

THEATRE GHOSTS:

OFF BOOK

a play

by

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With so much theatre being created for 90 minutes or less presentations, theatre houses often close their doors by ten at night; leaving venues dark, yet presumably available to create additional revenue and/or bring in a new audience; one that doesn't even consider night life starting till after 9:00 pm.

THEATRE GHOSTS is a series of 'after-hours' theatre. Made up of one act plays roughly forty-five to seventy-five minutes in length that are intended to be performed on a stage already in place for another production, regardless whether that production be *Noises off*, *Music Man*, *As You Like It* or *Raisin in the Sun*. The *Theatre Ghosts* plays utilize each venue as a theatre space—generally the same theatre space itself that the audience is attending...any dialogue pertaining to location or venue may and should be adjusted to match the venue.

CHARACTERS

SUSAN WOLINSKI - A Real Estate agent

WALLIS PIERS - A prospective buyer's representative

DOBORAH "DOBIE" AMES - an Artistic Director

THE SETTING

The theatre space itself as is.

THE TIME

An early Monday morning; and the following weeks.

SYNOPSIS

Susan, a corporate Real Estate agent, walks Wallis, a potential buyer, through a theatre which the building's owner has decided to put on the market.

Doborah, the resident Artistic Director, crashes the meeting in order to barker their own deal.

A NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE:

1. A slash “ / “ indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is unspoken, although the character is thinking it.
(please note these passages will also be highlighted in grey in this script)
3. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is spoken aloud but is an aside.
(also note that these passages are NOT highlighted and SHOULD BE read aloud)
4. Grammatical errors; sentences beginning in lower case; or UPPER CASE; used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), were, indeed, intended.

SCENE 1

(Lights come up rather awkwardly as WALLIS PIERS, clad in business attire, steps into the theatre and makes her way onto the stage. WALLIS examines everything carefully, making a point not to convey her interest or lack thereof in the property.)

SUSAN (Offstage/FROM TECH BOOTH)

Now don't touch anything. I'll be right there.

(As she travels from the tech booth:)

It's a Hot set.

WALLIS

What?

SUSAN (TRAVELING OFFSTAGE)

It's a it's a term they use. It's uh

(SUSAN enters, also dressed for business though more economically adorned:)

It means the set is—we shouldn't touch anything on the set. They're using it in a production they have running right now. It's nothing, it's—

WALLIS

So somebody's already in the space.

SUSAN

Community Theatre..at best. They can be out before escrow closes.

WALLIS

Do they have a lease?

SUSAN

It's made of porcelain. So, this is—you saw the outside: this is the view. It can be disorienting, I know. The street is there. This is the—there is ample parking, if you need it. These [interior] walls can all be moved. Except that one. That's load bearing.

WALLIS

Wouldn't want to move that one.

SUSAN

Nope. Nope. You wouldn't. This is obviously the largest space but you can add walls if you need. And the acoustics...well need I say more?

WALLIS

More than what?

SUSAN

Well, they're using it as a theatre; the acoustics are...optimal.

WALLIS

Who's they?

SUSAN

Truth be told, I've never seen a show here. I just know some theatre group is using it to do Neil Simon or Matt Damon or somebody. Whoever's current. Or whoever's old. Whoever's free—I'll bet they do Shakespeare, right?

WALLIS

I'm sorry, I stopped listening when you said "truth be told".

SUSAN

excuse me?

WALLIS

I expect the truth to be told; in fact, anytime I hear "truth be told" it tells me you're either lying now or you've been lying to me up until this point. Either way, it tells me you're a liar. Or at least lying's not outside your repertoire.

SUSAN

(Recovering:)

...I've never seen a show here. It's a damned good piece of real estate and for the street exposure you want, it's perfect. I don't know what business you're in, I don't know what you do, I'm not asking.

WALLIS

You can.

SUSAN

Not that I haven't looked up what your company does—it's just they offer so many varying—a variety of services and causes—good for them—I don't know where their—where your diversification fits into place here—nor do I need to know.

(The following may be tailored to the production venue:)

You want 3000 square feet in East Hampton by the water. I got you right *on* the water. The view is spectacular, you just have to knock down that wall and punch a few holes in that one and you're there.

WALLIS

Electrical?

SUSAN

Electrical is...will be brought up to code—to date. There are Wi-Fi issues but that's true for everything on the water—just keep hardwired and you'll be fine..

DOBORAH

(DOBORAH enters, casually dressed, carrying three coffees and a small bag, all in a cardboard commuter tray:)

Sorry, I'm late. I took the liberty. They're black: I don't know how you take them. I take mine black. But I have cream and every different sweetener they make here for you. So.

(Sets down the tray and pulls out her own:)

I'm Doborah—like Deborah but with 'o's.

SUSAN

[What're you doing here?]

DOBORAH

I saw it on the calendar. We usually have a cleaning crew that comes in on Monday mornings but they got cancelled. I asked why and..here we are. Would you rather have tea; I can heat some water.

WALLIS

And you are?

DOBORAH

Doborah Ames—call me Dobie—I hate the name but everyone finds it easier so...I'm stuck with it. I'm the Artistic Director here.

(To Susan:)

We missed you at rehearsal last night.

SUSAN

..I'm/—

DOBORAH

Oh no. She was going to stop by and get the key. I see you got your own.

WALLIS

You rehearse *and* you're doing a show.

DOBORAH

Oh my god, we have to. Only way to keep the doors open: keep 'em turning. [I didn't get your name?]

WALLIS

Wallis. Wallis Piers.

DOBORAH

God, wouldn't that look great on a marquis. How do you spell it?

WALLIS

W-a-l-l-i-s.

DOBORAH

Like...

WALLIS

Yes.

DOBORAH

(Introducing Wallis to Susan:)

The Duchess of York.

WALLIS

Are you buttering me up?

DOBORAH

Is it working? I came to let you in but obviously you're already here.

SUSAN

(This is entirely unprofessional of you.)

DOBORAH

Theatre [people] are desperate people. We are desperate to do theatre. We're desperate to have a space to do theatre. I just wanted to see if you planned on taking that space away. Are you?

WALLIS

Doborah..Ms. Ames. I uh I'm just looking at buildings. This is one of them. I appreciate what you're doing.

DOBORAH

And I appreciate what you're doing.

WALLIS

I'm just looking at buildings.

DOBORAH

No. Not just here: in the big picture. *Allied*. That's who you work for, right?

Allied?

You must have your fingers in so many many pies...I'm sure it's hard to keep it all accounted for. I mean the..the accounting alone...

Who does your books?

SUSAN

..I *can't* be having this conversation.

WALLIS

Seems we're already *having* this conversation.

DOBORAH

Can we have this conversation?

(Receiving neither a 'yae' nor a 'nay' she forges ahead:)

You're going into *computer tech*, here. I know, I read it online. [Forgive my being forward here but:] You don't need tech in this little piss-ass town. You need a business front. You just..somebody just chose *Tech*. Maybe because it's kind of cutting edge, so you can throw away..you may *lose* a lot of money on just tossing around ideas—and that's all I'm doing: tossing ideas at you. The problem with *Tech*, is it's so obvious, I mean you might as well build a laundromat—but the problems with laundromats is that they're too easy to audit: Electrical consumption, water in/water out. And they're going to look into you; I mean not *you* personally (I'm sure) but *Allied* (definitely). So, you're going to have to come up with—you're gonna have to provide employment records, meaning, you're going to have to actually hire IT people and they're not cheap. To do what? To sit there and come up with apps that nobody uses or for phones that nobody's gonna buy? And then you're gonna actually have to make those phones and that's gonna be a real expense. I mean you have to show overhead: I get it.

WALLIS

You are assuming a lot of inferences here.

SUSAN

(This is entirely unacceptable.)

DOBORAH

We do theatre; we do the unacceptable here. We are losing money every other show and breaking even on the rest and living on donations.

WALLIS

Then maybe it's a good thing if you went on to do something else.

DOBORAH

But that's not *why* we do theatre—and it's only because we get small houses even for our best plays. By contrast: if every seat filled up for every show or nearly [every show] we'd be rolling in..in it.

...And all we'd have is our attendance sheets to prove our audience was here. And nobody keeps ticket stubs..unless you got engaged or something.

(WALLIS conveys nothing.)

DOBORAH

And we build or borrow our sets now but we can rent. Others do. It's very common to rent sets, and lights and costumes and sound and and and designers and directors. Nobody gets paid *now*—you're lucky if you can give out a gas stipend—but everybody—we *could* keep record of everybody getting paid..something. If we had to.

WALLIS

..I don't make these decisions.

SUSAN

I apologize, Ms. / Piers. This—

DOBORAH

Do you think the people you work for at *Allied* might be interested in just hearing what..we have to discuss? We could sit down? Or just go through you...

WALLIS

you have quite a set of balls on you.

DOBORAH

Yeah, I wear 'em high so men can look at him. Too big to fit in my pants.

WALLIS

(To Susan:)

[See? This is what I was talking about:] *That's* truth.

(Lights Fade.)

In the interim (dimmed lighting):

All three women move to different positions onstage:

But first: WALLIS takes a coffee from Doborah.

SUSAN does not.

DOBORAH offers Wallis a two to three page typed out proposal that she's been carrying beneath her coffee commuter tray.

SUSAN steps aside to take a phone call.

WALLIS skims the proposal. DOBORAH watches on, doing her best to display her poker face.

SUSAN paces the stage, crosses to her purse, and digs out a pen and wallet sized notebook.

WALLIS leaves stage with the proposal.

SUSAN writes hastily.

DOBORAH gathers up her coffees and fixings.

WALLIS returns with a 50 page thick legal contract and hands it to SUSAN who, in turn, stops writing, in order to receive the document.

WALLIS exits as SUSAN warily crosses stage to pass the contracts to DOBORAH.

DOBORAH exits, slightly overwhelmed but still poker faced, with contracts.

SUSAN is left alone unsure what to make of anything—remembers the phone and returns it to her ear. Whoever it was on the other end has already hung up. SUSAN begins to redial them back. She waits a moment before...

SUSAN exits, phone still to her ear.

SCENE 2

(At rise:

WALLIS and DOBORAH. Doborah's outfit has enhanced in quality since the previous scene. In contrast, Wallis' attire is far more casual. The irony of which goes over neither of their heads.)

WALLIS

(Unapologetic about it at all:)

I'm going to the gym after this. What did you want that the email didn't make clear?

DOBORAH

First: thank you for meeting with me in / person.

WALLIS

I'm meeting with you in person because I'm assuming you'd type or say something over the phone that can't be undone.

(A slight beat: "understood".)

WALLIS

Close the show.

DOBORAH

..In all due respect we just opened last Friday. Gene will learn his / lines.

WALLIS

You already have a review. It wasn't favorable.

DOBORAH

No one reads reviews; they're like Fox news...(Is that going too far?)

WALLIS

You need a bona fide hit. We're selling out every seat, remember? No one's going to see

(Quoting from memory:)

"an embarrassment of embarrassments" "You may try to get your money back but you still can't get your time returned." "Run, don't walk, just run. For god's sake run."

DOBORAH

(Referring to the critic himself:)

That's just Bill Warren; he wasn't cast. He tends to hold / a [grudge].

WALLIS

I don't care. The show is closed. What's up next?

DOBORAH

..Nothing. We're still in rehearsals. The show was supposed to run six weeks and then we're two weeks dark.

WALLIS

Why would you be two weeks dark?

DOBORAH

We have to build the set.

WALLIS

What's wrong with this set?

DOBORAH

Nothing; for *this* play but...it's not *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

WALLIS

Is that the next play?

DOBORAH

No. It's a [figure of speech]...

WALLIS

Good: because Mamet's not Mamet anymore. Do a female writer.

DOBORAH

I've been trying to get the board / to do that for—

WALLIS

What Board? I am the Board. Run your plays by me, I'll tell you which ones you can do.

DOBORAH

(Choosing her battles now:)

...We still don't have anything ready to replace the show that's on now—that *was* on now—that you just *closed*. Have you seen it?

WALLIS

“Run, don’t walk, just run...”

DOBORAH

See it. First. Please. Then if you still want it closed: we’ll close. I will bring out *Love Letters* and polish off *Shirley Valentine* but I need a week.

WALLIS

What was the last success you ran before this?

DOBORAH

M-most of the cast are already doing other shows across town already and the Silvermans went to Europe on a Cruise line. One weekend?

WALLIS

..Tonight. They will run it for me / tonight.

DOBORAH

They’re in rehearsals for—

(Realizes this is no to push her luck:)

I will get them here tonight.

(Lights dim.)

(In the dim: An audience seat is brought on stage. WALLIS sits, cellphone in hand.)

SAMPLE ONLY - NOT FOR PERFORMANCE - consult playwright

SCENE 3

(Lights shift:

WALLIS sits alone in the seat, watching the play unfold before her. She takes notes on her cellphone. Muffled dialogue and light changes engulf her throughout. Music is piped in to enhance moments. A fight. Tears. Laughter. Perhaps a gunshot or two. WALLIS remains unaffected but diligent throughout it all.

As the music caresses the final muffled lines of the play, and the lights alter for a last time, DOBORAH carefully approaches Wallis. WALLIS hits send on her phone. DOBORAH's cellphone alerts her a message has come in. She pulls out the phone to verify the same as WALLIS rises.)

WALLIS

Make the changes. Reopen on Friday. I'll have you re-reviewed.

(WALLIS makes her exit as DOBORAH is left reading over the sent message on her phone.)

DOBORAH

You're not going to threaten him (or anything), are you?

(But WALLIS is gone. DOBORAH continues scrolling through her text.)

(Light fade.)

SCENE 4

(At rise:

The chair is gone. Actually no one is onstage. Daylight may stream in from the lobby as we hear the outside doors closing and a voice talking, moving towards us through the lobby.)

SUSAN (OFFSTAGE)

I'll be real quick, I just have to make one stop. — I'm already here.

(SUSAN enters still talking on her cell phone:)

SUSAN (Continued:)

I won't. — I won't. I'll be there. — How many times have I actually missed a doctor's appointment? — That's because you never told me about it—that one doesn't count. — Five minutes tops. — You got yourself pregnant, didn't ya?; you can get yourself to the clinic.

(SUSAN hears a sound coming from somewhere in the theatre.)

SUSAN (Continued on phone:)

(Getting off the phone:)

— I'm not talking about this right now. — Yes, I'll be there—stop. Good-bye.

(She hangs up and waits a beat...)

Hello?

Hello?

(SUSAN's cell phone pings—alerting her of an incoming text. She reads the text, then turns out towards the direction of the previous sound:)

SUSAN

Yes, I'm here alone.

(Her phone pings again. She reads it again. To the sound location again:)

SUSAN

Yes, I'm sure.

(Another ping.)

SUSAN

Ok, you want to do this over the phone? I could've been in line at Starbucks.

DOBORAH (OFFSTAGE)

..no. No.

(DOBORAH enters cautiously from the shadows:)

I'm...Our phones may be bugged.

SUSAN

How do you know the whole place isn't [bugged]?

DOBORAH

City still has to make their inspection before ...

(Realizing:)

(of course, I doubt they sweep)...

SUSAN

Did she... What happened?

DOBORAH

I haven't been sleeping. I feel like Gene Hackman at the end of *The Conversation*.

SUSAN

Sorry: I don't go to plays.

DOBORAH

It was a movie. Francis Ford Coppola. He made *The Godfather*?

SUSAN

I've got my daughter waiting for me across town.

DOBORAH

Is she keeping it?

SUSAN

..what?

DOBORAH

I..couldn't help but hear that... She's going to a clinic?

SUSAN

She doesn't have insurance, she's a Barista. Yes, I'm going to be a grandmother, again, if you must know.

DOBORAH

Congratulations.

SUSAN

And if I'd said, "yes"?
[To] "She was getting an abortion"?
Exactly. It's none of your business.

DOBORAH

Ok, we got off to the wrong foot here.
She scares me. Does she scare you—I know she scares you—does she scare you?
What I'm trying to say is—I need to get out of our lease. Or..is there a way that
she doesn't pass Escrow?

SUSAN

She doesn't need Escrow. She paid your rent for the next three years with an
option to buy.

DOBORAH

Can she do that?

SUSAN

Write a check? Yes, apparently.

DOBORAH

And you lost your [big] commission.

SUSAN

You made your bed.

DOBORAH

I'm sorry. Sorry if I lost you money but I was about to lose my theatre.

SUSAN

Which you now want to walk away from.

DOBORAH

I think of it as walking *toward* the light.

SUSAN

What does that even mean?

ALTERNATIVE DIALOGUE:

(pages 1, 2, 3,
6, 9
14-15)

Part of the concept of THEATRE GHOSTS is to adapt the script to the actual venue of the given production.

Therefore, building descriptions (pgs 1 & 2) and the reason behind poor Wi-Fi reception (pg 3), should be adjusted to fit the actual building and location itself.

SAMPLE ONLY - NOT FOR PERFORMANCE - consult playwright

THE CURRENT SET:

There are times when the venue may have no set or a set under construction (between productions). In these cases the following adjustments can be made:

Pg 6

DOBORAH
And we build or borrow our sets now but we can rent. Others do. It's very common to rent sets, and lights and costumes and sound and and and designers and directors. Nobody gets paid *now*—you're lucky if you can give out a gas stipend—but everybody—we *could* keep record of everybody getting paid..something. If we had to.



DOBORAH
And we build or borrow our sets now but we can rent. When we need to. This set is... [minimalistic]—anyway, Others do [rent]. It's very common to rent sets, and lights and costumes and sound and and and designers and directors. Nobody gets paid *now*—you're lucky if you can give out a gas stipend—but everybody—we *could* keep record of everybody getting paid..something. If we had to.



OR

DOBORAH
And we build or borrow our sets now but we can rent. Right now we're... it's conceptual but we could rent. Others do. It's very common to rent sets, and lights and costumes and sound and and and Nobody gets paid *now*—you're lucky if you can give out a gas stipend—but everybody—we *could* keep record of everybody getting paid..something. If we had to.

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DOBORAH
We have to build the set.

WALLIS
What's wrong with this set?

DOBORAH
Nothing; for *this* play but...it's not *Glengarry Glen Ross*.



DOBORAH
We have to build the set.

WALLIS
Why do you need a set? You don't need a set for *this* play?

DOBORAH
They're different styles—it's more of a...This concept works for *this* play but it's not...it's not exactly *Glengarry Glen Ross*.



OR

DOBORAH
We have to build the set.

WALLIS
When will it be done?

DOBORAH
Soon. Yes but... They're different styles—it's more of a...This concept works for *this* play but it's not...it's not exactly *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

Pages 14 (and further in the script) has reference to planned parenting clinics. Dependent on the laws governing the State in which a production may be presented the following alternative dialogues may be preferred:

Pg 14

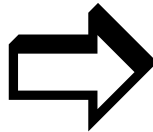
SUSAN
I've got my daughter
waiting for me across
town.

DOBORAH
Is she keeping it?

SUSAN
..what?

DOBORAH
I..couldn't help but
hear that... She's going
to a clinic?

SUSAN
She doesn't have
insurance, she's a
Barista. Yes, I'm going
to be a grandmother,
again, if you must
know.



SUSAN
I've got my daughter waiting for me
across town.

DOBORAH
Is she keeping it?

SUSAN
..what?

DOBORAH
I..couldn't help but hear that... She's
going to a clinic?

SUSAN
They don't do that anymore [it's
illegal].

DOBORAH
[Not meaning to pry...] Right.

SUSAN
She doesn't have insurance, she's a
Barista. Yes, I'm going to be a
grandmother, again, if you must
know.