

GHOSTING

by

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Episode 1: Toby

60 minute TV drama pilot

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EXT. STREET IN INNER-CITY COUNCIL ESTATE - AFTERNOON

Running. Fast. It's a chase.

A balaclava-clad young MUGGER -- over-sized black hoodie and matching jogging bottoms -- is being pursued by --

-- meek-looking, boy-next-door type TOBY FOSTER, 18, in a BURGER JOINT UNIFORM. A bizarre, amusing sight... apart from the large kitchen knife in TOBY'S hand.

The MUGGER takes evasive action, a sharp right into --

EXT. SUBWAY - AFTERNOON

-- a subway. Trot, trot, trot down the steps and into the main subway tunnel. TOBY's not far behind. Hectic footsteps echo as they both charge through the poorly lit concrete tube.

At the other end, TOBY is almost upon him. He reaches out and grabs the MUGGER by the hoodie, yanking him to a halt.

TOBY

You attacked my little sister, you
shit! Give me back her stuff!

Cue the frantic struggle. The MUGGER grabs the wrist of TOBY'S knife-wielding hand, turning the blade away from himself. They pull, they push, oops, TOBY loses his footing, falling flat on his back. The MUGGER collapses on top of him. Oof!

They quit the scrap. The reason, oh, shit, they've both noticed it. The kitchen knife embedded deep in TOBY'S chest.

Not thinking, TOBY yanks the weapon free of his body. Argh, geysers of blood erupt from the wound.

Sod this, it's time for the MUGGER to make tracks. A terrified, desperate TOBY reaches out, trembling fingers grappling, but the MUGGER breaks free and heads up the steps.

Oh, God, this is the end. Losing consciousness fast, TOBY can only lay back and wait for death to come a'calling.

Then oh. A GIRL appears on the scene, AMY, early 20s, wearing a cardigan over a student nurse's uniform. Off comes the cardigan. She presses it firmly against TOBY'S wound, attempting to curb the red-water rapids of claret.

With her other hand, AMY rifles through her handbag. Oh, did we spot a pistol in there? An actual gun? We're sure we did. Then out of the handbag comes her mobile phone. She thumbs 999 and waits. Erratic, panicky breathing. Then --

AMY

Ambulance! Now! A guy's just been
stabbed. The subway on Turner Street.

We are TOBY, looking up at this angel. Everything is fading
fast, a dissolving world of blur and echo.

AMY

Hang in there, yeah? Help is on its
way. No! Don't close your eyes. You
need to stay awake.

Too late. We fade to black. No sight. No sound.

Nothing.

Oh, and let there be light, we're back in the subway. TOBY sits
bolt upright, gasping for much-needed air. He checks the knife
wound. Oh. It's vanished. No blood. Yay, he's alive.

He clambers to his feet. That's when he clocks a distraught AMY
on her knees a few feet away... beside the motionless victim of
a stabbing, blood everywhere, a horrific sight.

WTF? Curious yet wary, TOBY inches forward to investigate. He
recognises the dead youth as... OMG... himself!

Horror-struck, confused, it's all too much. He turns and runs.
Fast. Up the subway steps and into --

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

-- a main shop-lined street. Strangely deserted. No people. No
moving cars. No anything. He stops dead, very much alone.

The sunlight fades. A distant rumble of thunder. Dark clouds
gather in a greying sky. Ooer, it's an unnerving sight.

What now? He turns to flee, but --

-- blocking his way are THREE GRUESOME FIGURES dressed in soiled
18th century smuggler attire, their skin pallid and grey, their
teeth stained and blackened.

The leader, CEPHAS GRIMM, steps forward, grinning like an
imbecile, his gait theatrical, almost a flamboyant mince. His
two companions MR LEFT and MR RIGHT snigger and cackle.

CEPHAS

Ah, Toby. So glad you could make it.

CEPHAS performs an over-blown courteous bow and arm sweep.

CEPHAS

Cephas Grimm at your service. Consider us your welcoming committee.

CEPHAS takes note of the boy's fear and confusion. Finger planted upon lips, the smuggler delivers mock mulling over.

CEPHAS

Methinks you need an explanation. Four little words should do it.

He lunges forward, nose-to-nose with TOBY.

CEPHAS

You're dead, boy!

TOBY yelps with fright. Another rumble of thunder adds to his unease. He looks right, looks left, desperate for help.

CEPHAS

There's no point in running away. You've got nowhere else to go. So be a good lad and come with us.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Get away from him.

TOBY twists around to face the firm, well-spoken, stiff upper lip voice. His face goes all WTF as he lays eyes upon --

-- CAPTAIN GEORGE TRENT, 30s, a World War Two British Army officer in full battledress, head held high, standing tall;

-- GEMMA JONES, early 20s, wearing the iconic Gerri Halliwell Union Jack mini-dress and red platform boots;

-- EGG RICHARDS, 16, a mixed race girl with messy coloured hair, facial piercings, a baggy American football shirt, camouflage cargo pants and trainers. Typical modern inner-city streetwear.

Eh? This motley crew is a bizarre sight to behold.

CEPHAS

Captain Trent. Must you always spoil the party?

GEORGE

You know the rules. This street is under my jurisdiction.

CEPHAS

True. But the subway he died in is under ours.

GEORGE

This boy is on my patch now. Which means he's coming with us.

GEORGE beckons TOBY over. Clearly seeing the trio of soldier, Spice Girl and chav as the lesser of two evils, TOBY shuffles closer to them.

CEPHAS

Mr Black won't like you butting into his private business.

GEORGE

Well, you know me. I'm always prepared to stand up and fight.

CEPHAS indicates to GEORGE'S uniform and --

CEPHAS

Hah! You and whose army?

GEORGE produces a service revolver from its holster and points it at CEPHAS. The smugglers are highly amused.

CEPHAS

Mere bullets cannot harm us.

Even so, GEORGE fires several shots into CEPHAS' chest. Upon impact, small clouds of black smoke mushroom out from each bullet hole. A giggling CEPHAS skips and dances like a loon.

CEPHAS

Ooh, stop it, Captain, it tickles.

Each smoke plume fades to nothing. All bullet wounds heal and disappear. Even the holes in his clothes cease to be.

#fail. Back in its holster goes GEORGE'S gun. Nevertheless, with a face as rigid as stone --

GEORGE

You can tell Mr Black I am not letting you take him.

The tense face-off seems to last a lifetime. But then --

CEPHAS

We'll be sure to pass the message on. But rest assured, Captain... you will be seeing us around.

The cackling smugglers morph into the blackest of ghostly shapes and soar into the distance at breakneck speed.

In an instant, sunlight returns. As do passers-by going about their business. Cars sail past. The street is back to normal. Although nobody seems to notice this unusual foursome.

TOBY

Can somebody please explain to me what the fuck is going on?

EXT. RECREATION PARK - AFTERNOON

TOBY sits next to GEORGE on a park bench. GEMMA and EGG stand close by. TOBY doesn't look at all convinced.

TOBY

You're telling me I'm a ghost?

GEORGE

Yes. We all are. From different time periods, naturally. Gemma here is from the 90s, I died in 1945 and --

TOBY

No way. None of this is real. You're talking bollocks. You've got a gun. You fired it. Ghosts can't do that.

TOBY stands up, as does GEORGE. TOBY recoils.

TOBY

No! Stay away from me! I'm going to prove you wrong.

He turns and legs it, leaving the ghosts standing in silence.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE TOBY'S PARENTS' HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Run, run, run, TOBY reaches his own street, a row of houses. It seems a pleasant place to live... apart from the view of two ugly and not too distant tower blocks reaching skywards.

Anxious, distraught, the lad gallops up the garden path and over to the front door. A search in his pockets for his keys. No joy. Plan B: He pounds frantic fists upon wood.

TOBY

Mum! Dad! Let me in! Please!

No answer. He trots over to the lounge window. Nose pressed against glass, he peers inside. That's when he sees --

-- two solemn POLICE OFFICERS, post-news. Standing before them are TOBY'S MOTHER, FATHER and 11-year-old sister KATIE who wears the facial spoils of a recent mugging.

They're crying, barely able to stand, holding onto each other. It's obvious. They're being informed of TOBY'S death.

TOBY'S face falls from a great height. The weirdoes back there were right. He is a ghost. Oh, it's all too much, he explodes into tears. We feel his pain, his gut-wrenching anguish.

Something makes him turn around. GEORGE, GEMMA and EGG stand nearby, compassion etched upon their faces.

GEORGE

It's no use trying to communicate with the living. They can't see or hear you.

TOBY still can't get his head around it. GEMMA holds out a hand.

GEMMA

Please. Come with us. We need to stick together.

TOBY

Why?

GEORGE

Because your world just got dangerous.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET/GHOST HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

GEORGE, GEMMA, EGG and a sullen TOBY walk in silence. EGG notices TOBY'S continued gloominess.

EGG

It's any consolation, Toby, I also died today. Lost an argument with a car.

TOBY

So how come you're not as depressed as me about it?

EGG looks as if she's trying to construct a reply when GEORGE stops outside the house we will recognise from now on as the GHOST HOUSE. In the garden, a For Sale sign stands guard.

GEORGE

Here we are, chaps. This has been our home for the past two years. The owners live elsewhere. The house comes fully furnished, yet they're having trouble selling the place.

EGG

Why's that?

GEORGE delivers a cheeky grin.

GEORGE
Because it's haunted.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON

GEORGE, GEMMA, EGG and TOBY enter the room.

GEORGE
Please. Make yourselves at home.

GEMMA and EGG claim the sofa. Sulking TOBY takes an armchair.
GEORGE remains standing, ready to lead, never off-duty.

GEORGE
Right. First things first. Room
arrangements. Toby can take the spare
bedroom. Egg, you can share with Gemma.

GEMMA
Me and Miss Facial Piercings? You are
joking, right?

EGG
Oi, excuse me. I am house-trained.

GEORGE
Gemma, you've been begging me for
months to find you female company.

GEMMA
Yeah, somebody like me. Not a total
fashion disaster.

EGG
Says the twat in a Spice Girl outfit.

GEMMA
At least I've got a proper name. What
the hell is Egg all about?

EGG
Gemma, let me guess how you died. Your
friends clubbed you to death for being
so frigging irritating.

GEORGE has had quite enough of this bitchiness.

GEORGE
Right, that's it. It's high time we
lightened the tone. Who's up for a trip
down the pub?

A pleased GEMMA stabs a hand high in the air.

GEMMA
Me, me, me, me, me!

But EGG and TOBY swap bemused glances.

EGG/TOBY
The pub?

INT. PUB - EVENING

It's a trendy High Street establishment, YOUNG PEOPLE chattering, music blasting out.

GEORGE props up the quieter end of the bar. Before him stand at least ten drinks of all types. A giggling, near-manic GEMMA scampers over with a pint in one hand, a voddy in the other.

GEMMA
Two more to add to my collection.

GEORGE
Must you keep stealing people's drinks?

GEMMA
It's fun. And I'm hardly likely to get caught, am I? They can't see me. The highlight of this game is checking out their reactions. Look.

She points to a GUY who's just discovered his lager is missing. He searches in vain, FFS, some bastard's nicked his drink.

GEMMA
Oh, George, I'd give anything to be able to sink all this alcohol right now. I so miss getting totally off my face at the weekend.

GEORGE clocks a HORNY COUPLE eating each other's faces. Yuck.

GEORGE
Things were very different in my day. There was none of this noise, this binge drinking, this... debauchery.

GEMMA
God, it must have been so boring.

And now we shoot off to a table in the far corner where we find a seated EGG and TOBY.

TOBY

You don't need to babysit me. It's not like I can slit my wrists.

EGG

I just figured we'd appreciate each other's company, seeing as we're both new to all this. It's about time I did something good. When I was alive, I was a bad person. I did horrible things.

TOBY

Like what?

TOBY really wants to know. EGG opens her mouth... but no, she hesitates, she falters, she's not ready. Then phew, she's saved by GEORGE and GEMMA joining them and sitting down.

GEMMA

Cheer up, Toby, it might never happen.

TOBY

I have good reason to sulk. I died today.

GEMMA

So did face full of metal over there, but I don't see her complaining.

EGG

At least I ain't a fan of an ancient girl band people's mums like.

GEMMA

Nor am I. I can't stand the Spice Girls.

EGG

Erm, does not compute. You're cosplaying Gerri Halliwell.

Then oh, the lights flicker. Out they go. The music dies. Darkness. Silence. Then comes a weird substitute form of illumination, a cold, eerie, other-worldly blue haze.

Oh, look, the pub's REVELLERS, they've all vanished.

Our four ghosts are now totally alone.

Right hand hovering by his holster, GEORGE stands up and creeps forward, slow, cautious. The other three rise to their feet, staying close to their leader, nervous, apprehensive.

EGG

George? What's happening?

GEORGE doesn't reply. But he looks hugely concerned.

GEMMA

Is it me or is it getting cold in here?

Question answered, ice crystals begin to form on the windows. Spooky stuff. And oh, even the drinks glasses begin to freeze. All members of the gang are seriously rattled... even GEORGE who tries his best to hide it.

GEORGE

Whatever you do... stay behind me.

Bam! By themselves, the double doors fly open. And in march CEPHAS, MR LEFT and MR RIGHT, emitting the usual cackling.

CEPHAS

Presenting the all-seeing, all-knowing,
all-powerful... Mr Black.

CEPHAS flings both hands towards the open doors, as if welcoming a superstar to the stage.

And here we see the arrival of the sinister MR BLACK, face pale and craggy, eyes as dark as his heart, wearing the long black coat and wide-brimmed hat of a 18th century parson. One click of his fingers, the double doors slam shut.

Ever gallant, GEORGE stands tall, protecting those behind him.

MR BLACK

Captain Trent. I am growing tired of you interfering with my recruitment procedure. That lad was ours.

GEORGE

Why? He's just a boy. What use could you possibly have for him?

MR BLACK

In the closing moments of his life, there was a rage in his eyes I have not witnessed for generations. So be an obliging soldier and hand him over. If you refuse, you will be very sorry.

Behind GEORGE, EGG shields TOBY, extra protection.

GEORGE

You don't scare me. I fought in the war.

EGG steps forward, chest puffed out.

EGG

Yeah. And I lived in a tower block. You can't do shit to us. We're already dead.

MR BLACK

Do you honestly believe ghosts cannot be harmed? Oh, I assure you they can.

MR BLACK raises an arm and flicks a hand sideways. Without any physical contact, an alarmed EGG flies through the air and collides with the wall. There she stays, stuck like glue, legs dangling, arms forced into a cross, a replica Jesus.

MR BLACK

One twist of my hand, that is all it will take to extinguish your light.

TOBY rushes forward.

TOBY

No, please! Don't harm her. I'll come with you. But only if you let her go.

A dangling EGG looks touched by TOBY'S heroic gesture.

GEORGE

Toby, you don't need to do this.

Ignoring GEORGE, TOBY peers at EGG. His face softens. The birth of a bond. Friendship. Or maybe even something more. Then adamant eyes fall upon MR BLACK.

TOBY

Take me.

MR BLACK is impressed. He glances at EGG, then back at TOBY. Hmm, clearly he can see this bond. He's working something out.

MR BLACK

A heroic sacrifice. But something tells me your heart is not quite into joining my band of merry men just yet.

He lowers his arm. EGG slides south and lands on her arse.

MR BLACK

Change of plan. Toby. You stick with your newfound friends. But hear this. One day, you will be ready. And on that day, you will choose to become one of us.

GEORGE, GEMMA and TOBY stand tall, saying nothing. EGG, rubbing her sore arse, comes to join them.

MR BLACK

Time to leave, gentlemen.

MR BLACK clicks his fingers. The double doors fly open. The three ghouls depart. The doors slam shut behind them.

A flicker of lights, then the pub is back to normal, music, illumination, chattering PEOPLE. Amongst them stand four ghosts, invisible to the living, trading disconcerted glances.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - LOUNGE - LATE EVENING

GEORGE, GEMMA, EGG and an even more depressed TOBY, all seated.

EGG

So who exactly is this Mr Black?

GEORGE

A powerful demon who has been around since the eighteenth century. He usually recruits the lowest of the low - recently deceased tramps, drunks, drug addicts - to do his dirty work. The cad's sudden interest in somebody like Toby is most disconcerting.

EGG

Is he really that powerful?

GEORGE

Well, put it this way. We all saw what he did to you. And how he altered our perception of reality.

GEMMA

What I don't get is why he didn't just take Toby and destroy the rest of us on the spot.

TOBY huffs loudly, taking to his feet, marching towards the door.

GEMMA

Where are you off to?

TOBY

What's it to you?

GEMMA

All right, all right, I only asked.

TOBY

If you must know, I'm going to my room.
I've had enough, I want to be alone.

He opens the door, but pauses.

TOBY

Oh, and don't expect me to join your
stupid gang any time soon.

Slam! He's gone.

GEORGE

I think we're going to have a problem
with that one.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - GEMMA AND EGG'S BEDROOM - EVENING

It's a pink and girly bedroom, two single beds. EGG sits on her bed, her back resting upon the headboard, reading a novel. GEMMA enters. Time for mock surprise.

GEMMA

Wow. I didn't know you could read.

EGG

You are so frigging funny, Gemma.

GEMMA lays down on her bed and peers at her fingers.

GEMMA

I am so fed up with my nails being this
colour.

She studies her face in a compact mirror. Pouts her lips.

GEMMA

And my lips are totally crying out for
an emergency re-gloss.

EGG

Then do something about it.

GEMMA

I've tried. Loads of times. It doesn't work. No matter how many coats I apply, they instantly revert back to their original colour. It's the same with my clothes. This is the outfit I died in. I can't change it. So embarrassing. My advice to the living: Always keep your look in check, 'cause when you snuff it, you're stuck with it.

EGG

I hope Toby's okay. You don't think he's done anything stupid, do you?

GEMMA

What, you mean like killing himself? It's a bit late for that.

EGG

I'm being serious. Maybe I should check on him.

GEMMA

You heard the guy. He wants to be alone.

EGG

That was four nights ago.

GEMMA

You do realise, don't you? He doesn't fancy you.

EGG

I never said he did.

GEMMA

Okay, so he came to your rescue in the pub. So what? Toby would have done the same for anybody. Especially me.

EGG

Oh, I get it. You're planning on getting your claws on him yourself.

GEMMA

Too right I am. Young, good looking ghosts like Toby are rarer than gold dust. Snap them up while you can, that's my motto.

EGG

Then go for it. See if I care.

GEMMA

Hah, look at you. It's written all over your face. You. Have. Got. It. Bad. No wonder he's locked himself away.

The burning glare from EGG amuses GEMMA.

GEMMA

Ooooh. If looks could kill, I'd be a dead woman... again.

She's not worth the effort. EGG returns to her novel.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - TOBY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Morning has broken. TOBY sits on his bed, staring into space, thinking of --

INT. TOBY'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

-- his sister KATIE. A loving family at the dining table. Balloons. Cards. A happy 11th birthday banner. She blows out all eleven candles on her cake. Cheers from her MOTHER, FATHER and TOBY who, oh, look, is in normal clothes.

TOBY'S MOTHER hands an excited KATIE a present.

TOBY'S MOTHER

This is from me and your father.

CAPTION: "TOBY: 1 DAY BEFORE DEATH."

KATIE strips the box of wrapping paper. Ooh, it's a brand new mobile phone.

KATIE

Oh, wow! Thank you.

TOBY'S FATHER

Before you get too excited, young lady, it's only a Pay As You Go.

TOBY'S MOTHER

Which means you'll have to earn your credit by doing chores around the house.

Mock disappointment from KATIE.

TOBY
Katie, this is from me.

TOBY passes over his gift. One shredded sheet of wrapping paper later, she opens a gift box to reveal a silver locket on a chain with her name engraved on it.

KATIE
Oh, thank you, Toby, it's lovely.

TOBY
Let me put it on for you.

KATIE hands it over and turns around. TOBY clasps it around her neck, then kisses her head. He loves his little sister.

INT. TOBY'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LOUNGE - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

It's now the evening. TOBY'S MOTHER and FATHER slouch on the sofa, watching TV. KATIE is not present, probably upstairs. TOBY wanders into the room.

TOBY
Mum. Dad. I've got something important to tell you.

TOBY'S FATHER
Not gay, are you?

TOBY
No. Of course not. Why would you even think that?

TOBY'S FATHER shrugs his shoulders. TOBY re-prepares himself, clearly working out how best to word his news.

TOBY'S MOTHER
Well, come on, lad. Spit it out. EastEnders is on in a minute.

TOBY
The thing is... I've got myself a job.

It's weird. His parents don't seem too pleased.

TOBY'S FATHER
What did you go and do that for?

TOBY
It's what people do.

TOBY'S FATHER

What about your education? You said you wanted to go to university.

TOBY

No, Dad. You wanted me to go to university.

TOBY'S FATHER

Son. Think about your future. You're a bright kid. With grades like yours, you'll easily win a place.

TOBY

I'm sick of hearing that.

TOBY'S MOTHER

We're only thinking of you.

TOBY

I'm sick of hearing that as well. It's as if you're trying to mould me. To shape me into something I'm not.

TOBY'S FATHER

Toby. This is your golden chance to better yourself. Me, I was never given that opportunity. That's why I've had to endure poxy dead-end jobs all my life, and why we live a stone's throw from those bloody crime-ridden tower blocks. There was another mugging there yesterday. Fifth attack this week. In broad daylight.

TOBY'S MOTHER looks at TOBY and wants to know --

TOBY'S MOTHER

What kind of job is it?

TOBY averts his eyes, self-conscious.

TOBY

Customer service assistant.

TOBY'S MOTHER

Where?

TOBY

Burger Frenzy.

Shock, horror, disgust, the jaws of both parents drop.

TOBY'S MOTHER/FATHER
Burger Frenzy??

TOBY'S FATHER
You seriously want to waste your whole
life rustling up fast food?

TOBY
No, of course not. It's only until I
find something better.

TOBY'S FATHER
You need your bloody head tested.

TOBY
I don't care what you think. I start
tomorrow morning.

TOBY'S FATHER
Like hell you are. Phone them up. Tell
them you've changed your mind.

That's it, it's time for TOBY to blow.

TOBY
Oh, for God's sake! I am fed up with
you two trying to control me!

Nobody notices the glass vase shuddering on a nearby shelf unit.

TOBY
Don't you get it? This is my life!!

The vase flies off the shelf, whizzes across the room and
smashes into the opposite wall. TOBY'S MOTHER and FATHER cast a
weird look at the smashed vase, then back at their son.

TOBY checks himself. Tries to calm down. And in a lower voice --

TOBY
It's my life.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - TOBY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

TOBY. Still staring into space on that bed. He whispers --

TOBY
Was my life.

Knock, knock, the door opens. EGG pokes her head round.