapot! *(throws it)*

DUCHESS and called for a vote to-

COOK Pull the guts out of that dead chicken! *(throws it)*

DUCHESS Oh, who is knocking? The noise is driving me absolutely-

COOK Crackers! *(throws box of)*

DUCHESS Get the door, Cook! Or you'll be out of a-

COOK Bushel of rotten potatoes! *(thrown across the room and against the door)*

(The impact of the potatoes pops the door open and ALICE who was leaning on the door stumbles in...)

ALICE Hello? May I come - Whoops! *(and trips or somersaults over rolling potatoes.)*

COOK Pasta's done! *(throws spaghetti)* More pepper!

ALICE Oh, clumsy me. Goodness! Aachoo! Aachoo! There's certainly too much pepper in that soup! Please, are you the Duchess? My name is Alice.

DUCHESS Did you let that thing in?

COOK I didn't let it in - You let it in! More pepper!

ALICE *(After looking around in amazed horror)* Pleased to meet you. Would you tell me why your cat grins like that?

DUCHESS It's a Cheshire cat, and that's why. Pig!

("She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped; but she saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her, so she took courage, and went on again.")

ALICE I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats COULD grin.

DUCHESS They all can, and most of 'em do.

ALICE *(politely)* I don't know of any that do.

DUCHESS You don't know much, and that's a fact.

("While Alice was trying to fix on a new topic, the COOK set to work throwing everything within her reach at the Duchess and the baby- -the fire-irons came first; then followed a shower of saucepans, plates, and dishes. The Duchess took no notice of them even when they hit her; and the baby was howling so much already, that it was quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not.")
(Substitute soft things to throw.)

ALICE Oh, PLEASE mind what you're doing! *(jumping up and down in an agony of terror.)* Oh, there goes his PRECIOUS nose!

DUCHESS If everybody minded their own business, the world would go round a deal faster than it does.

ALICE *(crossing in front of Duchess to stand between her and the Cook)* Which would NOT be an advantage. Just think of what effect that would have on day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis-

DUCHESS Talking of axes, chop off her head!

(ALICE turns around in terror to look at COOK who hits her with a faceful of spaghetti.)

ALICE Twenty-four hours, I THINK; or is it twelve?

DUCHESS Oh, don't bother ME with figures. I was a music major! *(BABY screams in terror.)*

(DUCHESS stands and sings, tossing baby up. Can be sung to the tune of "Pop Goes the Weasel".)

(MUSIC: DUCHESS'S PEPPER SONG)

DUCHESS: Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes:
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.

DUCHESS & COOK *(tossing baby over ALICE's head):* Wow! wow! wow! wow! wow! wow! wow!

DUCHESS: I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes;
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases!

DUCHESS & COOK *(tossing baby back and forth over ALICE's head):* Wow! wow! wow! wow! wow!
wow! wow! *(end music)*

DUCHESS Here! You may hold it a bit, if you like!

(Flings the baby at Alice who catches it.)

I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen! *(EXITS)* See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll

adapted for stage by Jeannette Jaquish ©2007

Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

SCENE 9: THE QUEEN'S CROQUET PARTY

3 CHARACTERS: Alice, Lord Milquetoast, Lady Lavender

(LORD MILQUETOAST AND LADY LAVENDER notice Alice struggling with her flamingo.)

ALICE Oh! This flamingo is hard to control.

LADY LAVENDER Good day, little girl. I am Lady Lavender of Castle Obsequious, and this is Lord Milquetoast from the Isle of Maybe. Are you visiting the Kingdom on holiday?

LORD MILQUETOAST *(aside)* Oh, no, my dear. She is obviously a commoner, probably a mop herder or spoon farmer.

LADY But she is obviously in the Queen's good graces. It seems prudent to pay her some respect or at least a bribe.

LORD Or, perhaps, she is a spy from the Domino Kingdom. Those blackguards will stop at nothing!

ALICE Hello, my name is Alice. This is a rather tricky game, isn't it?

LADY Have you ever played before?

ALICE I've played croquet before but never with flamingoes and hedgehogs.

(LORD & LADY look at each other in amazement.)

LORD Using what then?

LADY Perhaps reptiles and arachnids?

ALICE No. At our garden parties, we use wooden mallets and colored balls and metal arches.

LORD *(scuttling Lady Lavender away)* How charming. We must go take our turns.

LADY Oh, how frightening! She has obviously escaped from the Sanity Asylum. Do you think anyone else realizes?

LORD Don't cause a panic. Don't Look Back! And she looked so harmless.

See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from **You Don't Bring Me Flowers Anymore**
by Jeannette Jaquish ©2007
Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

3 CHARACTERS: Stephanie-wife, Ralph-husband who has become a zombie, Counselor

(Neither Stephanie nor the Counselor realize that Ralph's terrible behavior is because he has become a zombie. He constantly tries to grab and bite his wife and she fends him off. She has just shoved him away from biting the counselor and he is flopping on the floor.)

STEPHANIE Could we get back to discussing my husband's aggressive behavior? I think it is getting out of hand.

COUNSELOR Yes, he did leave his seat, but you and I were having an exclusive conversation. I apologize for my rudeness, Ralph. Could you apologize too, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE Fine! I'm sorry I stopped you from attacking the counselor, Ralph! Listen Doc, he won't talk to me in a civilized manner anymore. It's all bleagh blaughga *(imitates him)* this and that. We can't have a conversation if he won't use real words.

COUNSELOR She has a valid argument there, Ralph.

(Ralph is trying to climb up the Counselor's leg or chair. COUNSELOR calmly brushes him off, and off balance, he rolls away.)

COUNSELOR Ralph, do you think you can start using words again. *(trying to be silly and light-hearted)* You know, English words? Words in the dictionary words? Do you think, Ralph? Ralph?

RALPH Yeah, sure.

(During their conversation, RALPH drags himself behind STEPHANIE who keeps glancing back to keep track of him. When she is not looking he rises and reaches out to grab her head. When she looks he quickly, innocently, looks away and whistles. If he lays hands on her he tries to bite her head and she beats him away, even grabbing his chair and using it like a lion tamer to jab at him.)

COUNSELOR Anything else, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE *(snort of exasperation)* Oh, brother. Well, how about him always lunging at me and trying to bite me? I can't go anywhere with him anymore. In K-mart yesterday he almost got my whole scalp in his mouth. I had to hit him with a can of paint, and then I had slobber in my hair. I had to go to the toilet paper aisle and open a package of paper towels to wipe it off, right there in the aisle. People were looking.

COUNSELOR I can imagine your humiliation, Stephanie. Ralph, your physical public display is embarrassing your wife. Do you hear the shame in her voice? She's telling you her feelings.

RALPH *(pausing to look sad)* I sorry.

STEPHANIE *(sarcastic)* Oh, more words. This is an improvement.

COUNSELOR Yes, it IS an improvement. Thank you, Stephanie. Even a marriage counselor appreciates a compliment. You know, Stephanie, sometimes men don't know what they are doing wrong if you don't tell them. We're not mind readers.
(RALPH gives up attacking from the rear, and tries reaching under her chair to grab her legs.)

STEPHANIE I've noticed! Listen doc! I have to tell you. I'm considering divorce. I can't take this much longer.

COUNSELOR I appreciate you sharing that, Stephanie. Have you told Ralph?

STEPHANIE Only a million times. How about: "Stop following me everywhere I go or I'll divorce you!" How about: "Stop drooling all over me while I'm trying to sleep or I'll divorce you." Doc! Three blankets and a bedspread and the drool still soaks through. That's two additional loads of laundry every day, Doc!
How about: "Stop flopping all over my car every time I try to drive away or I'll divorce you!" Believe me, doc! He's heard it.

COUNSELOR Repetition can cause a numbing effect, Stephanie. And I just have to point out that Ralph hasn't made one complaint about you.

STEPHANIE But... but... how could he when well, he hardly says.... I mean... 4 words....

(End of Excerpt.)

See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from **Auditioning a Ghost**

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, adapted for stage by Jeannette Jaquish ©2009
Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

3 CHARACTERS: Watkins the Butler, Natalie the Daughter, Hobbes the Father

SCENE 1: CHANCE OF A GHOST --(evening)

CURTAIN OPENS

English sitting room, father's armchair, fireplace, table. Father MONTY HOBBS sits. Daughter NATALIE has just spoken to WATKINS. They wear nice evening clothes.)

WATKINS: (*irked*) I am most complimented, Miss Natalie, that you should care to extend my employment through all eternity but I must beg to decline. The paperwork would be horrendous. Master Hobbes, your newspaper. (*Lays the newspaper on the table, EXITS.*)

HOBBS: Thank you, Watkins. (*after WATKINS leaves*) Natalie, that was a tad rude.

NATALIE: Oh, Papa, don't scold. Watkins knows when I'm teasing.

HOBBS: Of course he knows you're teasing, Natalie. He'd be out the door in an instant if he thought you were serious. The poor man has enough stiff-upper-lipping to do without having to politely fend off the Mistress of the House asking if he wouldn't mind committing a fiendish murder, followed by a remorse stricken suicide, just so you could have a few ghosts to haunt the place.

NATALIE: (*pouty*) A real castle should have a ghost. And ghosts become ghosts from having died unnaturally, and tragically.

HOBBS: Well the tragedy is, that all you've accomplished so far, is to insure that we'll be haunted by a living, sulky butler.

NATALIE: Hmmmph.

HOBBS: (*amusing himself*) Maybe Watkins would conduct his duties draped in a sheet and dragging a chain. And moaning painfully... but he already does that. Still, if he asks for an increase in wages for the extra services, it's coming out of your entertainment allowance.

NATALIE: Might as well. I'm ashamed to host even a tea party with no story to tell. You should hear how Cornelia Jorrocks complains about their ghost! Cornelia says she can't get a good night's sleep because of her ghost's wailing. She can't get a drink of water in the night because she's afraid of stepping in the translucent blood trail that follows her.

HOBBS: How did Cornelia's drippy ghost die?

NATALIE: (*revealing her romantic enthusiasm*): When she read the letter telling that her lover had died at the battle of Dettingen... she cut her throat!

(*HOBBS looks shocked.*)

NATALIE: I would never do that. Stupid.

HOBBS: Uh.. good. Perhaps Cornelia Jorrich..?

NATALIE: Jorrocks.

(*HOBBS does not recognize it.*)

Of Havistock Farms?

HOBBS: Havistock?

NATALIE: Daddy! They live next door!

HOBBS: Oh, yes, Jorrocks. I've met the father -- a coarse fellow. Nearly accused me of knocking the stones off the wall between our properties. It seems the upper crust, at least in this part of England, includes a lot of crumbs.

NATALIE: That's why it's so unfair! Why do *they* get the ghost? And such a good one at that!

HOBBS: That mischievous ghost does seem to be skewing the normal criteria for social distinction. Explains a lot actually.

NATALIE: Explains what?

HOBBS: How a knucklehead like Jorrocks rates his own stool at the Thirsty Dragon. What if... What if Cornelia is making it up?

NATALIE: Well, since you don't believe in ghosts, you'd have to say that.

HOBBS: Just because I don't believe in ghosts, doesn't mean Cornelia isn't making it up, all the same.

NATALIE: The Jorrocks are not the only family claiming a ghost! Felicity Morgan's downstairs maid saw a woman wearing a bonnet picking flowers in their garden. And then the woman stepped into a shadow and faded away. Cecilia Cannon's little brother won't set foot in the attic since he saw a severed head hovering behind him in the mirror. Gwyneth Von Chandler's family can't keep a scullery maid employed for two weeks such are the whispers and cackling from their wine cellar! We must have the only castle in the province without a ghost!

HOBBS: Or without superstitious, in-bred, imaginative occupants.

NATALIE: Well I've tried to imagine! I've listened for weeping and ghostly voices. But it is always the wind scraping tree branches against the windows.

I stare into the dark trying to make out wispy figures. But no cold gust of wind seems unnatural. Every rustle and creak, I can tell was made by a mouse or owl or a servant sneaking jam.

When I was little, I feared the dark and cried for a light next to my bed. Do you remember, Papa? Now the dark is peaceful and comforting. I'm so miserable!
(sits on floor next to his chair, laying head on his knees.)

HOBBS: *(chuckling, comforting her)* Oh, Natalie

NATALIE: I want a ghost. Like the other castles.

HOBBS: Oh, My Poor Little Noodlehead. A ghost *is* all that Goresthorne Grange lacks. It has everything else!

The advertisement describing this as a feudal mansion was straight on. It is soothing to know that when needed, there are slits in the staircase through which to discharge arrows, and a complicated apparatus for pouring molten lead upon the head of the casual visitor or encyclopedia salesman.

NATALIE: I love the portcullis, the dungeon and the keep! And I love saying them. Portcullis. Portcullis. But the moat stinks.

HOBBS: That is why it is called a "moat" instead of an "encircling uncovered sewer" which is what it is.

NATALIE: Oh, you are so base and vulgar! Just like an American!

HOBBS: Fear not, darling! You obviously take after your elegant British mother and not your boorish American father.

NATALIE: I know. Everyone says I inherited her personality. And then when Great Uncle Cedric died, I inherited her castle.

HOBBS: Goresthorne Grange is massive, and primitive in its facilities, but I don't know that we can call it a "castle".

NATALIE: We could if it had a ghost!!!

HOBBS: Ah, yes. The ghost. The ghost that we don't have. Dearest daughter of mine, I thought the point of moving into, instead of selling for an enormous chunk of cash, this ancient pile of rock and timber, was for the prestige of owning a "castle" and having a wall-size fireplace over which to hang our mail order coat of arms. You should have told me. We could have bought an RV and parked it over a few plots in the cemetery.

NATALIE: You don't understand. You don't believe in ghosts. You think I want the impossible. *(plops into his chair, arms folded, mad)*

HOBBS: *(more to himself, as he figures out a solution)* But you do believe in ghosts. With all your heart. And this castle has sufficient creaks, groans and chilly gusts..... If only.... Aha!

NATALIE: What Poppa?

HOBBS: Jacky Brockett!

NATALIE: Mummy's cousin?

HOBBS: Jackie is a talent scout with ledgers full of clients.

NATALIE: Poppa, you can't hire a ghost.

HOBBS: No, but we could hire someone to conduct a seance to bring one in!

NATALIE: A medium?

HOBBS: Yes! Cousin Jackie might be just the ticket. She has seancers and mystics as clients, along with her retinue of banjo players, tapestry appraisers and folks who retrieve ferrets from drain pipes. Think of all the *(selecting the right words; he is making this up as he goes)* unnatural, tragic deaths history holds. Certainly, some of those... tortured wandering souls could be ...umm.... invited to live here, by a ... gifted communicator with the dead.

NATALIE *(getting excited)*: Oh, Poppa! Could she? Would you? Please pen her a letter this evening!

HOBBS: Better than that, cream puff. I was going into town tomorrow anyway. I'll drop in and put her onto the job.

NATALIE: Oh, Poppy-loppy!

HOBBS: Oh, Nattie-noodle!

(They do something goofy like rub noses or do a little dance.)

WATKINS: *(as he appears in the doorway with a drink tray)* Ahem!

(HOBBS & NATALIE freeze, then separate embarrassed & assume dignified poses.)

WATKINS: Master Hobbes, Miss Natalie, your bedtime hot chocolates.

(Sets down tray. Will pour cocoa from teapot, and is about to shake jar of "cinnamon".)

HOBBS: Thank you, Watkins. You'll be pleased to know that Miss Natalie will be acquiring her ghost ... from an outside source.

WATKINS: Oh! Very good, sir.

(Puts down cinnamon, hands each their cup and again picks up "cinnamon")

Then I won't be needing to sprinkle this umm... "cinnamon" into your chocolates, and I won't need to fling myself off the tower afterwards.

(NATALIE freezes, already sipping, HOBBS freezes about to sip.)

Good night, Miss, Sir. *(EXITS)*

(HOBBS & NATALIE look at their cups, she with a big chocolate milk moustache)

HOBBS *(bursts into laughter)*: Well, darling. You didn't tell him who to murder.

See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

Excerpt from *A Christmas Carol*

by Charles Dickens, adapted for stage by Jeannette Jaquish ©2008

Script at www.theaterfunscripts.com

3 CHARACTERS: Wench-serving girl, Cook, Scrooge

(Christmas Morning, and Scrooge's visits with the spirits have given him a new joy of life.)
WENCH (*wiping a café table*) The brisket guy said his had turned.

COOK (*sweeping, hungry*) Did he leave it?

WENCH No wrapped it up in his newspaper and took it with 'im. For his dog.

COOK Right. Bloody twit.

COOK Doncha hate working on Christmas?

WENCH No, truly I don't. It's the only day of the year I'd rather be here.

COOK Why's that?

WENCH My father gets the day off and he spends it tippin' a bottle and blamin' the world, including me.

COOK Blamin' you?

WENCH To hear him tell it, if he didn't have a daughter he'd be a world class explorer, leading a safari baggin' tigers in India, or be the hand-picked adviser to the Mayor of London.

COOK Blimey! What a character!

WENCH If he didn't have a daughter, I can tell you, he'd be a sight smellier and got his throat cut long ago. Oh, now here comes **Mr** Christmas Spirit.

(SCROOGE ENTERS)

WENCH Top of the morning to you, Mr. Scrooge. Will it be our Christmas Dinner Special or just a late breakfast?

(COOK EXITS)

SCROOGE (*sternly*) Young lady. How many years have you worked at this establishment?

WENCH (*instantly terrified*) I don't know sir, about 7, since I were 12.

SCROOGE And how many days a week have I come in for dinner?

WENCH Five, sir, Monday through Friday.

SCROOGE And what do I usually spend?

WENCH About 2 shillings, sir.

SCROOGE: And how much do I usually tip?

WENCH (*uncomfortable pause*): You don't tip.

SCROOGE Exactly. Let's see, 7 years, times 52 weeks per year, times 5 days, times 2 shillings, times 15 percent... (*writing*)

WENCH 546 shillings, sir, or 27 pounds 6 shillings. Are you, are you.... wantin' a refund?

SCROOGE How did you do that?

WENCH Do what? What did I do?? I'm sorry sir, whatever it was.

SCROOGE I'd like to speak to your Master, young lady.

WENCH He ain't here, sir, but his son is, but if I've been rude, sir or given you poor service, I beg your forgiveness and promise never to do it again.

SCROOGE The owner's son, please.

WENCH (*doomed*) Yes, sir. Jonathan!

COOK What?

WENCH Mr Scrooge to give your father a message.

COOK Yessir?

SCROOGE (*handing a check*) Here is a check to reimburse your father for having to hire another serving maid.

WENCH Oh, no! (*bursts into tears*)

SCROOGE I want this young lady to enroll immediately at the Academy for Girls.

COOK and WENCH What?

SCROOGE I calculate, or rather you calculated for me, much faster than I ever could, that I owe you 27 pounds and 6 shillings in back tips. That should be enough for your first semester's tuition, room and board, and if your grades are top notch, I'll pay for next semester, as well.

I am writing you a certified check for that amount made out to the school and yourself.

Now what is your name? I apologize. I've never asked before. Very rude of me.

(*She just stares in shock.*)

Your name, young lady.

COOK Her name's Catherine Worley.

SCROOGE (*writing*) How is "Worley" spelled?

WENCH I don't know. I can't read nor write.

SCROOGE You calculate like a thing of nature but you can't read???

WENCH Don't need to. There's no menu written down. I just remember the orders.

SCROOGE Amazing. Well, we'll just spell Worley with an "O". (*hands it to her. Cook reaches out and turns it right side up in her hands*)

Now take this to the Academy tomorrow and tell them Ebenezer Scrooge is considering you for a position in his firm. Aaaaand Merry Christmas!

(*SCROOGE "leaves" moving away.*)

(*WENCH is still dumbfounded.*)

COOK Catherine! You're going to school!

(*Jonathan grabs both her hands and they jump up and down like children.*)

WENCH Jonathan! I'm going to school! (*They laugh and EXIT.*) See the script at www.theaterfunscripts.com