

SAMPLE SCENE

Edgar

A Ghost Story

(Full-Length Version)

By John Haman

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### Cast of Characters

<u>LISA FOSTER:</u>	Female, new high school drama teacher.
<u>MOLLY:</u>	Female, lively student, theater tech.
<u>EMMA:</u>	Female, student, writer/actress, suffering from a serious illness.
<u>MASON:</u>	Male, student, anti-social behavior.
<u>HEATHER:</u>	Female, student, actress, reformed popular girl into “new-age.”
<u>GARRETT:</u>	Male, transfer student, difficulty adjusting.
<u>MORRIS:</u>	Male, assistant principal with childlike side. Runs quickly.
<u>TURNEY:</u>	High school counselor.
<u>HARLOW:</u>	Special-education teacher.
<u>RUMBOLD:</u>	Male, grandfather of Garrett. Mentally unstable. 60s/70s.
<u>EXTRA STUDENTS:</u>	As needed to round out scenes.

### Casting Note

Nominally, there are four females and four males, with two roles flexible by gender, as TURNEY and HARLOW can be either male or female. Extra school kids can be used and some lines divided to give more students a chance to participate in the classroom scenes.

Schools and companies producing “Edgar: A Ghost Story” can feel free to change the genders of any of the characters -- and change the character names, if needed -- to accommodate the kind of cast that they want and need to put on stage. Accordingly, pronouns may be changed, as well, and minor line changes can be made for the purpose of making the play work for the actors you have available. Same-sex relationships are allowed, within those adaptations. No other changes are allowed without written permission from the publisher or playwright.

Place

Sugarloaf High School, a secondary school in a mid-sized Arkansas town. Most of the play takes place in the school auditorium. Drama classes are held on stage, with kids sitting mostly on the floor. Around them are visible light rigs, set pieces, etc.

Staging

The play is designed for an auditorium, using the features of the performing space to tell the story. Scenes in the counselor's office can be staged in front of a closed curtain, or out on the apron of the stage, with tightly focused lighting. When the curtain opens again, then, we're back to the "auditorium." An upstage scrim is required, but it can be a special, smaller, mobile scrim, perhaps six to eight feet wide, hanging from a rod. The play may be performed with or without intermission.

SAMPLE STARTS AT SCENE 3...

(Cross-fade to the classroom at lunch.  
EMMA is seated with her lunch box and  
GARRETT walks in with a tray.)

GARRETT

Hey, whatcha doing ?

EMMA

(Not particularly friendly)

This is where I eat, most days.

GARRETT

Why .... aren't you in the cafeteria?

EMMA

*(Pause)* Why aren't you?

(Quietly, he sits down with her.  
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

EMMA wants to be alone and is not used to others taking an interest in her, but GARRETT seems to be there on purpose, and she realizes that he is not leaving, and it is now awkward to ignore him. After a pause:)

EMMA (CONT'D)

Lunch gets weird. Finding a group ...

GARRETT

Yeah.

EMMA

Even if the kids are nice, I still end up talking about my scarf, my hair. My illness.

GARRETT

(Seemingly disinterested)

I'm not even gonna ask.

EMMA looks up at him.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

*(Pause)* How bout Miss Foster, though? She's alright. I like being in her class.

EMMA

*(Softly)* It's safe here.

GARRETT

She's cool. But anywhere away from monster boy is good.

EMMA

Mason?

GARRETT

There was someone like him at the old school, too.

EMMA

Thought you didn't want to talk about that.

GARRETT

I don't mind it with you. You've got an understanding face.

EMMA

You mean I've got my own problems, and that makes you feel better? (*Beat*). That was snarky. I ... apologize.

GARRETT

It's cool. I'm not used to people being nice. They look at me and see I'm not a jock or a brain, or anything else interesting, and I just disappear.

EMMA

Invisibility. I get it. People see my scarf, the pale skin. They see that I'm thinner than they think I should be, and they figure I won't be around long. They don't see me at all.

GARRETT

That's a shame.

(Looks at her. Pause. Sincerely.)

GARRETT (CONT'D)

I can see you.

(Pause)

EMMA

I see you too.

GARRETT

Eh, don't look so hard.

EMMA

(Pause)

Tell you what. Look me over. Tell me everything you see. Then I'll give you the same treatment. How's that sound?

GARRETT

Fair, I guess.

EMMA

So, what do you see?

GARRETT

Someone way smarter than I am. You choose ... really good words.

(EMMA laughs)

GARRETT (CONT'D)

You have an ...identity. You're smart, a good actor and a good writer. You're quick on your feet.

EMMA

What else? I'm not fishing for compliments. Just curious what I'm putting out there.

GARRETT

I think you've lived through some really tough things.

EMMA

Yep.

GARRETT

Probably a lot of throwing up.

EMMA

(Laughs)

Also true.

GARRETT

And a lot of nasty stuff to swallow.

EMMA

Actually it was mostly I.V.

GARRETT

Looking at what you are eating, seems like you don't have much appetite.

EMMA

Still get weekly treatments.

GARRETT

Yours eyes are kind of ... tired.

EMMA

Great.

GARRETT

But really ... kind.

(EMMA smiles just a little. Substantial pause.  
Not looking at him.)

EMMA

Do you see that I'm dying?

(Silence)

GARRETT

I don't know what that looks like, exactly.

EMMA

Come on now.

(Pause)

GARRETT

Yeah. I see it.

(There's quiet between them as they focus on  
their food for a bit. Awkwardly.)

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Your turn?

EMMA

Sure. You ... have some trouble learning.

GARRETT

Okay. I mean yeah. I do.

EMMA

You learn from experience. You learn from, connecting. It's classroom learning you  
struggle with.

GARRETT

People, I get. One-on-one, anyway. I can ... relate. Books I don't get.

EMMA

You also understand death. *(Pause)* Anyway, you aren't afraid of it. That's why you're  
willing to talk to me. You know it's not catching.



GARRETT

I have direct experience.

EMMA

You've already been dead? (*She smiles*)

GARRETT

When I was six, I found my mother dead.

EMMA

Jesus.

GARRETT

I'm not really hung up on death. My mother talks to me.

EMMA

Really? (Pause) What does ... *how* does she ...

GARRETT

I hear her voice. She tells me there's nothing to be afraid of.

EMMA

Wow. I'm terrified. My mother, my father, they're both healthy. They're planning to live for another 40 years. They take it for granted. They look at me, and they don't know if I'll be here another three months. I see the fear in their eyes. For me. They can't imagine what it must feel like. They know I won't have a family. Everything I do could be the last time. Lots of pictures. Lots of special days together. Every day reminds me that there won't be many more.

GARRETT

(Hoping to cheer her up)

Couple of ways you can go with that. You could say, hey, it's just a normal day. Live it like everything's cool. Or I guess you could say, why I am I in school? Let's go have some ... experiences.

EMMA

I want the normal day. It keeps me calm and ... happy? I don't know if I can say I'm happy. But I also want the experiences.

GARRETT

What's on your list?

EMMA

I'd like to write a book. Maybe a novella.

GARRETT

Okay.

EMMA

I'd like to see the Rockies. Maybe all the way up into Canada. The glacial lakes. Elk. Moose.

GARRETT

Sounds doable.

EMMA

(Looking down)

And I want to know what being in love feels like.

(GARRETT looks up, while EMMA keeps her eyes down)

LISA enters the scene, smiling.

LISA

I hope I'm not interrupting.

GARRETT

No, it's fine. Thanks for letting us eat here, Miss Foster.

LISA

You deserve a place to relax. Emma, I have something for you.

EMMA

Really?

LISA hands over an envelope, which EMMA opens.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hey! I did it!

LISA

Yeah?

EMMA

I'm a finalist! In the playwriting contest!

GARRETT

Heck yeah! Good job!

LISA

I *knew* you could.

EMMA

This means my play is going to be showcased! (*Beat*) Oh *crap*. It means I have to *produce my play*. Cast it, direct it, everything!

GARRETT

You can do it. I know you can.

EMMA

But ... I need help. Lots of help. (*Looks at Garrett.*) You! I'm going to need you, Garrett! You have to be involved.

GARRETT

What can I do?

EMMA

You can be my stage manager.

(Silence)

GARRETT

That's a small job, right?

(LISA laughs knowingly. Lights down, LISA crosses into the other scene, and lights up on the counselor's office.)

TURNEY

Garrett has abandonment issues. I had him in my office and we talked forever. His momma died of a big ole drug overdose. After that, daddy disappeared, and that's how the boy ended up with Grandpa.

LISA

He seems so normal to me. I haven't had any trouble at all.

HARLOW

True, but he's barely functional in some classes. He *can't* do the math. He *won't* read the English assignments. In history he's actually disruptive, and he's already gotten into two fights.

LISA

But in my class he's eager to learn. There's a girl involved, but he does the work, participates in class, and he even seems excited. He's well behaved. I guess it's just the power of the arts.

TURNEY

Isn't it tempting to think you're the first-year teacher of the century? But lemme take some shine off that apple. Garrett was with me, waffling about his electives, and I was the one who sent him your way. He was telling me how awkward he felt. Something about --

(Cross-fade to classroom)

GARRETT

(Hands hanging down like Frankenstein)

--The hands. What do you do with them?

EMMA

Huh?

GARRETT

They don't feel real. Hands, they just hang there. I feel like they should be doing something.

EMMA

Just ... relax your body and stop being a dork about it.

GARRETT

But I feel like an alien. Like I don't belong here. My hands are ...weird and my face is ugly and I'm ... floating above everyone, and they're all laughing. I feel like I could walk through that wall and no one would notice. That's how I feel every day in this school.

EMMA

You know what? (*Smiles*) You're kind of a drama queen.

GARRETT

Really? You think so?

EMMA

Definitely. I think theater is --

(Cross-fade to the counselor's office.)

TURNEY

-- "*really* going to bring you out of your shell. Make you more comfortable in your skin."  
That's what I said!

LISA

You are a genius, no doubt about it.

(Side-eye at HARLOW)

LISA (CONT'D)

But I think the biggest challenge here is Mason. That boy has bullied Garrett since day one.

HARLOW

That's nothing new. Mason bullies everyone. That boy is an equal-opportunity A-hole.  
(Cross-fade back to the classroom.)

GARRETT

(Agitated)

So if I can't hit him ... and I can't steal his phone, then what am I supposed to do when he gets in my face?

EMMA

Why not try a well-composed literary insult?

GARRETT

Are you serious?

EMMA

Deadly serious.

GARRETT

Where am I supposed to get something like that?

EMMA

From the library, goofball. Oh, okay, how silly of me. Wait --

She goes to a cart on the stage.

EMMA (CONT'D)

There's a handout in here. Where are you? Got it! Shakespearean Insults. A copy for you, and one for me. Now then. Let's trade insults. I'll start, and we'll see what you're made of. These aren't from the plays, really, but they sound like they are. The hand-out gives you three columns. Just say the word "thou," then pick something from column 1, 2, and 3, and deliver it in a nasty tone.

GARRETT

I'd rather just talk about your mother.

EMMA

*Think of this like a rap battle.*

GARRETT

Oh! *(Looks at the list)* Then it's on.

EMMA

Here we go. *(Clears throat)*. "Thou impertinent ...fool-born ... hedge pig!"

GARRETT

*(Laughs)*

Okay. Lemme try. "Thou ruttish ... clapper-clawed ... barnacle?"

EMMA

*(Not impressed)*

Alright ... How did that feel?

GARRETT

Awkward.

EMMA

And that's how it sounded. Glide through that insult like you're stabbing me with a sword,

*(Snaps into character)*

EMMA (CONT'D)

"Thou *mangled*, ill-breeding *flap-dragon!*"

GARRETT

(Responding with more gusto.)

“Thou ... loggerheaded, RUMP-FED, foot-licker!”

EMMA

Good. “Thou reeky, half-faced malt-worm!”

(The bell rings. Other kids gather and are starting to cheer the insults. One of them puts a Shakespearian hat on GARRETT’s head, and GARRETT Finds an extra something in the character.)

GARRETT

“Thou *artless*, beef-witted MAGGOT-PIE!”

EMMA

“Thou dissembling, dizzy-eyed BLADDER!”

GARRETT

(Suddenly standing)

“Thou FAWNING, elf-skinned MAMMET!”

CROWD

Oooh!

GARRETT

(Quickly)

What’s a mammet?

EMMA

(Standing)

Come at me! “Thou impertinent, BEETLE-HEADED, CANKER-BLOSSOM”

GARRETT

(Moving around the table at her. They move as if they are fencing.)

“Thou puking, knotty-pated CLOT-POLE!”

EMMA

(Standing tall against him.)

“Thou mammering, DOG-HEARTED jolt-head.”

(Pause)

GARRETT

Wow. That hurt.

EMMA

Fight back with words, “thou infectious fat-kidneyed PUTTOCK!”

GARRETT

“Villainous pox-marked MISCREANT!”

EMMA

“FROTHY, ONION-EYED WAG-TAIL!”

GARRETT

Standing on a chair, brandishing a pantomimed sword.

“PAUNCHY, SHEEP-BITING STRUMPET!”

EMMA laughs, everyone laughs with her, but GARRETT is holding character, stiff upper lip, eyebrows raised. And that just makes everyone laugh harder. EMMA looks at the sheet, and then laughs again. She just can't go on.

EMMA

*Touche, my friend. Touche!*

Smiling, EMMA gives him a ostentatious bow.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You're a theater geek now. Nothing you can do about it!

(Blackout)

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JOHNKHAMAN@GMAIL.COM, OR FIND IT ON NPX. THANK YOU!