

Ghostlight was fully produced live for the first time at Hollywood High School on September 30, 2021, with the following cast and crew:

GARBIELA NETTLES Madison Moore
JACKSON NETTLES Delfin Gamboa
FANTINE Emily Mendez
RUTH Immanuel Tims
CARA Ashley Jorge
COLBY Leslie Alfaro
BILLIAM Sergio Liden
KELVIN Adela Ramirez
MAUNDER Rocio Ramirez
CLOVIS Lance Encarguez
RILEY Angela Hernandez
MOGPIN/FREYA MCSLANE/
TAM TAM Yvonne Contreras
AMICUS Solbi Chung
FLACHRA COLLISTER Catalina Agrello
MS. STAUNCHER Veronica Torres
SFX Selena Garcia
Director John Tourtellotte
Assistant Director Michelle Fernandez
Stage Manager Sienna Willis
Lighting Designer Stephen Azua

Acknowledgments

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GHSTLIGHT

by Stephen Gregg

(Most of the settings, a good bit of the feel, and some of the plot of *Ghostlight* are conveyed through sounds, which are produced live onstage by one or more SFX artists. The same artists also voice the ghosts that only GARBIELA can hear.)

(A few days before the play, those who have bought tickets get a message—electronic or physical: "Hello you! It's Garbiela. I need a favor. Could you please come to the play? I have an important task for you. I do know that the timing of this message is awkward, but I'm really looking forward to meeting you and I'd like to be your friend.")

(On the back of the program it says: "YOUR TASK. When signaled to do so, make this sound very softly until signaled to stop." Different programs have different assigned noises as spelled out in the back of the script: "Cough twice, softly," "Use the program as a fan," "Whisper: 'Can I help you with that?'" etc. [See back of this volume for details.]

(On stage is a ghost light.)

(As the lights go to half, the SOUND EFFECTS PERSON (SFX) speaks to the audience.)

SFX. Friends! Welcome to our play! All of us up on stage have rehearsed and rehearsed. We are going to do great. There's only one single thing that can go wrong, and that's you. There are a couple of ways that you can destroy this evening. The first is by not ever laughing. There are parts of the play that are funny and parts that are not, but the thing is, if the cast and crew doesn't hear you laugh once in a while everybody's going to home a little sad and it will be your fault. Also: On the back of the program you'll find a sound that you're going to make when signaled. The ghost light will flash and I'll go like this [a signal]. When I signal, make the sound until I signal you to stop. Let's try it.

(The ghost light flashes. SFX signals; the audience makes the sound. Repeat if necessary.)

SFX. If you do this wrong, the entire play will fail. I'm counting on you.

(Spotlight, GARBIELA, 16, on a bare stage.)

GARBIELA. (To the audience.) Everything I'm about to tell you is true and all of it is going to seem like a lie. My name is Garbiela Nettles. We're in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

lobby, I see an elevator marked "Doves Forge." It's huge and it's already open. Empty. I enter. And the doors close.

(With a HISS.)

GARBIELA. (To the audience:) And . . . And nothing happens. There are no buttons.

(She speaks to what must be a security camera.)

GARBIELA. Hey! I'm here for an interview! (Beat.) I NEED TO BE TRANSPORTED UP TO THE SCHOOL! (Beat.) Please?

(The elevator starts abruptly. WHOOSH.)

GARBIELA. Twenty-four floors.

(While GARBIELA is in the elevator, the Doves Forge Academy—students and all—materializes around her. DING.)

GARBIELA. (Awe!) It's nothing like what I pictured. It's beautiful and warm. Wood paneling, leather armchairs, floor-to-ceiling windows that look out over the Sandias.

There's a moment when it feels like I belong here. But it's just a moment.

(FANTINE enters. Excitement is FANTINE's at-rest state.)

FANTINE. Hi!! Hello hello, I've been expecting you.

GARBIELA. Hi.

FANTINE. I'm going to be your guide. My name is Fantine, like in *Les Misérables*. The book not the musical.

GARBIELA. The musical is based on the book.

FANTINE. What do you think so far?

GARBIELA. Wow.

FANTINE. I like you already. The architects, Myer and Wombley, wanted to show that the whole experiment could work, that you could put a school twenty-four floors high in the air and still make it feel like a school. They wanted everything to feel warm, and safe. Of course as we know, that didn't work out. But it's safe now. We occupy floors twenty-four through twenty-eight. Floor twenty-nine, though technically part of the school, is still off-limits. It used to be the theatre. The carpeting is controversial. The pattern is called Rust and Willow. Some people hate it, including me.

GARBIELA. I like it.

FANTINE. Me too. I was testing you.

(A moment of happiness for FANTINE.)

FANTINE. You smell like you've just been ironed.

GARBIELA. (The mild mortification of being told you can be smelled:) It's a laundry soap my dad likes.

FANTINE. I do too. When you come here, if you need a best friend, or a practically best friend, you can just come to me if you want. We could tell each other secrets and bump against each other when we walk down the halls. (Beat.) Nobody would have to know.

GARBIELA. I'm not going to get in.

FANTINE. Yes you are. When you do, I can tell you about every student, and which teachers are nice. They're all nice except the sophomore Spanish teacher, Ms. Collister. She's a stone wrapped in a blowtorch. And I could tell you which clubs to join and which ones not to join. They have archery, and film studies, and there's really only one you shouldn't join. Are you even listening to me?

GARBIELA. Which one shouldn't I join?

FANTINE. There's a Pretend Fantine's Not Here Club.

GARBIELA. There is not!

FANTINE. Sometimes. Please don't join it.

GARBIELA. Of course I wouldn't join it. If I got in, I would love to be your best friend and I wouldn't be a good fit for that club. But I'm not going to get in.

FANTINE. Let's start in the library. There's a wall of books about self-esteem.

(From off: there's a pained yell.)

CARA. (Offstage:) HELP ME! It's freezing me!

(CARA bursts in! Here—and every time we see her—CARA holds a large feather duster. But all we know about CARA at the moment is that she's fleeing from pain. It's a pain that started inside her—her whole body felt like it was freezing—and that she instinctively tried to run from. GARBIELA's impulse is to help.)

GARBIELA. What's the matter?

CARA. It was freezing me!

GARBIELA. I don't understand.

(RILEY, the calmest person alive, glides in.)

RILEY. Cara, stand still for a moment.

(She does. Just the sound of RILEY's voice calms CARA.)

Garbiela + Fantine

RILEY. Are you feeling it right now or did it stop?

(It might take a moment for CARA, shaken, to realize:)

CARA. It stopped.

RILEY. You think it was The Chill?

CARA. For sure it was. It's worse than they say.

GARBIELA. What's happening?

FANTINE. It's The Chill.

GARBIELA. What's The Chill?

RILEY. (To CARA.) Come on. Let's get you to the nurse's office.

CARA. (As she exits with RILEY.) I'm still shivering.

FANTINE. It started about a dozen years ago. The first girl it happened to, Freya McSlane, described it as—

(FREYA MCSLANE appears...)

FREYA MCSLANE. A heart attack crossed with an ice storm.

(And she disappears.)

FANTINE. People thought she was making it up. But it happened to other people, and it keeps happening. I hope this hasn't changed your desire to come here.

GARBIELA. It hasn't. Not a bit. (To the audience.) Life can be managed one clear, achievable goal at a time. My clear, achievable goal at the moment is to not get in to the Doves Forge Academy.

(GARBIELA is being interviewed by MR. AMICUS, who takes his gatekeeper status seriously. He's browsing a file, puzzled by its lack of achievement.)

AMICUS. So. Gabriela Nettles.

GARBIELA. Garbiela. It was a typo on my birth certificate but it stuck.

AMICUS. I'm looking at your file. I know a fair amount about you. What do you know about us?

GARBIELA. Almost nothing. That's why I'm here.

AMICUS. You didn't do any research.

GARBIELA. I couldn't be bothered.

AMICUS. And you were thirty minutes late.

GARBIELA. Well, technically fifteen.

AMICUS. Your appointment was for ten o'clock.

Amicus
Garbiela (3)

GARBIELA. The tour took fifteen minutes.

AMICUS. There's no tour.

GARBIELA. Fantine was my tour guide.

AMICUS. We don't have tour guides. She must have third period free. (Beat.) Why do you want to attend Doves Forge?

GARBIELA. I don't. I don't want to attend here. I wasn't even going to come to the interview but my dad gave me this. If you could just put your signature there, we could both get on with our day.

AMICUS. Why are you so set against coming here?

GARBIELA. It's going to be too hard for me. You can see the grades, the test scores. And the thing I hate most in life is effort. I'll just sit in the back and text.

AMICUS. We don't get reception here.

GARBIELA. I'll be so bored.

AMICUS. (From her file.) You seem to have put a lot of effort into drama.

GARBIELA. Yeah. And it's the one thing you're horrible at. You never rebuilt the theatre after the fire. Nine people go to your plays. You perform in the gym.

AMICUS. So you did do some research.

GARBIELA. If I think about an academic career here, what I'm thinking about is a muscly tutor named Omar who's exactly my age and lonely. I have ambitions in life but they involve drinking. This place is wonderful. Don't waste it on me.

AMICUS. Thank you. I think we're done here. (As she goes.) One more thing. How much do you drink?

GARBIELA. I don't. Yet. (To the audience.) Two days later, the decision came.

JACKSON. Congratulations! I'm so so proud of you.

GARBIELA. There's no way.

JACKSON. That must have been quite an interview.

GARBIELA. They got the name wrong.

JACKSON. No they didn't. They see something in you.

GARBIELA. I don't want to go. I'll miss Mogpin.

JACKSON. Mogpin's not going anywhere.

Garbiela (H)
(And we've changed scenes: Kachina High hallways. STUDENT SOUNDS.)

MOGPIN. Your dad's right. Just because we're not going to the same school doesn't mean we're not gonna be friends. Does it?

GARBIELA. Of course not.

MOGPIN. Everybody at Kachina's gonna miss you.

GARBIELA. You know that's not true.

MOGPIN. You don't think? (MOGPIN produces a large card.) Then how did this happen?

GARBIELA. What's this?

(She opens it, is impressed by the tiny scribbling.)

MOGPIN. A card. Way more people wanted to sign it than could, cause some people wrote so much.

GARBIELA. Mogpin, thank you so much! This is so great. "We miss you already. —Lisa." "Can't wait to hear all about Doves Forge. —Raul." "The school's gonna shine a little less brightly without you. —Melissa." That doesn't sound like Melissa.

(She notices something.)

GARBIELA. The "n" in shine looks like the "n" in Mogpin.

MOGPIN. I don't see the resemblance.

GARBIELA. It's over here, too. And here. Did you forge all these signatures?

MOGPIN. No.

GARBIELA. Yes you did.

MOGPIN. No I didn't. The signatures are real. I only forged the inscriptions.

GARBIELA. The sentiment.

MOGPIN. Everybody likes you. They just don't know you.

GARBIELA. Mogpin, this is the nicest thing anyone's ever done for me. Thank you. I'm going to keep it forever.

MOGPIN. Pretty soon you'll have all new friends.

(A dark thought causes GARBIELA to make some sound of unhappiness.)

MOGPIN. What?

END

Collister

FANTINE. Where are you supposed to be first period?

GARBIELA. Spanish.

FANTINE. With who?

GARBIELA. Ms. Collister.

FANTINE. You're late!

GARBIELA. The passing period just started.

FANTINE. Go! I'm serious. I'd take you, but I'm staying on this floor and you're heading up to twenty-eight . . . Down that hall, up the stairs, and three doors left.

GARBIELA. (This represents GARBIELA walking.) Down the hall, up the stairs, three doors left and—

COLLISTER. Where have you been?

(MS. COLLISTER is imposing, at least in spirit. Next to her is someone more imposing than she is. This is TAM TAM.)

GARBIELA. I'm new.

COLLISTER. The only proper response when I ask a question is to answer the question. The rule in this class is that you get here four minutes early to turn in your homework. Where were you?

GARBIELA. I got lost.

COLLISTER. The worst response is to lie. The school's not that big, the rooms are numbered, and there's no one who wouldn't have given you directions because everybody here is nice.

GARBIELA. Maybe not everybody.

COLLISTER. Explain that. Explain what you just said.

GARBIELA. It's three hundred students. There have to be some mean ones.

COLLISTER. This is my bodyguard, Tam Tam. Ignore him. I have a disorder that sometimes makes me attack students. He's here for your protection. You're Garbiela Nettles.

GARBIELA. Yes.

COLLISTER. Did you take Spanish at your old school?

GARBIELA. Yes.

COLLISTER. The class motto is on the board. Can you translate it?

GARBIELA. No.

(We hear a CHIME.)

Garbiela,

COLLISTER. What was that?

GARBIELA. I think I got a text.

COLLISTER. That's impossible. We don't get reception here. Give me your phone.

(GARBIELA does. COLLISTER reads it. It puzzles her. A SOUND tells us she's erased it.)

GARBIELA. Did you just erase my text?

COLLISTER. I did.

GARBIELA. What did it say?

COLLISTER. It was private.

GARBIELA. You can't do that.

COLLISTER. Apparently I can.

GARBIELA. Give me my phone.

COLLISTER. Sit down.

GARBIELA. No, I'm out of here.

COLLISTER. If you leave this classroom, then you're leaving the school, permanently.

GARBIELA. That's right. I am. Give me my phone.

(COLLISTER gives GARBIELA her phone.)

COLLISTER. On your way out make sure to check in at the office so they don't think you've been abducted.

GARBIELA. I will.

(But then GARBIELA hears a voice: strange, of indeterminate gender. It seems to come from above.)

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

GARBIELA. Who said that?

COLLISTER. Who said what?

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.

GARBIELA. A voice that said "You're burning up." (To a STUDENT next to her:) You heard that, didn't you? What's directly above us?

CARA. The theatre.

GARBIELA. I thought the theatre was in the gym.

CARA. The old theatre. The one that burned.

6 Clovis
Garbiela
Fantine

Dog

COLLISTER. You were on your way out.
GARBIELA. I changed my mind.
COLLISTER. It's too late for that.
GARBIELA. Here's my phone.
COLLISTER. Doves Forge is a privilege, and you've lost the privilege.
GARBIELA. Please. It's my first day.
COLLISTER. Goodbye.
VOICE (SFX). You're burning up!
GARBIELA. How can I be the only person hearing that? You don't hear a voice from up there? "You're burning up."
COLLISTER. You're holding up the class.
GARBIELA. I'll fix my attitude. I'll try so hard that— (She looks at the board.) The class motto: "No eres tan inteligente como crees." You're not as smart as you think.
COLLISTER. Sit down. Don't speak again this period. Do you understand?
GARBIELA. Yes. (To the audience:) I don't remember anything else from that morning.
VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.
GARBIELA. Just that voice, over and over again. From upstairs.
(BELL RINGS!)
VOICE (SFX). You're burning up.
(Boom. She's alone, in the hall.)
START (From off, SNARLING, FEROCIOUS BARKING.
CLOVIS, 16, enters with his giant, invisible-to-us dog Scattergood on a leash. He's barely able to hold the dog back. CLOVIS has lost a tooth, and is self-conscious about it.)
CLOVIS. Slow down SLOW down!
(CLOVIS stops, but Scattergood seems desperate to reach GARBIELA and devour her.)
CLOVIS. Are you lost?
GARBIELA. No, I have this period free.
(Another Scattergood lunge, accompanied by ferocious BARKING.)
CLOVIS. This is Scattergood.

GARBIELA. (To the audience:) The single ugliest mammal I've ever seen.
(More ferocious BARKING.)
CLOVIS. He says hello! (More BARKING.) "Hello hello hello!"
GARBIELA. (To the audience:) Like a sandworm.
CLOVIS. He's equal parts Great Dane, Rottweiler, and pit bull, so he's super loyal. You can pet him if you want.
GARBIELA. I'm allergic to dogs.
CLOVIS. He barely has any fur to be allergic to. He used to be better looking. (To Scattergood:) You were so handsome. Weren't you?
(A low, teeth-baring snarl from Scattergood.)
CLOVIS. He's showing you how clean his teeth are. It's cause I brush them. (To GARBIELA:) I'm on my way to the dentist myself.
(He shows her his mouth. There's a tooth missing.)
GARBIELA. Ouch. What happened?
CLOVIS. It got knocked out. And I'm in the play so I have to get it fixed. I have the final speech and I wrote it myself. It's about my future. I'm going to produce a TV show either about eels or about an eel.
(FANTINE enters. Oddly, CLOVIS turns his back to her.)
FANTINE. Hi, two favorite people! I'm looking for superglue and a swim cap. You don't happen to have any?
GARBIELA. No, sorry.
FANTINE. Hey Clovis.
CLOVIS. Hey.
(CLOVIS's acknowledgement was minimal.)
FANTINE. I'll let you know if I find any.
(She exits.)
GARBIELA. What's up with you two?
CLOVIS. I'm pretending to ignore her.
GARBIELA. What's the difference between pretending to ignore someone and actually ignoring them?
(He puts his finger to his lips.)
GARBIELA. (To the audience:) History.

END

START

(As she approaches, we hear)

STAUNCHER
Colby, Kelvin

STAUNCHER. (Offstage:) You're going to have to be louder.

COLBY. (Offstage:) I am louder!

STAUNCHER. (Offstage:) Don't get frustrated.

(As GARBIELA walks in, LUCY STAUNCHER runs a rehearsal. She's tense, talking to COLBY, who has a black hole where his stage presence should be.)

COLBY. Everybody hates this part of the play anyway.

STAUNCHER. Not if it's done correctly. Again.

COLBY. (To an imaginary audience. Weak.) "All right, everyone. Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. No, big, Colby. I need you to be big. The play is called *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation*. You're providing the audience participation.

COLBY. (The same.) "Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. "ARE WE HAVING A GOOD TIME?"

COLBY. "Are we having a good time?"

STAUNCHER. You're getting quieter!

COLBY. My throat closes up when I'm terrified.

STAUNCHER. How can you be terrified? There's nobody even here!

COLBY. I'm picturing them anyway. "I have an important job for you. When I say a word . . ."

STAUNCHER. "WHEN I SAY A WORD!"

COLBY. (Still weak.) "When I say a word, you're all going to shout out that word, and if you don't do it, the whole play will fail."

STAUNCHER. "THE WHOLE PLAY WILL FAIL!" Moving on! Let's get set up for Scene 21B.

(The cast and crew get to work changing the set. GARBIELA's phone DINGS. It DINGS again.)

COLBY. You better turn that off. My name's Colby. I'm a genius. I take MIT math online, physics at Sandia labs, and Chinese at UNM. I'm only here cause they're trying to socialize me.

GARBIELA. I'm Garbiela.

COLBY. Sorry I forgot to ask.

STAUNCHER. KELVIN, ARE YOU READY BACK THERE?

KELVIN. (Offstage:) YES!

STAUNCHER. All right! This is where I want the—

KELVIN. (Offstage:) Got it!

(All the lights go out. A moment.)

STAUNCHER. Kelvin, I know you want to be helpful, but if you say yes—

KELVIN. (Offstage:) Here you go!

(A badly aimed spotlight.)

STAUNCHER. No. If you say yes before I finish my sentence—

KELVIN. (Offstage:) OK!

STAUNCHER. No.

KELVIN. (Offstage:) I get what you're saying!

(Back to blackout.)

STAUNCHER. Stop! Don't agree with me and don't say anything!

(The lights come up.)

STAUNCHER. Can I help you?

GARBIELA. I want to join theatre.

STAUNCHER. We're all cast and we're all crewed.

(They are plunged into darkness.)

GARBIELA. I heard you're still squeezing people in.

STAUNCHER. Not anymore. You can observe this semester.

GARBIELA. Seems like you could use help with the lights.

STAUNCHER. Have you worked on lighting before?

(Pop. A spotlight directly on GARBIELA.)

GARBIELA. (To the audience:) This would be a good time to mention that I lie incessantly.

(Lights to full.)

GARBIELA. Yeah. Tons.

STAUNCHER. What shows?

GARBIELA. (To the audience:) Detail is more important than the right detail. (To STAUNCHER:) At my old high school, *The Little Mermaid* and *Waiting for Godot*.

STAUNCHER. Your high school did *Waiting for Godot*?

END

William, Stauncher, Maunder, Garbiela

GARBIELA. Twice. Also, there's a community theatre called the Splurge Players and when their lighting designer got a freelance accounting job out of town, I offered to step in. It was a production of the Scottish play, and their Fresnels didn't work with their antiquated light board so I had to figure out how to rewire it.

STAUNCHER. Good! Get up there and start fixing.

GARBIELA. I will.

STAUNCHER. Go!

GARBIELA. I have a migraine right now. I'll do it tomorrow.

STAUNCHER. PLACES!

(BILLIAM stands on a pedestal, aggrieved.)

BILLIAM. I hate my part.

STAUNCHER. Your part is important.

BILLIAM. No it's not. It's not even a talking statue. It's just a statue.

STAUNCHER. There are no small parts.

BILLIAM. Actually, if you don't talk and you don't move, that's a small part.

STAUNCHER. That's when you dig into research.

BILLIAM. I researched ghosts, *The Turn of the Screw*, and granite. I don't want to be just a statue; I want to be a statue that does a handstand.

STAUNCHER. There's no place in the play where that would fit.

BILLIAM. During the curtain call. Everybody would be like, "Hey, the statue is doing a handstand." It would be the highlight of the whole play. Ten years from now, people will be talking and someone will say, "Do you remember that play *The Turn of the Screw* with *Audience Participation*?" And they'll be like, "No. Wait, is that the one where the statue does the handstand? I love that play!"

STAUNCHER. Let me see it. Let's see the handstand.

BILLIAM. I can't do a handstand. That's why it's a good assignment.

STAUNCHER. If you can stand one hundred percent perfectly still for the whole play, I'll consider the handstand. Scene 21B! Enter the Butler.

(MAUNDER enters as the Butler.)

MAUNDER. "What will happen next in this house of terrifying spirits?"

STAUNCHER. Stop! You have to know your line.

MAUNDER. That is the line!

STAUNCHER. No. I changed "terrifying" to "terrifying and amazing." Do it again.

MAUNDER. "What will happen next in our house of amazing and terrifying spirits? And who's that knocking at the door!"

STAUNCHER. "DID YOU HEAR A KNOCK?" You have to know your lines! You have six of them.

MAUNDER. I do know the lines. I don't know the order of the lines.

STAUNCHER. Let's call it a day. I'll see you at three p.m. sharp tomorrow.

VOICE (SFX). You're burning up!

GARBIELA. (To BILLIAM:) Did you hear that?

BILLIAM. Hear what?

GARBIELA. You researched ghosts.

BILLIAM. Yeah.

GARBIELA. What did you learn?

BILLIAM. They're people with unfinished business. They need to get something done that they didn't do in life. Say goodbye, or get revenge.

GARBIELA. (To the audience:) I walked home, trying to figure things out. I was distracted, which is why I made the mistake.

(She comes upon JACKSON deeply sad, unaware of her.)

GARBIELA. I forgot to make noise when I entered, something I'd learned to do from an early age so I didn't find Dad in the midst of his occasional, secret despair.

(She tiptoes back, makes a noise of some sort. This jolts JACKSON into convincing cheer.)

JACKSON. Hey! How was the day?

GARBIELA. Strange.

JACKSON. Strange how?

GARBIELA. I don't want to talk about it.

JACKSON. Any potential friends?

GARBIELA. I've been there exactly seven hours.

END

JACKSON. ~~You want to start early~~ / ~~I made Affinity.~~

GARBIELA. Thank you!

JACKSON. It's not exactly for you. I want you to share it.

GARBIELA. Share it.

JACKSON. Yeah.

GARBIELA. With who?

JACKSON. Anyone who seems nice.

GARBIELA. You want me to take it to school?

JACKSON. Yeah. Sometimes, in new situations, you can be a little contained.

GARBIELA. "Have a piece of candy and be my friend."

JACKSON. It's an icebreaker.

GARBIELA. That's not gonna happen.

JACKSON. OK. I'll give it to the neighbors.

GARBIELA. I actually have tons of friends. Two days ago, right after school, there was a big going-away party for me.

JACKSON. You didn't mention that.

GARBIELA. I don't tell you everything. I didn't even show you this.

(She produces the card from somewhere.)

JACKSON. Let's see. (He sees through it instantly.) Well that is awfully nice. The handwriting is a little bit similar.

GARBIELA. It's all Mogpin's. She had people dictate what they wanted to say and she transcribed it.

JACKSON. Garbiela. Take the candy.

(She grudgingly takes the plate of Affinity.)

GARBIELA. (To the audience.) Day two.

(And suddenly we're in the school hallway. Students pass back and forth. RUTH stops.)

RUTH. What have you got there?

GARBIELA. It's called Affinity. It's a family recipe. Have one!

RUTH. Thanks!

GARBIELA. A lot of people think it's the best thing they've ever tasted. Tell me what you think.

Garbiela, Ruth Ghostlight
Jackson, Cara
(She hands him one. He hates it, but desperately covers.)

RUTH. Wow!

GARBIELA. I knew I liked you.

RUTH. That's the best thing I've ever tasted. Colby come try this.

(This leads to a quick improvisation as students passing by get pulled in, love it: yum!)

(Hanging back is the deeply calm RILEY, who we met briefly earlier.)

GARBIELA. Last two pieces.

(CARA gags, spits it into her hand.)

CARA. This is candy?

GARBIELA. That happens sometimes.

RILEY. May I?

GARBIELA. Of course!

RILEY. My name's Riley, but my friends call me The Oasis. I'm the president of the yoga club. Come talk to me if you want to join.

GARBIELA. That certainly won't happen, but thank you. Last piece.

(RILEY takes the piece. Takes a bite.)

RILEY. That's the single best thing I've ever tasted.

GARBIELA. It's great, right?

RILEY. It makes my life better.

CARA. Take mine.

(She does.)

RILEY. Can I get the recipe?

GARBIELA. No, it's a family secret.

RILEY. Is that a joke?

GARBIELA. No. It's not my rule.

RILEY. I don't understand that, but I accept it. See you in rehearsal.

(FANTINE runs in.)

FANTINE. Hey Frienderifica! Is there more?

GARBIELA. No, I just gave away the last piece.

FANTINE. What was it?

END

GARBIELA. If
FANTINE. My
GARBIELA. I
FANTINE. Is
GARBIELA. I

(She a

GARBIELA.
FANTINE. I
I got a part.
minute, it got
GARBIELA.

FANTINE. I don't want to be that
feeling, right here, like an intersection. (She indicates her heart.) This
way, I get the part and my life changes. That way, I don't get the part.
Or any part. And if you don't get a part in the school play, then you
don't get, you know, *any part*. Ever. In life.

GARBIELA. That's not true.

FANTINE. Yes it is. And my sister takes the other path. One success
leading to another leading to another. I think of getting this part as
making my sister evaporate.

GARBIELA. Fantine.

FANTINE. It's nothing I wouldn't say to her face. You don't have
brothers and sisters?

GARBIELA. No. Only child.

FANTINE. Lucky you. She has this ball and she's like, "Catch," and
then she doesn't throw it. "Catch!" "Catch!" WOULD YOU JUST
THROW THE DANG BALL? Whatever. She's three.

GARBIELA. She's three years old?

FANTINE. Yeah. Four next month. There's already a party planned.

GARBIELA. I forgot to ask! How was your surprise party?

FANTINE. It was timeshifted.

GARBIELA. Oh.

FANTINE. My stupid friends are lame. Except for you.

GARBIELA. Well that's great news. I'll be able to come.

FANTINE. I thought of that already!

~~GARBIELA. Let's hear why you should get the part.~~

FANTINE. (To the imaginary teacher.) Ms. Stauncher, thank you for
seeing me today. I like your shoes.

The Second Maid is the part I was born to play. The part's not in the
novel, but it's important. Just the fact that she's there tells you what
kind of house they have.

You want an actor who's going to take this part seriously, who thinks
about every single word like it's thirty-six tiny research projects. You
want me because I know that the Second Maid has a name, which
is Benithia, and that Benithia doesn't just want to pour tea, she also
wants the new gardener, whose name is Del Toro.

It's fun to watch people having fun, like if you didn't get invited to
a party, and you stand outside the window and peer through the
curtains, watching, until everyone leaves. If I get the part I'll be
having so much fun you'll have to get me offstage sometimes so I
don't distract the audience with my happiness.

~~GARBIELA. You know what, Fantine? That's pretty wonderful.~~

FANTINE. You think?

GARBIELA. I would lose the line about the curtains. But yeah, I
think it's great.

FANTINE. You think I'll get a part?

GARBIELA. Is your character monologue as good as your speech?

FANTINE. It is!

GARBIELA. Let's hear it!

FANTINE. No it's secret. But it's great.

(FANTINE starts to leave.)

GARBIELA. Where are you going?

FANTINE. I have to get my snakes.

(And she's gone. STAUNCHER storms in.)

STAUNCHER. Garbiela, you're out of the play.

GARBIELA. You told me I could do lighting.

STAUNCHER. Because I took you at your word. But then a little
bird told me to check where you came from. You said you went to
the Wayfair School, but you went to Kachina High School until two
weeks ago.

GARBIELA. I went to the Wayfair School in the summer.

STAUNCHER 11
Collister

FANTINE. Thank you!

GARBIELA. I'm so proud of you!

FANTINE. Me too! It's not official but I nailed it. Ms. Stauncher was speechless. She was like (*staring, open-mouthed*), like she'd never seen a better Medea.

GARBIELA. Medea.

FANTINE. Yeah.

GARBIELA. Fantine, I'm not sure Medea is great casting for you.

FANTINE. It is, even though my prop didn't work. I had this whole idea of snakes all over my head and they'd be moving around except one that's dead and he's hanging right here. And when I got pissy at the end of the monologue, I'd go like this: (*An upward puff of air*) and the dead snake goes: (*She indicates that it flips up into place on her head.*)

GARBIELA. I think you mean Medusa.

FANTINE. (*Anguished*) No!

GARBIELA. Yeah.

FANTINE. Medea turns people into stone.

GARBIELA. No that's Medusa.

FANTINE. I'm not going to get the part!

GARBIELA. Yes you are!

FANTINE. No, I always screw it up and I never get a part!

GARBIELA. Fantine, you are going to get a part. I promise.

(*A noise alerts them that people are coming.*)

GARBIELA. Shhh!

(*STAUNCHER enters with COLLISTER right behind.*)

STAUNCHER. (*To COLLISTER.*) Go back to your own class.

COLLISTER. *Listen to me.*

STAUNCHER. I'm tired of listening to you.

COLLISTER. Why did you let Garbiela take part in the play?

STAUNCHER. I don't need to explain my decisions.

COLLISTER. She lied to you.

STAUNCHER. I need a lighting person. She knows what she's doing.

COLLISTER. Don't tell me. She talked about intensity, color, direction, and focus. That's not knowledge. That's Wikipedia.

STAUNCHER. This isn't your program anymore. It hasn't been for a long time.

COLLISTER. And the school is the worse for it. How many people in your production?

STAUNCHER. Twenty-nine.

COLLISTER. I'm sure the twenty-nine members of your audience will love it.

STAUNCHER. You've never attended one of my plays.

COLLISTER. I'm not interested in *conventional* theatre.

STAUNCHER. *The Turn of the Screw with Audience Participation?* That's too ordinary for you?

COLLISTER. *Narrative-based* drama. *Scripted* entertainment. Your plays are *stories*. My plays were *life*.

STAUNCHER. What was it called again? *Past, Most Past, Keep Dwelling on the Past?*

COLLISTER. Make fun of *Past, Present, and Future* all you like. We sold out, and if we'd finished, people would still be talking about it.

STAUNCHER. People *are* still talking about it. *Flachra*.

(*This was a harder blow than STAUNCHER intended.*)

STAUNCHER. I'm sorry. That was uncalled for.

COLLISTER. It's true. I've never seen one of your shows. That was a favor to you. But I'll be in the front row of this one, holding binoculars.

END

GARBIELA. (*To RUTH in the library.*) And then Collister stormed out of the room.

RUTH. I'm still not adding it up the way you are.

GARBIELA. Collister used to be the theatre teacher. Her production of *Past, Present, and Future* is what started the fire. She knows I can hear things from up there and she *does* not want me anywhere near that theatre. She's hiding something.

RUTH. That's a lot of guess.

GARBIELA. What's the theoretical way up to the theatre?

RUTH. I knew we were getting back to this.

GARBIELA. At least tell me why you can't tell me.

RUTH. Because it involves me. You know the back stairwell is completely off-limits, right?

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START

GARBIELA. (To RUTH, in the library.) And then Collister stormed out of the room.

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*Garbiela
Ruth*

GARBIELA. Yeah.

RUTH. This is confidential.

GARBIELA. I'm great with secrets because I love hearing them.

RUTH. I'm in the back stairwell twice a day. I'm so claustrophobic that it's medical. Being in the elevator makes me actually pass out. For a while, they hired a paramedic to go with me both ways, but it was costing a fortune so I said let me just take the back stairwell. It takes me thirteen extra minutes to get to school and four extra minutes to leave.

GARBIELA. So you could take me with you.

RUTH. I'm not allowed past this floor. And the door's just gonna be locked.

GARBIELA. But whatever I'm hearing, I bet I can hear it better through the door. Please?

RUTH. No.

GARBIELA. You scared of some voices?

RUTH. No. I'm scared of authority.

GARBIELA. The worst that can happen is that a security guard catches us, we get suspended, and bum around downtown for a day or two.

RUTH. (Relenting.) Don't make any noise.

(They PUSH open the door. They don't move at all during this section. A character saying the word "Step" equates to them taking one step up.)

GARBIELA. Step step step step step. Come on!

RUTH. Step. Step step step step.

GARBIELA AND RUTH. Step step step step step step step.

GARBIELA. (Big steps.) St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p.

RUTH. (To catch up.) St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p St-e-e-e-p.

GARBIELA. This is the door?

RUTH. Yeah.

END

(GARBIELA RATTLES it. Of course it's locked. She KNOCKS on it. She presses her ear to the door.)

RUTH. Now can we go?

Garbiela, Jackson, Fantine, START

GARBIELA'S MOTHER (SFX). She was right here!

JACKSON. (Offstage.) Garbiela?

(GARBIELA'S nauseous. She fights it. FANTINE enters.)

FANTINE. Garbiela!

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Catch!

(But she doesn't throw the ball.)

FANTINE. What are you doing back here? The play's about to start.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. I don't feel good.

FANTINE. How did you get away from Mom and Dad?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Ohhhh.

FANTINE. What?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. I feel sick.

(GARBIELA throws up.)

FANTINE. Oh no! Let me feel your forehead.

(She does.)

FANTINE. Garbiela, you're burning up. Let's get you to Mom and Dad.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. No. Nooo!

FANTINE. Come on.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. No!

FANTINE. Clovis!

(CLOVIS enters with Scattergood, who's calmer than usual.

CLOVIS holds something behind his back.

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Catch!

CLOVIS. (Charmed.) What are you doing here?

FANTINE. She's not feeling good. Hi Scattergood. (To CLOVIS.)

Can you watch her for two seconds while I get my parents?

CLOVIS. Happy to!

(FANTINE exits. What was behind CLOVIS's back was a cupcake and candle.)

CLOVIS. Shhh! Fantine thinks I forgot her birthday. But I have this! Strawberry chip with cream cheese frosting. You want to help me sing "Happy Birthday"?

THREE-YEAR-OLD GARBIELA. Yes.

Clovis

(He has a lighter. He clicks it. Clicks it again. Click click click!)

CLOVIS. Hang on.

(He sets the cupcake and lighter on the props table.)

CLOVIS. I'm going to get something to light this. Do not move and do not eat that cupcake.

(He exits. GARBIELA moves to the table, picks up the lighter, and examines it. Click click click.)

(It lights! She lights the candle, pleased with herself. From off)

JACKSON. (Offstage.) Garbiela? Where are you?

(Panicked, she tries to blow out the candle. But she can't. This freaks her out.)

JACKSON. Garby?

(She puts the lit cupcake behind a curtain as JACKSON enters.)

JACKSON. There you are! Let's get you home.

(He leads her off as a light starts to glow behind the curtain. We hear the crackle of the fire.)

(Now we're back in the present. GARBIELA enters, back to the teenage GARBIELA but confused. The flames are everywhere. She panics.)

GARBIELA. HEY! EVERYBODY! Everybody get out of the building!

(She finds the fire alarm. Pulls it. The ALARM CLANGS; SPRINKLERS drench the room and GARBIELA.)

(STAUNCHER runs into the room.)

STAUNCHER. You pulled the fire alarm.

GARBIELA. I couldn't find it at first.

STAUNCHER. Why did you pull the fire alarm?

GARBIELA. You're welcome!

STAUNCHER. The whole building is evacuating.

GARBIELA. Good! There's a fire.

STAUNCHER. Where?

(It starts to dawn on GARBIELA that there is no fire.)

GARBIELA. It must have gone out.

END

STAUNCHER. *(Into some kind of walkie-talkie:)* False alarm. Repeat False alarm. *(To GARBIELA:)* You do understand that this is the end of your time at Doves Forge.

GARBIELA. No!

STAUNCHER. You pulled a fire alarm for no reason—

GARBIELA. Not for no reason.

STAUNCHER. —in a building that once had a tragic fire.

GARBIELA. There was smoke and there were flames. Obviously it wasn't real but that doesn't mean I didn't see it.

STAUNCHER. I need you to follow me.

GARBIELA. I need to talk to Mr. Amicus.

STAUNCHER. No you'll have to come with me.

GARBIELA. He'll want to talk to me.

STAUNCHER. I doubt that.

GARBIELA. He will. The only reason he let me into this school is because I could see Fantine.

STAUNCHER. *(Again, the walkie-talkie:)* Stauncher again. Send security to the theatre.

GARBIELA. Look at this theatre!

(Which she does. It stuns her.)

STAUNCHER. It's beautiful.

GARBIELA. They rebuilt it but they keep it secret because everybody who comes up here feels The Chill. The Chill is Scattergood.

STAUNCHER. I have no idea what that means.

GARBIELA. Please don't let them kick me out!

STAUNCHER. Pulling a fire alarm is a mandatory expulsion.

(TAM TAM enters.)

TAM TAM. What do you need?

STAUNCHER. I called for security.

TAM TAM. Security is handling the evacuation. They sent me.

STAUNCHER. Please escort this young woman out of the building.

GARBIELA. *(As TAM TAM approaches:)* I know who started the fire! *(And now she's with her father at home.)* I did.

JACKSON. You didn't start the fire.

(GARBIELA is deeply upset.)

GARBIELA. I did! I saw it.

JACKSON. Your sister started it.

GARBIELA. No, it was three-year-old me. I was there that night, right? I got away from you. I ran backstage. Everyone thought it was her because she'd lost the part, but it was me.

JACKSON. No it wasn't, and I need you to stop saying that.

(GARBIELA's still got the ball.)

GARBIELA. Dad, catch!

(But she doesn't throw it.)

GARBIELA. Catch!

(Again, she doesn't throw it. This probably mildly freaks him out.)

JACKSON. You really can see her.

GARBIELA. Yes!

JACKSON. You talk to her.

GARBIELA. We have to get her out of there. She wanders the halls looking for friends. She wants a part in the play, and then she gets one, and then she loses it.

JACKSON. That's exactly what happened. She worked so hard on that tiny part. She was playing an eel.

GARBIELA. An eel?

JACKSON. It was the Collister boy. Fantine didn't get a part to begin with, but then all of a sudden he needed an eel.

GARBIELA. Then his mom took it away.

JACKSON. Said Fantine would be better backstage.

GARBIELA. Cause she's evil.

JACKSON. I don't think so. I called Collister. I was furious. She said it would be for the best.

GARBIELA. *(To herself:)* Clovis said he was pretending to ignore her.

JACKSON. What's that?

GARBIELA. I have to get back there for the play.

JACKSON. They're not going to let that happen, Garbiela. I'm sorry.

GARBIELA. We have to help her.

JACKSON. They said they'll be watching for you in the lobby.

END