

HAUNTED

A 10 Minute Play

By

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HAUNTED

CHARACTERS:

SALLY MCFADDEN, an actor trying to go on.
FOUR GHOSTS, Spirits Who Know Sally

TIME:

Now.

PLACE:

A Theatre.

SETTING: Backstage at a theatre.

AT RISE: A woman costumed in a simple blue servant's dress stands expectantly backstage, glancing past the curtains to watch the action "on-stage".
This is SALLY MCFADDEN.

SALLY

(Quietly to herself)

"Why dost thou cry, m'lady?" ... "Why dost thou cry, m'lady?"
"Why dost thou cry-"

(A ghostly voice echoes around her...)

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Salleeeee... Sally McFaddennnnn...

(Sally pauses... then-)

SALLY

(Quickly and quietly to
herself)

"Why dost thou cry, m'lady?" "Why dost thou cry, m'lady?"

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(Ghostly whisper)

That's not the liiiine....

(Sally hesitates...)

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(cont'd)

The line is "M'lady, why dost thou cry?"

SALLY

No, it's not.

(Refocuses)

"Why dost thou cry, m'lady?" "Why dost thou cry, m'lady?"

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(A ghostly whisper)

...are you surrrrrre?

SALLY

(Hesitates again, looks around)

Hank, I'm about to go on, this is not the time for one of
your stupid-

(A GHOST WOMAN with attitude glides on
in exactly the same blue dress Sally is
wearing)

SPIRIT #1

It is not Hank you should be concerned with...

SALLY

(Squinting in the dim light)

Matilda?

SPIRIT #1

I am not Matilda either. ...Idiot.

SALLY

Look, I'm about to enter, I do not have time for-

SPIRIT #1

I am the Ghost of Lines Dropped!

SALLY

What?

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

I am the spirit of every word you've never uttered, Sally McFadden. Every phrase you've ever mangled. Every flubbed set-up, every blown punchline, every missed cue. I am the ghost of lines that cannot speak themselves and have the misfortune to be reliant on your less than reliable mouth and brain...

(Beat.)

SALLY

Did Hank put you up to this? Are you that girl from the corner of Sullivant with the sandwich boards?

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Would the sandwich board girl remember your Mrs. Krebs debacle in "Inherit the Wind"?

SALLY

What? Who told you about that?

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

"The Good Lord guv us the heat, the Good Lord guv us the glands to sweat with." Was that so hard?

SALLY

I got the line right most nights!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Except opening night. And closing. And two of the matinees-

SALLY

Stuart was the shopkeeper -- he wouldn't give me the cue half the time-

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

And it was his fault you kept forgetting the words to "Give Me That Old Time Religion"?

SALLY

...I'm not musical. And there was that whole accent thing...

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

(Singing loudly)

"Give me that old time religion, Give me that old time religion, Give me that old time religion, It's good enough for me!"

SALLY

(Trying to shut the ghost up)

Will you please-

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

A monkey with head trauma could spit that one out.

SALLY

I hummed it!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Oh, well, good for you! Except let me think... Oh, that's right! The script clearly called for the WORDS.

SALLY

Why are you here?

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

"Bruce is going to come into a lot of money someday. His uncle made a fortune in men's garters."

SALLY

...What?

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

"Come Back Little Sheba". No reason you should remember it now. You could never remember it then.

SALLY

That's not fair! I was terrific in that show!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

When you weren't staring blankly at your castmates, sure.

SALLY

Even when I forgot, I got the gist of the lines.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Like you're going to do tonight?

SALLY

It's "Why dost thou cry, m'lady". I don't think I'll screw that up.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

"M'lady, why dost thou cry".

SALLY

"M'lady" is at the end of the line.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Beginning.

SALLY

End.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Beginning.

SALLY

End!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

...Are you sure?

(Beat. Sally is about to answer...
hesitates...)

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED
(cont'd)

Oohhhh...

SALLY

What difference does it make? The line means the same thing!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Sure, the words aren't that important, it's only SHAKESPEARE.

SALLY

Okay, listen, I do not have time for this -- I have to go on--

(Another woman's GHOSTLY VOICE echoes
over the stage)

WOMAN'S VOICE #2 (V.O.)

You wouldn't want to be late, would you, Sally McFadden...

SALLY

(Turns, looking)

What?

(A sweet maternal GHOST WOMAN glides on
in an identical blue servant's dress)

SPIRIT #2

Not like the time you left everyone in "Ah, Wilderness" standing on stage looking like complete morons...

SALLY

Oh no...

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Oh yes.

SPIRIT #2

I am the Ghost of Entrances Missed, Sally McFadden!

SALLY

I do not believe this.

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

Neither could your fellow cast members as they waited. And waited...

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Leaving Walter Higgins to improvise O'Neill dialogue -- badly I might add -- for what seemed like hours-

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

It was already a long play, Sally...

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

And when you did stumble on, you were pretty much making up your own script by that point-

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

That whooshing sound the audience heard? Mr. O'Neill spinning in his grave.

SALLY

It only happened that once!

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

On that show. What about "Pygmalion"?

SALLY

That was a costume change! We could never get the shoes and belt on in time!

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

The road to Hell is paved with missed quick changes, dear.

SALLY

Well, I'm not going to miss this entrance. If you'll excuse me-

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

Maybe you'll come in early! Just like in Act II of
"Tartuffe"!

(Sally hangs her head)

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

(cont'd)

(To Ghost of Lines Dropped)

Nothing kills comedy like an early entrance.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

And of course you can imagine what that did to the other
actors' lines! And yours, Sally, remember? Trying to
improvise in rhymed meter?

(The two ghosts laugh)

SALLY

(To herself)

"Why dost thou cry, m'lady?" "Why dost thou cry, m'lady?"

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

But then timing has never been your strong suite, has it,
dearie?

(A MAN'S GHOSTLY VOICE echoes over the
stage)

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

As witnessed by the response to your Mae in "Cat On A Hot Tin
Roof"...

SALLY

(Turns)

Oh dear lord.

(An authoritative MALE GHOST glides on
in exactly the same blue servant's
dress as Sally wears)

SPIRIT #3

I am the Ghost of Reviews Awful!

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

(To Sally)

You knew he was coming, didn't you, pumpkin?

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"Sally McFadden plays Mae as a flurry of trills, coos, and
chortles, not so much as a human being, but as a house bird
locked in a losing battle with Turret's Syndrome."

SALLY

That was a character choice!

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

Not an effective one apparently.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

The usual amount of paraphrasing.

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

And you only made that entrance in Act I on time because Gooper dragged you on.

SALLY

That was that critic -- Charles what's-his-name -- he hated me because I snubbed him at a party-

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"In 'The Crucible' McFadden once again displays her improbably gawkish stumbling style as Betty Parris, adding much-needed - if unintentional - levity to the grim proceedings."

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

I'd take that one, noodle-dumps. It was almost positive.

SALLY

That was a college production! You can't judge college productions-

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"Her perambulatrionics are all but unwatchable--"

SALLY

See, "perambulatrionics" -- what is that? He made that word up! You can't make up words!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

I wouldn't be throwing stones, Miss Glass Houses.

SALLY

I got plenty of good reviews-

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"Sally McFadden performs adequately in the undemanding role of Clementine."

SALLY

I'm not listening to this -- all of you-

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

It doesn't matter whether you listen to us or not -- what matters is the directors and producers listening to us.

SALLY

What.

(Another MALE VOICE echoes over the stage.)

MAN'S VOICE #2 (V.O.)

"What a dump. Hey, what's that from? 'What a dump'?"

SALLY

Who is that?

(A dramatic MALE GHOST strides on in the exact same blue dress as everyone else)

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

That is the Ghost of Roles Off-Limits.

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

"Dumbbell! It's from some goddam Bette Davis picture... some goddam Warner Brothers epic..."

SALLY

That's Martha from "Virginia Wolf"! I could still play that part!

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

Not with your reputation in this town, dumpling.

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

That's a lot of lines, honey.

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

"Now then let me look at you. But don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till we've bathed and rested! And turn that over-light off! I won't be looked at in that merciless glare!"

SALLY

I might be up for Blanche. I'd make a great Blanche...

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"Ms. McFadden had the audience wishing not only for paper lanterns to dim the lights around her, but for a merciful Stanley to shatter every bulb and free us from having to view her performance."

SALLY

That is what they'll say, isn't it?

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

"Goodbye, Torvald! I won't see the little ones. I have put the keys here. Goodbye!"

SALLY

I'll never be cast as Nora, will I?

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

Think what would happen if you missed that exit!

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Torvald, Krogstad, Rank, Helmer -- you have your hands full with English names!

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"Two minutes into 'The Doll's House', the audience found itself in the unique position of screaming at the stage for Nora to Leave Now! For God's Sake, NOW!"

SALLY

Stop it...

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

"Attention must be paid!"

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

Did I mention you forgot the chorus to "Oklahoma"?

SALLY

Stop it...

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

Why, I bet you've missed your entrance now altogether!

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

"Out, out, damned spot!"

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

"An otherwise lovely production with one outstanding blemish"--

GHOST OF ROLES OFF-LIMITS

(Singing)

"I feel pretty, oh so pretteeee--"

SALLY

STOP IT!!

(They do -- all staring at her)

SALLY (cont'd)

I don't care. I may have blown lines and entrances and gotten lousy reviews and been passed over for leading roles, but you know what? I was cast! And I kept on getting cast!

(MORE)

SALLY (cont'd)

So just maybe I did something right, huh? And now I'm cast as the stupid handmaid in stupid "Troilus and Cressida" -- but you know what? I am going to go out there and I am going to say my one line and listen to my fellow actors and react and do the best damn job I can do with what I've been given, because there is an audience out there who left their homes not to see Sally McFadden, but to see "Troilus and Cressida" and hear and feel something beautiful, and I get to be a part -- a tiny teeny itty bitty part of that beauty, and I am going to be the best damn tiny teeny itty bitty part I can be! Because that is my job! Because I... am an actor!! Now out of my way!!

(And she storms through the curtains, calling out-)

SALLY (O.S.) (cont'd)

Why dost thou cry, m'lady?

(Pause. We can faintly hear the other actors talking on-stage)

GHOST OF ENTRANCES MISSED

That was actually the exact right moment to enter...

GHOST OF LINES DROPPED

...And exactly the right line. I was wrong.

GHOST OF REVIEWS AWFUL

...Not bad. Not bad at all.

(Beat. They all watch through the curtains, engrossed...)

ALL GHOSTS

...huh.

(Blackout.)

END OF PLAY