

A Haunted House
A Ten-Minute Play by Sarah Hicks

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Characters

OPHELIA – A ghost. A young woman in her late teens to early twenties

MABEL – Also a ghost. An older woman. A little southern. No one special.

GOLDILOCKS – A living person. Mid- to late teens. Slightly younger than Ophelia.

Setting

The inside of a cottage. Slightly orange-tinted walls are preferred but not necessary. Set up like a studio apartment with a bed, couch, coffee table, ottoman, bookshelf, small kitchen table, and two chairs. The furniture is dated and worn down, but still in good condition. A door downstage acts as the front door to the cottage. The cottage is tidy, yet clearly abandoned.

Author's Note

“Floating” as a stage direction refers to walking in a way that is graceful, yet haunting. No pulleys or fly systems are necessary.

AT RISE: OPHELIA is setting two bowls of oatmeal on the table while MABEL sits on the sofa with her feet on an ottoman, reading a newspaper.

OPHELIA

I made some breakfast!

MABEL

Humpf. I'm not hungry.

OPHELIA

Oh. That's okay. Do you want to go float by the river?

MABEL

No.

OPHELIA

We could go out to the meadow? It should be blooming with violets and daisies and pansies this time of year.

MABEL

No.

OPHELIA

We could go into town to pick up sewing supplies and watch the living –

MABEL

How many times do I have to tell you? No!

OPHELIA

But we never do anything fun!

MABEL

We're dead! What part of that is supposed to be fun?

OPHELIA

Well, you could at least try to enjoy your afterlife!

MABEL

I am enjoying it! I was a nobody in life, so I have no responsibilities in death. I get to just relax here in the cottage that my ex-husband built me, out here in the quiet countryside, still getting a copy of the daily paper!

(pointing to the newspaper)

Says here it's going to rain the rest of the week. What could be better?

OPHELIA

Literally any form of interaction.

MABEL

I have you pestering me all day. Who else do I need?

GOLDILOCKS begins to knock loudly on the door, visibly startling MABEL and OPHELIA.

OPHELIA

Hark! Someone is at the door!

MABEL

(throwing down the newspaper)

I swear, if I had known how simple-minded you are, I never would have agreed to let you haunt here. I should have sent you to the nunnery across the meadow...

GOLDILOCKS slowly opens the door.

GOLDILOCKS

Hello? Is anybody here? Hellooooo?

OPHELIA

Who is that?

MABEL

I don't know. I've never seen her before.

GOLDILOCKS

Is anybody home? Little Red?

MABEL

Why is this child just walking into my house?

GOLDILOCKS

(noticing the oatmeal on the table)

She even made me breakfast! How sweet!

(trying the first bowl)

Oh! Too hot!

(trying the second bowl)

EW, too cold!

GOLDILOCKS look around and then runs to the sofa and jumps on it, nearly hitting MABEL. MABEL starts up from the sofa.

MABEL

Well, I've never!

OPHELIA

What is she doing, Mabel?

MABEL

Settling in, I reckon! Has no one ever taught this child to keep her feet off the furniture?

GOLDILOCKS

(taking off her shoes)

This place is perfect! All the way out here in the woods, abandoned, but still fully furnished. I can't believe Little Red was able to find it! I wonder where she is...

(calling out to the house)

Little Red? Little Red?

OPHELIA

Little Red? Is she talking about the girl in the cloak from across the meadow?

MABEL

That's her, alright. Sneaky little snake. I should've known Red or that spinster of hers would spoil my secret sooner or later! They were rotten neighbors, always trying to bring those nasty, dried out, raisin cookies. Who likes raisins?

OPHELIA

I liked raisins...

MABEL

Of course you did.

GOLDILOCKS

(really settling into the couch)

Oh yeah, this is just right.

GOLDILOCKS starts to doze off on the couch.

MABEL

No no no no no! This place is already crowded enough with just the two of us! I do not want a living person here! She has to go!

(yelling at GOLDBLOCKS)

Get out! Get out!

OPHELIA

She can't hear you.

MABEL

I damn well know she can't hear me! I'm just expressing my frustration!

OPHELIA

This could actually be a good thing. I've been terribly lonely. I lost everyone who was dear to me and then my own life... And you're not very good company with your nose stuck in a newspaper all day!

MABEL

Oh, go drown in a river.

OPHELIA

Fine. If she can't live here, perhaps she can die here. Then she and I could haunt our merry deaths together and I would have someone to keep me company.

MABEL

We're not going to kill her! We're just going to scare her enough to get her to leave!

OPHELIA

How?

MABEL

Like this.

MABEL moves to be oppressively close to GOLDBLOCKS. GOLDBLOCKS shivers but then pulls a blanket off the couch and onto herself, not noticing that she has hit MABEL in the process.

MABEL

Humpf!

MABEL attempts to shake the heavy couch.

Wake up, wake up, wake up!

GOLDILOCKS continues to sleep.

OPHELIA

I don't think it's working.

MABEL

I can see that! If you don't have any positive contributions, then hush.

MABEL grabs a pillow and starts hitting GOLDILOCKS, but GOLDILOCKS grabs it from MABEL's hands and cuddles with it.

OPHELIA

I could just get a knife from the kitchen and we could -

MABEL

We are not killing her! I will not have the two of you floating around here pining over men and whatnot!

OPHELIA

You NEVER let me do anything fun!

OPHELIA slams her hand down on the coffee table, startling GOLDILOCKS.

GOLDILOCKS

Who's there?

MABEL

Well, I'll be damned. Looks like you did something useful for once.

GOLDILOCKS

I said who's there? Show yourself!

MABEL slams her hand on the coffee table, this time closer to GOLDILOCKS, who jumps to her feet

on top of the couch and assumes a karate stance.

GOLDILOCKS

This isn't funny! What is going on here?

OPHELIA

I think you're scaring her.

MABEL

Good! Maybe I can scare her into leaving!

MABEL runs over to the bookshelf and begins knocking the books off one at a time.

(to OPHELIA)

Make yourself useful or I'm kicking you out!

OPHELIA

What do you want me to do? Drive her mad?

MABEL

Yes!

OPHELIA

Fine! I shall obey!

OPHELIA begrudgingly moves to the table and begins shaking a chair back and forth. GOLDILOCKS looks around in horror but then calms.

GOLDILOCKS

I know what's happening here.

(lifting hands as in prayer)

Oh, great woodland spirits! I mean not to disturb you! I simply wish to reside in your hallowed space. To rest. To escape my tormentors!

OPHELIA

Tormentors?

MABEL

What in the living world could this girl be running from?

GOLDILOCKS

You see, mighty spirits, for my crime of trespassing in the bears' home, I was sent to reformatory school. And it was there that I fell in love!

MABEL

Good grief.

GOLDILOCKS

But our love was forbidden! For she was of elven descent. Our families forbade us from ever laying eyes on each other again!

OPHELIA

How tragic!

GOLDILOCKS

By the worst of luck, she fell upon her letter opener while reading a letter from me. It plunged into her heart. Now her family blames me for her death and will not rest until I am hanged.

MABEL

You have got to be kidding me.

GOLDILOCKS

So I implore you, great spirits of the wood, to leave me in peace as I grieve the loss of my life and my love. Amen.

GOLDILOCKS tentatively looks around the cabin. When nothing happens, she begins to pick the books up and replace them on the shelf.

OPHELIA

(sniffling)

That... That was so beautiful.

GOLDILOCKS find the book *Death for Dummies* and takes it to the couch to read.

MABEL

Oh, come on, Ophelia. You heard her. She should know better than to go around sneaking into other people's homes. Look at what happened to her the last time.

OPHELIA

But she lost her love! By such a horrific accident. This is a heartbreak that can only be understood by those who suffered the same loss.

MABEL

Excuse me?

OPHELIA

My lover killed my father before he rejected me. I thought it would be the end of me. And it was. But now, I've found someone who can understand that pain – who can understand me.

MABEL

Now just wait a second -

OPHELIA

I must speak to her! We must console each other through our grief!

MABEL

The only thing that must happen is her leaving my house!

OPHELIA

How can you be so cruel? You invite me into your home to haunt with you, but then ignore me. We never go outside. We barely even speak! And now, this girl has wandered into my death, and you want to push her away!

MABEL

This is my house. I make the rules. I felt sorry for you when I saw you by the river all by yourself, so I let you come haunt my home with me. And to be honest, I don't mind you too much. But I will not have a living human come in here and take over my home!

OPHELIA

Then she does not need to be living!

OPHELIA snatches a letter opener off the table, raising it in the air. MABEL lunges in between OPHELIA and GOLDILOCKS. GOLDILOCKS shivers as the ghost come near.

MABEL

Ophelia, stop! You know this ain't right. You can't just kill someone because you're feeling lonely!

OPHELIA

But she understands my loss!

MABEL

I understand your loss, too!

(pause)

My ex-husband, Peter, who made me this house, passed away in Sherwood Forest, where he lived with his second wife. After he fell in love with her, he abandoned me. Left me to die of old age in this cottage by myself.

OPHELIA

Love does often lead to insanity... But then why would you stay here? Doesn't this place just remind you of your loss?

MABEL

It does. But it's also my home. It's a home that someone made for me out of love. Even if that love disappeared, it was once strong enough to build this house. It reminds me of my loss, but it holds precious, happy memories as well. I just try to focus on those.

(pause)

Having you here helps, too. Even if you do drive me crazy.

OPHELIA

Do you mean that?

MABEL

Well, why else would I say it?

OPHELIA drops the letter opener on the table and pulls MABEL in for an awkward hug. The sound of the knife hitting the table catches the attention of GOLDILOCKS.

GOLDILOCKS

What the – where the – how? Where did that come from?

Oh no. OPHELIA

Now you're the one scaring her. MABEL

GOLDILOCKS
Great woodland spirits! Have I angered you with my presence? Why would you mock me in this way?

What do we do? OPHELIA

Go over to the door. Open it when I signal. MABEL

OPHELIA crosses to the door.
MABEL takes the book from
GOLDILOCKS. MABEL places the
book on the table and stabs it with a
knife. GOLDILOCKS trembles.

GOLDILOCKS
Is this a sign? Have I angered you with my presence? Do you wish me to leave?

Yes! MABEL

MABEL picks up GOLDILOCKS' shoes.

Now!

OPHELIA slams open the door and
MABEL throws the shoes through it.
GOLDILOCKS sprints out of the
house.

So... do you want to go float by the river? OPHELIA

I guess I could put my newspaper down long enough to go outside. MABEL

MABEL puts her hand on OPHELIA's shoulder and the two exit.