

IN THE SPIRIT

A Comedy in Two Acts

By Matthew Carlin

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In this supremely entertaining play, timid and somewhat nerdy Arthur Miller (no relation to the playwright) has inherited a century-old mansion from a distant cousin. On arrival he finds more than he bargained for—the ghosts of three relatives who died there more than 70 years ago and the ghost of their killer, the schizophrenic Uncle George. But these ghosts are not content to just rattle chains. They enjoy “life” by re-enacting their deaths, sometimes two or three times a night, each time funnier, faster and more melodramatically than the last! As they explain to Arthur, they don’t want to “move on” when they’re having so much fun right where they are. Arthur is drawn into their games, utterly charmed, so much so that when a high-pressure medium with connections at the bank threatens to repossess the house and all the spirits in it, Arthur rises to the challenge. One living room set.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I

Scene 1: Living room of the Huntington Mansion.

Scene 2: Later that evening.

ACT II

Scene 1: The next evening.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 M, 4 W)

ARTHUR MILLER - The last male of the Huntington line and a bit of a nerd.

MRS. MORRIS - A real estate agent.

ROBERT HUNTINGTON - A ghost. Past, and as far as he's concerned, present owner of the Huntington mansion.

AMANDA HUNTINGTON - A ghost. Wife of Robert.

THERESA HUNTINGTON - A ghost. Their teenage daughter.

ANGELICA - A self-proclaimed medium. An eccentric old woman who has been trying for years to find the Huntingtons.

GEORGE HUNTINGTON - A ghost. A schizophrenic psychopath and cousin who murdered the Huntingtons and thinks he has to do it over and over again.

SETTING

The setting is the living room of the Huntington Mansion, a century-old home that has remained uninhabited for some 70 plus years now. It has been remarkably well kept. The room is tastefully furnished. DSC are a sofa and coffee table and a chair on opposing sides of the sofa. DSR there is an entrance leading to the front of the house. Just above that, in a corner, is a fireplace, and just UPS of that, a buffet with a concealed bar. USR is a staircase and large landing leading to the upper floors of the mansion. SL is a desk and chair. Directly behind that is a bookcase with several old books neatly shelved. A few thriving plants are in the room, again reflecting the fact that though the house has not been lived in, it has been maintained. A few old paintings hang on the wall as well. The room, overall, gives the appearance of a homey, family atmosphere, the way it must have been around the turn of the 20th century. In Act II, the sofa, coffee table and side chairs are moved UPS to make room for a round table and three chairs.

PROPS

ARTHUR: Small hamster cage, suitcases, goldfish in a bowl, reading glasses, paper and folder, candelabra for table.

MRS. MORRIS: Notepad and pen, briefcase.

GEORGE: Razor, turban, blowpipe and tiny darts, pistols, cowboy hat and boots, small piece of rope, monk-like hooded robe, grass skirt, arm and leg bracelets, necklace of teeth and bone, spear.

THERESA: Flat rectangular box with coins.

ROBERT: Pipe.

AMANDA: Platter.

ANGELICA: Huge purse, large bag, shawl, jar of dust, dead flowers, white table cloth.

SET PROPS: bottle of alcohol in cabinet

SOUND EFFECTS

Door opening and closing

Wheel turning

Door opening

Doorbell

Doorbell

Door slam

Gun shot

Gun shot

Two gun shots

Doorbell twice

Creaking door being opened and slammed

Piercing scream and thunderclap

Piercing scream and another

Booming thunder

Thunder and screams

Crash and loud clumping

Door slamming

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: As the LIGHTS come up we hear voices off SR. ARTHUR MILLER enters. He wears glasses and carries a small covered cage containing his hamster, Norman. Arthur is a nice man but seemingly very unsure of himself. He wants to do the right thing but is not quite sure how to do it. Following him in is MRS. MORRIS. She is a very aggressive sales lady. Her feigned exuberance is almost nauseating. She is an attractive woman, dressed in business attire.)

ARTHUR: I want to thank you for meeting me here on such short notice, Mrs. Morris. It was—

MRS. MORRIS: Oh, please! Mr. Miller! Don't even mention it! It was my pleasure, I assure you! *(SHE is already looking around the room, taking notes.)*

ARTHUR: Well, I hope you understand that I haven't made a decision yet on whether I should sell the house. I mean there may be other options...

MRS. MORRIS: I understand completely! I'm only here to give you my appraisal. You speak to anyone I have ever done business with. They'll tell you! Claudia Morris is not the pushy type! *(SHE looks past ARTHUR to the staircase, and bulls her way past.)* Oh! Look at this! This is so beautiful! What exquisite workmanship! Isn't it amazing!

ARTHUR: I suppose it is. To tell you the truth, I haven't even had a chance to look at it myself. Do you think—

MRS. MORRIS: Why, of course it will sell! And I want to assure you, Mr. Miller, there is not an agent in this city that will take better care of things for you than Claudia Morris! I know you won't be disappointed with the confidence you've shown in me. *(SHE sits at the sofa and opens her briefcase.)* Now, why don't we sit down and discuss terms. I just happen to have a copy of a standard contract here in my briefcase.

ARTHUR: Well, I—

MRS. MORRIS: Oh, don't worry about that! It's just a little case of buyer's remorse...or in your case, seller's remorse. Everything will work out just fine. I believe we can get an excellent price for the old place. Let's just go over the contract, shall we? (*SHE starts to shuffle papers in HIS direction.*)

ARTHUR: (*Sits at the chair SL and puts the cage down on the coffee table*) But, that's just it, Mrs. Morris. I really don't know if I want to sell the old place.

MRS. MORRIS: Oh, but Mr. Miller. From what I understand, the late Mr. Huntington left quite a large debt behind, what with the estate taxes and all. I was under the impression that you hadn't the means to settle the estate...unless you sold the house, that is. I believe that would take care of the debt and leave a nice little bonus for you as well. Isn't that true?

ARTHUR: Well, yes, but...

MRS. MORRIS: But?

ARTHUR: But I feel I should take the time to explore all of my available options. You see, although I never met Herbert...the late Mr. Huntington...I was certainly aware of who he was. Since I was a very young child, I have received letters from him. He always emphasized that I was the last living male relative of this particular line of the Huntingtons. He impressed upon me the importance of that. He spoke of the heritage behind the name, and he always talked about this house. He said it was a special place and should remain in the family. Always.

MRS. MORRIS: That's a very lovely sentiment, Mr. Miller, but it won't deter the I.R.S. You know what they say...come rain, sleet or poverty, they always get their man.

ARTHUR: Yes, well, I certainly have no intention of trying to cheat the I.R.S. of their due, nor any of Cousin Herbert's other debtors, but I still think I should take a little time...and care. Did you know, Mrs. Morris, that this house has been vacant for more than 70 years?

MRS. MORRIS: Oh, really? You wouldn't know it from looking at it.

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ARTHUR: No, you wouldn't. That's because Cousin Herbert saw to its upkeep. He had it cleaned once a week every week for all those years. The same with the grounds...but he refused to live here. I don't know the whole story, but it had something to do with his feelings for the original owners. They were killed here in the house...murdered...some 70 years ago. He was a very young man at the time.

MRS. MORRIS: How sad.

ARTHUR: Yes. I don't really understand it all myself. But if Herbert went to such great lengths all those years to preserve the house, then I think I can afford to take a few days to at least explore the possibility of keeping it in the family. I hope you understand.

MRS. MORRIS: Of course. Well, (*SHE begins to pack her briefcase.*) you have my card, Mr. Miller. If you'll give me the number of the hotel where you're staying, I'll be sure to stay in touch.

ARTHUR: Oh. I'll be leaving the hotel. I've decided to stay here.

MRS. MORRIS: Here? Do you think that's wise?

ARTHUR: I don't see why not? I do own it. At least for the moment. I've taken my two-weeks vacation to take care of things here and...who knows...maybe I'll find a hidden treasure stuffed up underneath the kitchen sink. (*HE laughs.*)

MRS. MORRIS: (*Forced laughter*) Oh, yes. Perhaps you will. You do know that the security system that was protecting the house is no longer functioning. I'm afraid that is one of the bills that went unpaid after Herbert's passing. Are you sure you'll feel safe here all alone?

ARTHUR: Oh, don't worry. Norman here is a great burglar alarm.

MRS. MORRIS: Norman?

ARTHUR: Yes, my hamster. If anything strange is about to happen Norman gets on his little exercise wheel and goes to town! Bad weather, bad luck on the way, anything...Norman senses it. It's amazing!

MRS. MORRIS: I'm sure it is.

End of Freeview

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