

ANNA

But no clowns?

Side 1

MS. WALKER

No clowns.

ANNA

Well, just put me wherever then.

COREY

Ms. Walker, we have a question.

MS. WALKER

Of course, Corey, what is your question?

COREY

Our question is... there's always been this story that this school is haunted. Like there's a ghost, or a phantom or whatever. Like, everyone knows this.

MS. WALKER

I am aware. What of it?

STEVE

But in the cafeteria today, Coach Grundman said that *this* play, *this* actual script, is haunted. Like... *cursed*.

COREY

And if Coach Grundman says it, it must be true because he's an international mixed martial arts champion.

STEVE

Which is true because he won a match in Canada, which is, in fact, another country.

BROOKE

Wait- the play is cursed?

ZEKE

Whoa! A real curse?

(Mutters and whispers among the cast)

TINA

Ms. Walker, if Brooke is afraid to be in our cursed play, I would be happy to step up and play the part.

BROOKE

I'm not afraid.

MS. WALKER

Thank you, Tina. But I need you to just be her understudy and help with the set and lights. And maybe the props. And the play is not cursed.

TINA

Oh, I *know* the play is cursed. And I love it.

ANNA

How do you know it's cursed?

CAMI

Is this for real?

TINA

Oh, it's for real all right. My older brother told me all about it. And he heard about it from my uncle. This isn't the first time the school has tried to do this play, is it? Ms. Walker?

MS. WALKER

Well...actually no. This play was attempted once before.

BROOKE

Attempted?

MS. WALKER.

It's a long story. Not important. What matters is that *we* are doing the play. Not the tragic circumstances of the original attempt. Now let's talk about the rehearsal schedule-

ZEKE

Um. Rewind. Tragic circumstances?

TINA-

I don't usually agree with Zeke, but, you gotta tell them.

ALL

Tell us! Tell us! Tell us!

MS. WALKER

I'm not sure it's an appropriate story.

TINA

I'll tell them if you don't.

MS. WALKER

Oh, all right. Seventy-three years ago, a young teacher named Abigail Walker sought to produce this version of *The Phantom* as performed by students in this very auditorium.

CAMI

Abigail *Walker*?

MS. WALKER

Yes. Walker. Abigail Walker was my Great Grandmother. And after the troubles with the original production, she was let go by the school. They blamed her.

ALL

And???

ZEKE

What happened???

TINA

I know what happened.

MS. WALKER

Tina! Oh, all right fine! I'll tell you!

ZEKE

Yes!

CAMI

Is this gonna be scary?

TINA

Oh yeah.

MS. WALKER

It's just a story.

Song 3. The Legend

MS. WALKER

THE LEGEND BEGINS AT THIS VERY SCHOOL,
FOUR SCORE MINUS SEVEN YEARS AGO.
LEGEND HAS IT THAT THERE ONCE WAS A BOY

side 2

Indeed.

EMILE

You just couldn't leave it alone.

BRIAN/BROOKE/ZEKE

AAAAAAHHHHH

EMILE

What are you kids doing here? I told you to stay away! This is my home!

ZEKE

Yeah? Well, you also told us you were the night janitor.

BROOKE

And Ms. Walker told us there is no night janitor.

BRIAN

Are...are you the Phantom?

EMILE

You kids. There is no Phantom. I just thought I could use that old legend to keep you away from my home. But I guess it didn't work. Why are you here after all my warnings?

BROOKE

What warnings?

EMILE

The note. The painting on the backdrop. Can't you kids take a hint?

ZEKE

Everyone thinks that was me! I could be in a lot of trouble!

EMILE

I can't help that. I needed you to stay away from my home.

BRIAN

You keep saying that: "Home"

EMILE

I live down here. Have for years. School laid me off for budget cuts. But I knew about this place. I know everything about this school. (*ominously*) Everything. I got nowhere else to go. Got no real home. Except this. Then you kids start snooping around, fit to ruin everything.

Next scene: The next day

Side 3

BRIAN

How are you feeling?

BROOKE

Fine.

BRIAN

That was pretty creepy. Do they know who that was in the Phantom costume?

BROOKE

No.

BRIAN

Are things always this weird at this school?

BROOKE

No. I mean there's always been the legend of a ghost in the school. But I've never heard of anything actually happening. Well, the show must go on. I'm playing that part. No one is going to scare me off. It's my time.

BRIAN

There ya go. Want to see the backdrop for the show? I finished it last night.

BROOKE

Sure!

(ZEKE enters)

BROOKE *(continued)*

Hey Zeke! Brian's going to show me the backdrop he painted.

ZEKE

Um...Cool.

BROOKE

What's wrong?

ZEKE

Nothing. I promise. Let's see it.

(BRIAN lowers or swings out the backdrop as your production allows. Painted on the backdrop is 'STAY AWAY FROM MY HOME SWEET HOME')

BROOKE/ZEKE/ BRIAN

Whoa! What the- Nooo!

BRIAN

Do you think this is funny? I put a lot of work into that backdrop.

ZEKE

I didn't do it!

BRIAN

Oh yes, I'm sure.

ZEKE

Brooke, look me in the eyes. I swear I didn't do this. Or any of it.

BRIAN

Brooke?

BROOKE

I believe him, Brian. Zeke loves to scare people, but he would never do something like this.

(MS. WALKER and TINA enter)

MS. WALKER

What in the world? What happened to the backdrop? "Stay away from my Home Sweet Home?"

TINA

Oh gee, I wonder who did this... Any thoughts Zeke? "Stay away from my Home Sweet Home?" Isn't that what you yelled at rehearsal?

ZEKE

Tina, why are *you* here?

TINA

Um, I don't know, maybe because I run back stage? The real question is why are you here?

BRIAN

I was showing it to them.

MS. WALKER

Zeke, do you have something you'd like to tell me?

ZEKE

Whoa- I wouldn't do something like this!

BROOKE

It's true, Ms. Walker. He wouldn't.

TINA

Look! A trail! Little drops of red paint. I bet it leads to whoever did this!

(they follow the 'trail' invisible to us or effect by lights around the stage until they arrive at the bank of lockers) Locker 172

BROOKE

172? Oh. boy.

BRIAN

What is it?

TINA

Yeah, what is it... Zeke?

ZEKE

172 is my locker.

MS. WALKER

Zeke Matthews! Open this locker immediately!

ZEKE

No way! I have rights!

MS. WALKER

Yes, you have the right to remain silent and open this locker.

(ZEKE complies. Inside his locker is a can of red paint)

TINA

I knew it!

BROOKE

Zeke!

MS. WALKER

Zeke Matthews! This time you've gone too far.

ZEKE

I didn't do it. I don't know how that got there. I swear!

MS. WALKER

Well if you didn't do it, who did? And how did this paint can get into your locker?

ZEKE

Why not ask Tina? She's the one with access to the paint. Or Emile! He's probably got keys to everything!

MS. WALKER

Who?

ZEKE

Emile, the Night Janitor.

MS. WALKER

What? There is no night janitor.

(Brooke and Zeke exchange furtive glances. They need to be furtive or the moment just doesn't work. Like, at all)

So Zeke, care to explain how this can of paint ended up in your locker?

Song: Whodunit?

ZEKE

I don't know! You have to believe me!

MS. WALKER

Frankly I don't know what to believe. Zeke, you are out of the play till further notice.

ZEKE

But?

MS. WALKER

No buts! Principal Kirkham and I will be discussing this with your parents. And deciding if we have to cancel the play.

BROOKE

Cancel the play? No!

BROOKE (*turning back to BRIAN*)

So anyway... You are actually in my chair.

Side 4

BRIAN

Sorry. I didn't realize there were assigned seats.

BROOKE

It's cool. So... you're new here?

BRIAN.

Um, yes. My family just moved here. From Indiana.

BROOKE

Yeah. I'm sorry I said that Indiana is gross. That was totally unfair. I've never even been to Indiana.

BRIAN (*dryly*)

Oh, it's pretty exciting. Never a dull moment in Indiana.

BROOKE

Are you here for drama class?

BRIAN

Yes. At my old school I was in all the plays. I was hoping to get into this one.

(*Enter MS. WALKER with the rest of the students*)

MS. WALKER

Hello Brian! I see you found a seat.

BRIAN

Hello.

BROOKE

Brian wants to be in the play, Ms. Walker.

BRIAN

Yes. Very much.

MS. WALKER

Oh, I'm so sorry. I love your enthusiasm, Brian, but I'm afraid that all of the parts have been assigned.

(BRIAN slumps dejectedly. Which is really the only true way to slump. So 'slumps dejectedly' is probably redundant) But Tina could certainly use some help I'm sure. Tina runs everything backstage from scenery to lights to...well just about everything. Would that be interesting to you?

BRIAN *(perking up. Again, up is probably the only way to perk. But we were afraid if we just wrote "perking" you might be confused. We should probably give you more credit)*
Oh, yes, ma'am.

MS. WALKER

Oh! A student who calls me ma'am. How lovely! You didn't mean that sarcastically, did you?

BRIAN

No ma'am.

MS. WALKER

How lovely! Tina!

TINA

Yes?

MS. WALKER

This delightfully polite young man is Brian. He has volunteered to help you.

TINA *(to BRIAN)*

Do you know how to do anything?

BRIAN

I can draw and paint a bit.

TINA

Ok. Maybe you can help with the back drop. Don't touch the lights. Or the set. Or the props. You don't have the training.

BRIAN

Okay.

TINA

Meet me here tomorrow at 4.

CAMI

Ms. Walker?

MS. WALKER

Yes, Cami?

CAMI

I feel like these ensemble characters are underdeveloped.

MS. WALKER

Remember there are no small parts. Only small actors.

ANNA

That's... clearly untrue. Also this script is pretty tense. You know what I think would break that tension? Clowns.

MS. WALKER

Where is Zeke? Not a lot we can do without him.

VOICEOVER

Ms. Walker, please report to the office. There's a package for you.

MS. WALKER

Really? It's here? All right, students, I'll be right back. In the meantime, make this time productive. Learn. Your. Lines.

(Ms. Walker exits)

BRIAN (to BROOKE)

So... What do we do now?

BROOKE

I do need to get to work on learning my lines. I have a lot so I guess I'll do that until Zeke gets here. I wonder where he is.

BRIAN

Zeke? Oh. Is that your boyfriend?

BROOKE

Zeke?

BRIAN

I'm sorry. It's none of my business.

BROOKE

No, Zeke is my best friend but he's not my boyfriend. Not that I'm against having a boyfriend.
It's just that-

(ZEKE enters, sneaks up on Brooke and intrusively sits between them)

ZEKE

Brooke!

BROOKE

AAAAHHH! What is wrong with you? By the way, I got your note and mask.

ZEKE

What are you talking about?

BROOKE

You're lucky you're my best friend.

ZEKE

I have no idea what you are talking about.

BRIAN

Well, maybe I will talk to you again sometime.

BROOKE

Ok.

ZEKE

Who's that?

BROOKE *(In a daze of new love)*

New kid. *(recovering)* Look, let's just run lines.

ZEKE

Totally. What's this play about anyway?

BROOKE

What?

ZEKE

I mean I know it's about me as the Phantom but...

BROOKE

You didn't read the play?

TINA *(writing note)*

'Ms. Walker, Zeke didn't read the play.'

CAMI

I read the play. I'm not in it.

BROOKE

You really didn't read the play?

BRIAN

I read it and I just got here today!

ZEKE

I totally meant to read it. And I absolutely planned to get the album and listen to it.

BROOKE

Album?

ZEKE

Of the Phantom of the Opera. Obviously. It's a famous musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber. And he wrote Cats. Which I saw. I do know some things you know.

BROOKE

Yeah. That's totally NOT the musical we are doing.

ZEKE

It's not?

BROOKE

Ok. Sit down. The Phantom of the Opera was a novel by Gaston Leroux.

ZEKE

Gaston? Like in Beauty in the Beast.

TINA

Yes. Exactly like him.

BROOKE

Except Gaston Leroux was a real person who wrote novels, not a villain in a Disney movie. Now our musical is a little different than the novel. Our story is about a young girl named Esmerelda-

ZEKE

Like in The Hunchback of Notre Dame. How many Disney movies are we ripping off in this thing?