

GHOSTING

by

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Episode 1: Toby

60 minute TV supernatural 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, matching jogging bottoms, pursued by --

-- weedy boy-next-door type TOBY FOSTER, 18, in a BURGER JOINT UNIFORM. A bizarre, amusing sight... betrayed by the massive 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 hood, yanking him to a halt.

TOBY

You attacked my little sister! 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. Then 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 groping and grappling, but the MUGGER breaks free, heading 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 free hand, AMY rifles through her handbag.

Oh, look, 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. 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 for TOBY. 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.

Fading sunlight. A distant rumble of thunder. Dark clouds gather in a greying sky. Ooer, it's an unnerving sight. TOBY turns to flee, but --

-- blocking his path is CEPHAS GRIMM, dressed in soiled 18th century smuggler's attire, his skin pallid and grey, his teeth stained and blackened. He grins like an imbecile, his gait theatrical, almost a flamboyant mince.

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 me your welcoming committee.

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

CEPHAS

Methinks an explanation is required. Three little words should do it.

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

CEPHAS

You're dead, boy!

TOBY yelps with fright. A clap of thunder adds to his disquiet. 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 me.

GEORGE (O.O.S.)

Get away from that young man.

TOBY twists in the direction of the 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 wearing typical modern inner-city streetwear, a hoodie, camouflage cargo pants, trainers.

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

CEPHAS

Captain Trent. Must you always spoil the party?

GEORGE

Toby. Don't be afraid. Please. Step over here with us.

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

Hah! You and whose army?

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

CEPHAS

Seriously?

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.

GEORGE

You can tell Mr Black this lad is strictly off-limits.

CEPHAS

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

The cackling smuggler morphs into the blackest of ghostly shapes and soars 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 nearby. 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. Gemma here is from the 1990s, 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! You stay away from me! I'm going to prove you all wrong.

He 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 through 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 a plaster on one eyebrow, covering the spoils of the mugging.

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

Oh, God, 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, sympathy and compassion etched upon their faces.

GEORGE

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

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. STREET OUTSIDE THE GHOST HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

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

EGG

If it helps, I also died today. Lost an argument with a speeding car.

TOBY

So how come you're not depressed about it?

EGG is about 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 Council Flat Girl? You are joking, right?

EGG

What did you call me?

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 Girls 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

Ladies, please. Is there any way you can see fit to getting along?

GEMMA

A trip to the pub might help.

EGG and TOBY swap bemused glances.

EGG/TOBY

Pub?

GEORGE

Fine. You win. So long as you choose a quiet establishment.

INT. PUB - EVENING

Quite the opposite, it's a trendy high street bar, YOUNG PEOPLE chattering, dance music blasting out.

GEORGE, covering his ears, props up 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 viddy 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? The highlight of this game is checking out the reactions of my victims. 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

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?

EGG opens her mouth to respond... but no, she's not ready to explain, so she changes the subject.

EGG

You know you asked me earlier why I wasn't depressed about dying? Well, basically, it's because I hated my shit-sack of a life.

TOBY

Even so, you must want to see your family again.

EGG

Like fuck I do. There's only Mum left, and she's a total waste of space. I doubt she ever learnt the meaning of the word "love." Or if she did, I never saw any of it. Now I'm dead, I'm free of that bitch... which suits me fine. No disrespect to you, Toby, but families are well overrated.

TOBY looks genuinely sorry for EGG. He's about to speak, but GEORGE and GEMMA join them and sit down.

GEMMA

Cheer up, Toby, it might never happen.

TOBY

I have good reason to sulk. I died today.

GEMMA

So did ASBO 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 form on the windows. Spooky
stuff. And oh, the drinks in all the glasses scattered around
the place begin to freeze. The gang, seriously rattled.

GEORGE

Whatever you do... stay behind me.

Then oh, the double doors fly open, bam! And in marches a
cackling CEPHAS. He flings both hands towards the open doors, as
if welcoming a superstar to the stage.

CEPHAS

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

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 an 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

That, my dear Captain, is no business of yours. 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 at height, 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 his now-adamant eyes fall once again 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 floorwards. Lands on her arse. Ouch!

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

Cephas. It is time we were leaving.

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

A flicker of light, then the pub is back to normal, music, illumination, chattering PEOPLE, no frozen glassware.

Among them stand four ghosts, invisible to the living, trading disconcerted glances.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - LOUNGE - LATE EVENING

GEORGE, GEMMA, EGG and TOBY sit in silence, tonight's events clearly on their minds. They trade glances, except TOBY who sits furthest away, not wanting to be a part of anything.

EGG

So... who exactly is this Mr Black?

GEORGE

An eighteenth century parson who, for reasons unknown to me, chose to take the demonic route. He usually recruits recently deceased homeless people, alcoholics, petty thieves, drug addicts. The cad's interest in Toby is most disconcerting.

GEMMA

Agreed. It doesn't make sense why he'd want somebody like him.

A pissed off TOBY isn't a fan of the current convo.

TOBY

Somebody like him? You're talking like I'm not here.

GEORGE

Then make yourself known. Contribute to this conversation.

TOBY

No, thanks. Getting pally with fellow dead people is way down low on my wishlist.

GEORGE

Toby, we need your input. Can you think of any reason why Mr Black would single you out as an asset?

TOBY

Don't know, not interested.

TOBY takes to his feet, marching towards the door.

GEMMA

Where are you off to?

TOBY

What's it to you, Spice Girl?

GEMMA

All right, I only asked.

TOBY

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. They all swap looks. Then --

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 "girlie" 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

Memo to self: Ignore Gemma. She might take the hint and piss off.

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

GEMMA

I am so fed up with my colour of my nails.

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 sort yourself out.

GEMMA

I've tried. Loads of times. It doesn't work. No matter how many coats I apply, my lips and nails 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. When you snuff it, you're stuck with it.

EGG

I hope Toby's okay. What if he's done something stupid?

GEMMA

What, you mean like topping 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. 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 into him.

GEMMA

Too right I am. Young, good looking ghosts like Toby are rarer than gold dust.

EGG

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

Oooh. 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 and FATHER. Oh, and TOBY who is dressed 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
call 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, Toby, it's beautiful.

TOBY
Let me put it on for you.

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

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

Still in the flashback, it's now the evening. TOBY'S MOTHER and FATHER are slouched 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

Is this the part where you announce that you're coming out of the closet?

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

Chop, chop, lad. Spit it out. EastEnders is about to begin.

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 want 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 too. It's like you're trying to mould me. To shape me into something I'm not.

TOBY'S FATHER

This is your golden opportunity to better yourself. Me, I was never given that chance. 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

Toby? 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 life rustling up fast food?

TOBY

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 so 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 gawp at the smashed vase.

We can tell that TOBY knows his frustration caused the breakage. It's clearly happened before. He takes deep breaths, attempting to calm down. However, his parents fail to make the connection.

TOBY'S FATHER

Oh, bloody hell. That poltergeist is back. Do we still have the number for that exorcist?

END FLASHBACK.

INT. GHOST HOUSE - TOBY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

TOBY

This was my life.

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

EGG

Just wondering how you are?

TOBY

What do you think?

EGG

We're all really concerned about you. This is the fifth day you've shut yourself away from the world.

TOBY

There is no world. Not anymore.