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**BE MY GHOST**

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# BE MY GHOST



**A suspenseful mystery comedy spoof**

**by Tim Kelly**



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

**Contemporary Drama Service**

PO Box 7710 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

## ***STORY OF THE PLAY***

Young George Travis writes horror fiction and everyone is certain he'll be the next Stephen King. Unfortunately, he's suffering from "writer's block" and hasn't had an idea in months. He travels to rural New Hampshire where he plans to wed his childhood sweetheart, Betty Fisher. George's eccentric Aunt Julia has recently passed on and willed him Black Raven Inn, a gloomy summer hotel. Local villagers stay away from the place because it's haunted by the *dangerous* spirit of one Mercy Appleton. When George and Betty step over the threshold on a dark and stormy night, (what else?) all manner of hilarity and terror breaks out. High school students, detoured from a Halloween celebration, seek shelter. Rootin'-Tootin', an Egyptian mummy, is delivered for storage, a Hollywood agent drops in, two weird sisters collect roadkill so they can practice taxidermy. When the housekeeper, Mrs. Shrivel, is murdered in a bizarre fashion, what starts out as routine fun and games ends up as a perplexing who-done-it. There's a parade of hilarious characters (many requiring only minimal rehearsal). The mad action is nonstop. Nothing is what it seems, and even George is startled when the truth turns out to be something he never expected. Wild! Creepy! Funny! A guaranteed box office smash. Eat your heart out, Stephen King.

## ***SYNOPSIS***

The action of the play takes place at the sinister Black Raven Inn in rural New Hampshire.

The time is the present.

### **ACT I**

**Scene 1:** A rainy night in late October.

**Scene 2:** Later.

### **ACT II**

**Scene 1:** A few seconds following.

**Scene 2:** Still later.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(in order of appearance)*

**BILLY** . . . . . odd teenager; looks as if he's part canine or ape  
**MRS. SHRIVEL** . . . . . housekeeper. Severe  
**GEORGE TRAVIS** . . . . . young writer of imaginative fiction  
**BETTY FISHER** . . . . . his fiancée, about 19  
**PAULETTE** . . . . . works at the inn, 16 or 17  
**DOROTHY CRUMB** . . . . . eccentric resident, also an  
amateur taxidermist.  
**MINERVA** . . . . Dorothy's sister; another amateur taxidermist  
**ZOLA LEWELLYN** . . . . . George's agent  
**PAUL CONRAD** . . . . . village attorney  
**ALMIRA** . . . . . his sister; writes bad poetry  
**CABDRIVER\*** . . . . . hates visiting Black Raven Inn  
**MERCY APPLETON** . . . . . ghost of a jilted bride  
**KAY CRANDALL** . . . . . criminal accomplice  
**STONEWALL DUNN** . . . . . bank robber  
**SHERIFF SANFORD** . . . . . local lawman  
**COUNTESS STARLIGHT** . . . . . psychic  
**ROOTIN'-TOOTIN'\*** . . . . . Egyptian mummy  
**ANASTASIA WIGGINS** . . . . . about 15, demented  
**MISS FROST** . . . . . Anastasia's keeper  
**PEGGY COWL** . . . . . librarian in search of her mummy  
**CHARLIE SUTTON** . . . . . high school student  
**LILY CARROLL** . . . . . another

\* The roles of CABDRIVER and ROOTIN'-TOOTIN' are played by the same actor.

If you wish, extras can be added as high schoolers, ghouls.

## ***PRODUCTION NOTES***

### **ON STAGE**

Fireplace, portrait of woman, steps and railing, chairs (3), desk/counter, hand bell, telephone, mail and key slots. Sofa, table with 3 chairs.

### **OPTIONAL STAGE DRESSING (as / if desired)**

Carpet, rugs, lamps, wall sconces, chandelier, stuffed birds, etc.

**BROUGHT ON, ACT I, Scene 1:** Candle in candlestick holder, leather belt with ring of keys (MRS. SHRIVEL), raincoat, hat (GEORGE, BETTY), handkerchief (BETTY), apron (PAULETTE), shawl, stuffed bird or small animal (MINERVA, DOROTHY), raincoat, umbrella (ZOLA), briefcase with folder, book (ALMIRA), spectacles (PAUL).

**BROUGHT ON, ACT I, Scene 2:** Hot water bottle, sweater (GEORGE), sweater (BETTY), jacket and cap (CABDRIVER), fake hand (BILLY), heavy coat, basket, lantern or flashlight (MINERVA, DOROTHY), bridal veil, bouquet of dead [paper] flowers, knife (MERCY), wrapped mummy with delivery tag (CABDRIVER, BILLY). Raincoat, newspaper (KAY), newspaper (STONEWALL), robe decorated with stars, wand (COUNTESS STARLIGHT), GEORGE's and BETTY's raincoat on hangers (PAULETTE), small suitcase with bundled money bills inside (STONEWALL), tea mugs (ZOLA, GEORGE, BETTY), police uniform, holster and [toy] revolver, rain gear (SHERIFF).

**BROUGHT ON, ACT II, Scene 1:** Strip of mummy cloth (behind sofa — SHERIFF), raincoat (PEGGY), bedsheet (PAULETTE), briefcase (PAUL), sheet of paper (ALMIRA), small suitcase (STONEWALL), bridal veil, bouquet, knife (MERCY).

**BROUGHT ON, ACT II, Scene 2:** Handkerchief (GEORGE), apple (SHERIFF), small suitcase (STONEWALL), bridal veil, bouquet (PAULETTE), whistle (ZOLA), small suitcase containing the wrapped bundles of money (BILLY), resumés, photos (ACTORS), small note pad and pencil (GEORGE).

### **SOUND**

Storm, slamming of door, séance mood music.

## **FLEXIBLE CASTING**

*Adjust according to the needs.* For example, some male roles can be switched to female — SHERIFF, CHARLIE, OPTIONAL GHOULS. Some female roles can be switched to male — ZOLA becomes ZACH, KAY becomes KEN, COUNTESS becomes SWAMI, ANASTASIA becomes ANDREW, LILY becomes LUKE.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

If you're using drapes instead of scenery flats, the cellar door and the office door are simply indicated by the dialog. The steps and railing can be eliminated. Characters will exit left in Upstage hallway when they are supposedly going upstairs. The "steps" can be Off-stage. The "fake hand" BILLY tosses at CABDRIVER is easily obtainable at any joke store. Or create one by using a stuffed glove. If you can come up with a complete mummy costume, use it. It will prove most effective. If not, CABDRIVER can wear a shredded, oversized suit with bandaging sticking out at the sleeves and ankles. The head and hands will be wrapped in burlap strips.

Keep a watering can Off-stage so that, when characters enter from the storm, a part of their costume will be a *little* wet.

When PAULETTE comes down the steps impersonating MERCY APPLETON, she might hold a flashlight behind the bouquet. Either use a green or red bulb or cover the light with a thin cloth. It will cast an eerie glow upward to PAULETTE's face. If you have access to a wedding gown, the real MERCY APPLETON might wear it. Otherwise, veil and bouquet will suffice.

The roadkill DOROTHY pulls from her basket in Act II, Scene 1, is supposedly something squashed on the highway. It can be a skunk, cat, raccoon, buzzard — whatever you can manage to suggest the critter.

Stage blood or paint will work for GEORGE's bloodied hand. Don't rush the brief séance sequence. The mood should be eerie, atmospheric.

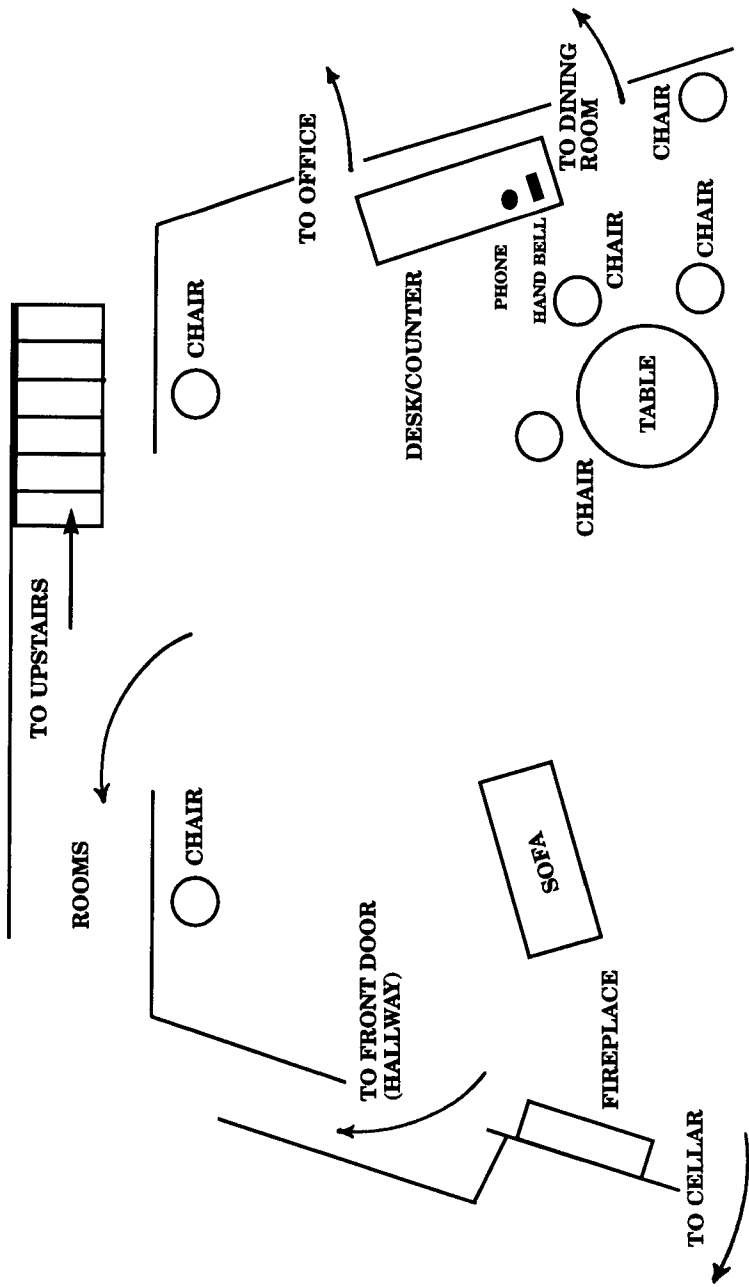
**IMPORTANT:** *The pacing of the spoof, except for the séance, must be fast.* Not rushed but brisk. No pauses between lines, no dead air. Boldly stated entrances and exits. Everyone speaks LOUD and CLEAR. The picking up of cues and crisp blocking will take some extra drilling, but it will be worth it. Don't be subtle, but take the spoof seriously. This way the show will get

bigger laughs.

Don't allow the **STORM EFFECTS** to overpower the dialog or go on too long. This will be distracting. Best to introduce the effect, let it play for a few moments, and then fade it down and out.

One last point — **HAVE FUN.**





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

**SETTING:** The Black Raven Inn. We are looking at what passes for a lobby and sitting room. Down Right leads to the cellar. Stage Right is a fireplace. On the wall above, the portrait of a dour-looking woman dressed in a gown from some bygone era. She looks quite menacing. Up Right is the main entrance into the lobby with a hallway beyond that leads to the unseen front door. Up Center is an archway that leads into another hallway. Right from this hallway leads to various rooms. Left leads to the upstairs. We can see steps and railing. There's a chair right of archway and another left. Left Center is a hotel desk or registration counter with a gate facing Downstage. Telephone, hand bell. Behind the desk/counter is a rack for room keys and slots for mail. There's an office door behind the desk/counter. Below the desk/counter is the entry for the dining room. The kitchen is beyond. Down Right Center is a faded sofa or settee. Down Left Center is a table with three chairs. Down Left another chair or stool. So much for the basics.

The setting will work nicely in just stage draperies. (Consult Production Notes.) The important thing about Black Raven Inn is this — *it's a grotesque dump*. Everything is old and frayed. Hasn't been dusted in at least a decade and looks it. Creepy, crawly, dank. Cobwebs everywhere. Optional stage dressing, as desired: Old carpet, rugs, lamps, chairs, wall sconces [one on each side of portrait], chandelier, stuffed birds and/or animals, etc.

**PRIOR TO LIGHTS UP:** Sound of a terrible storm — thunder, howling wind, driving rain. The sound grows louder and louder, reaching a crescendo. Then it fades and we can hear the sound of someone banging at the unseen front door.

**LIGHTS:** Slowly the lights dim up about halfway. There's a glow in the fireplace indicating logs burning. A moment or two for the eerie scene to present itself to the audience, and then someone or some "thing" scurries from the cellar. The creature (BILLY)

1 looks somewhat deformed. Walks or, rather, lopes like something  
2 canine or simian. Eyebrows are shaggy. Thick hair covers  
3 pointed ears. Holds hairy hands as if they were paws. BILLY  
4 starts to move for the dining room. More banging at front door  
5 stops him. On the alert, he stops, listens. In a moment more  
6 banging. He trots to the front hallway, but is afraid to go to the  
7 door. More banging. He trots Up Center and calls up the dark  
8 steps —

9 **BILLY: Mrs. Shrivel? Mrs. Shrivel, people at the front door!**

10 **MRS. SHRIVEL'S VOICE: Let them in, Billy.**

11 **BILLY: Not me. You know I don't like answering the door.**

12 **MRS. SHRIVEL'S VOICE: Stuff and nonsense. Very well. I'm**  
13 **coming down.**

14 **BILLY: Good.** (*BILLY licks the back of his hand. Quickly moves to*  
15 *Downstage end of desk/counter and crouches low, his eyes*  
16 *watching the steps. A moment passes and we see someone coming*  
17 *down the stairs with a lighted candle in a candlestick. This is*  
18 *MRS. SHRIVEL, the housekeeper. She looks like every "haunted*  
19 *house" housekeeper we've seen in old horror movies. Long black*  
20 *dress, her hair pulled back tightly in a bun. Room keys dangling*  
21 *on a leather belt. Her expression would sour cream. Posture stiff*  
22 *as a ramrod. She's severe and unyielding. She enters the lobby*  
23 *and looks about.*)

24 **MRS. SHRIVEL: Billy?** (*BILLY makes an animal sound.*)

25 **BILLY: Here I am, Mrs. Shrivel.**

26 **MRS. SHRIVEL: (Sees him.) What are you doing over there?**  
27 **Unbolt the front door.**

28 **BILLY: I don't like to open the front door. How many times do**  
29 **I have to tell you?**

30 **MRS. SHRIVEL: (Hint of threat) Mind your words.**

31 **BILLY: (Resigned) All right, all right. I'm going.** (*He exits Up*  
32 *Right, mumbling to himself.*) **Unbolt the front door, unbolt**  
33 **the front door. Unbolt the front door.** (*MRS. SHRIVEL steps*  
34 *to the desk/counter. Blows out the candle and puts down the*  
35 *candlestick. Turns on a lamp or two and the lights dim up a bit*

1           *more. Sound of voices from front hallway.)*  
2   **GEORGE'S VOICE:** About time you opened the door.  
3   **BILLY'S VOICE:** Yeah.  
4   **BETTY'S VOICE:** We could have drowned standing outside.  
5   **BILLY'S VOICE:** Yeah. Yeah. (*MRS. SHRIVEL reacts to the voices.*  
6           *She folds hands in front of her, stands center waiting for the*  
7           *arrivals to show themselves.)*  
8   **GEORGE'S VOICE:** What a storm!  
9   **BETTY'S VOICE:** I'm drenched to the skin. *Ach-choo!*  
10  **GEORGE'S VOICE:** Bless you. (*Enter GEORGE TRAVIS, about*  
11           *twenty-one or twenty-two, but looks younger. He's a nice guy,*  
12           *extremely likeable — but, boy, does he have a wild imagination.*  
13           *He's a writer, quite successful. Behind him is his fiancée, BETTY*  
14           *FISHER, about nineteen, intelligent and pretty. At the moment*  
15           *they both look like drowned cats. Their raincoats are soaked*  
16           *through. As GEORGE speaks, he takes off his hat and "wings it*  
17           *out." BETTY removes her head covering.)*  
18  **GEORGE:** Never rains like this in sunny California.  
19  **BETTY:** Not this heavy, anyway.  
20  **MRS. SHRIVEL:** You, I take it, are young Mr. Travis.  
21  **GEORGE:** George Travis, yes. You must be the housekeeper.  
22           Mrs. Shovel.  
23  **MRS. SHRIVEL:** Shrivel. In addition to being the housekeeper,  
24           I am also the resident manager. I took over those duties  
25           from your late aunt. Someone had to. It was either that or  
26           close up.  
27  **GEORGE:** You must have your hands full.  
28  **MRS. SHRIVEL:** Nothing I can't handle. On behalf of the staff,  
29           myself included, may I welcome you to Black Raven Inn.  
30  **SOUND:** Thunder. (*GEORGE and BETTY react.*)  
31  **GEORGE:** What a night, what a night.  
32  **MRS. SHRIVEL:** I enjoy storms. The darkness, the crack of  
33           lightning, the boom of thunder.  
34  **BETTY:** *Ach-choo!*  
35  **GEORGE:** You're coming down with a nasty cold, Betty.

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