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Family Plays

I Sincerely Doubt That This Old House Is Very Haunted

Musical mystery by
Paul Crabtree

I Sincerely Doubt That This Old House Is Very Haunted

Musical mystery. By Paul Crabtree. Cast: 8m., 9w., with option to add ghosts and spirits. This play is an original musical comedy about ghosts and people. Unknown to the Exex family, their house is occupied by a whole company of ghosts. Very lively ghosts they are, too, who only tolerate the people of the house as intruders and turn the human conversation on or off, at will. Head Ghost has declared that a new recruit must be initiated into their society before their fiscal year expires at midnight—and when Wilma Exex's young man smashes his car into a tree, Head Ghost seizes on this happy event, and signs Billy Joe Exex into the organization before he is even dead. But this is illegal—and the whole plan is foiled when Billy Joe decides not to die. *Two sets. Modern costumes. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: IA6.*

Family Plays

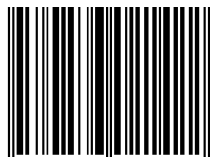
311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308

Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170

Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

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(I SINCERELY DOUBT THAT THIS OLD HOUSE IS VERY
HAUNTED)

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SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene 1. The Victorian living room of the Exex family.

ACT TWO

Scene 1. A peaceful roadside on Beaver Hill.

Scene 2. The Head's office.

Scene 3. Forestage.

Scene 4. The Exex living room.

MUSIC NOTE

Original music for this play has been composed by the author, Paul Crabtree.

Complete piano score for the overture, six songs, background accompaniment, dances, and transition music, is available from the publisher at a fee of \$10.00. No further music royalty is required.

This score is released only for the use of producers presenting the play. The music may not be used for any other purpose.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SUPERNATURALS, as many
as desired, such as:

Vincent, a Ghost
Witch Hazel
Vampires
Skeletons
The Big Head, Head Ghost
Ghosts
Ghouls
Witches
Sprites
Etc.

PEOPLE:

Six Maids
Dr. Milford P. Exex
Wilma Exex, his wife
Lily Exex, his daughter
Billy Joe
Officer Dudd
Officer Thudd

(Names suggested by the author, for Supernatural Extras:

Vampira	Gora Ghoul
Vampoona	Lizzy Witch
Vampinna	Tizzy Witch
Vampaina	Dizzy Witch
Vampanna	Shaggy Ghoul
Vampeena	Snookie Witch
Ollie Oop Bones	Cookie Witch
Voodie Bones	Tookie Witch
Buffalo Bones	Charmeena Sprite
Tony Bones	Magieena Sprite
Chief Chicken Bones	Wierdeena Sprite
Barbarian Bones	Mesmereena Sprite)

I SINCERELY DOUBT THAT THIS OLD HOUSE IS VERY HAUNTED

By

PAUL CRABTREE

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: *Overture medley builds . . . segues into satirical haunted house theme that includes all of the cliché noises that might be heard in any Vincent Price, Boris Karlof or Lon Chaney movie, including squeaking doors, wild laughter, bubbling potions, wolf cries, clanging chains, and crashing thunder . . . sky splitting lightning flashes throughout the theatre. Overture builds and then cuts abruptly to a lone thermon-like discordant melody that seems to spell impending doom. The front curtain has opened in the blackout. A filmy, fuchsia and green ectoplasm floats over the stage. (Flourescent light on filmy material riding on a gas filled balloon held on a string by a person dressed totally in black). The ectoplasm dips and dances to the beat of the music. As the ectoplasm exits up the stairs the regular stage lighting fades up to dim, revealing the totally colorless room. Everything is black-grey-white. It is a sketchy, cartoon-like Victorian living room. (Note: All real or alive things or people in this show appear like a black and white photograph, while all supernatural beings and things are in brilliant colors). The blue follow spot settles on an oversized, round pouf-type footstool down center. With an exaggerated squeaking noise the lid of the footstool raises a crack, a funny little laugh is heard and then the lid slams down. This cat and mouse routine is repeated several times . . . and then suddenly the lid flips open and the face and upper portion of a monster appears like a Jack-in-the-box. However, this monster scares no one as his make-up and costume are more pixilated clown than monster.*

VINCENT. Boo.

(He laughs hysterically, ducks down, then jumps up again.)

Boo.

(He laughs even harder, then tries it once more.)

Boo.

(Laughs again, then his laugh trails off.)

Scared you, didn't I?

(With a broad grin.)

I'm a monster.

(He stands up, gets out of pouf, and closes lid, revealing lower portion of his body for the first time. He wears loud Bermuda shorts and knee socks. Obviously his upper impression is achieved by means of a phony padded costume. He removes some of his camouflage, looks around to see if anyone is listening, then leans to the audience confidentially.)

I'm not really a monster—not really. I'm the Andrews sisters.

(He laughs and hits his knee at this big joke.)

Naw, I just said that. Anyone over 35 years old knows perfectly good and well that I'm not the Andrews sisters. You look like a good flakey bunch, so I'm gonna level with you . . . I'm a ghost . . . Naw, now, that's the truth. I'm a ghost, and have been for about eleven or nine hundred years. And this joint, this joint is haunted, and that's the straight goods. Now when I say haunted—brothers and sisters, I mean haunted! We have every kind, every variety, all shapes and sizes. They call me Vincent . . . I'm so price-less.

(He roars at his own joke, then suddenly swings back to the audience.)

Uh-oh. I wouldn't think that if I were you. Somebody out there doesn't believe in ghosts. Wouldn't you know it. Listen, you.

(He waves his hands for magical effect. The lights lower, to a haunting musical introduction.)

(In a mystic tone, to patter):

If you have the slightest doubt . . .

That there are such things as ghosts . . .

If you're skeptical of spooks and spells and sprites . . .

If you don't believe that witches ride the howling winds . . .

(Choral effect of wind.)

Or vampires walk the mystic earth at night

(Choral)

Then come with me my friends . . .

On a cabalistic tour . . .

The one thing that I'm certain of . . .

We want you to be sure . . .

(Vincent performs hocus-pocus gestures as choral winds howl . . . High witch laugh . . . puff of smoke . . . Witch Hazel appears.)

WITCH HAZEL *(screeching laugh)*. Hello, my little darlings . . . Having a goodie-goodie time . . . *(Laughs)* Can you laugh like me? Come on, try it . . . One . . . two . . . three . . . *(laugh)* Aw now, come on my little butter balls . . . You can do better than that . . . Now, once again. One . . . two . . . three . . . *(laughs)* Oh,

that's more fun than playing jack rocks with turtle eggs . . .
Once again . . . one, two, three . . . (*Laughs*) Wheeeeeeeee . . .

(Choral Winds . . . as she disappears.)

VINCENT. Have you ever watched the shadows . . .
On the ceiling of your room . . .
Dancing to the music of the wind . . .
And rain and doom . . .

(Creepy musical chords accompany six vampires as they enter from wings.)

(Shadow Dance, Orchestra and choral company. At end of dance, vampires exit . . . Musical transition.)

VINCENT. Have you ever walked a lonely road at night . . .
Without a soul to hold your hand . . . without
A soul in sight . . .? And suddenly a rattle . . .
(Choral) Your heart steps up its beat *(Drum)*
Suddenly you know it's there . . .
But you can't move your feet . . .
You hold your breath and listen . . .
And all you hear are groans. *(Choral)*
You turn around . . . and there it is . . .
A stack of dancing bones . . .

(Skeletons appear.)

(Skeleton Dance in black light, with costumes made of fluorescent material.)

(As skeleton dance builds, add vampires . . . and witch . . . Build to finale . . . hold for applause.)

(Blackout. Spot light on Vincent and then stage lights to normal.)

VINCENT. Now, are you convinced? . . . You've seen them with your very eyes . . . If you don't believe in ghosts now . . . you never will . . . and you are missing an awful lot of fun . . . an awful lot . . .

(The loud clang of a large bell is heard off.)

Uh-oh . . . That's the big iron gate in the front wall . . . The good doctor . . . and his good wife . . . and good daughter are back . . . They've been down to the village on their yearly shopping spree.

(Six maids rush in to open the front door. They are dressed in black and white. They jabber and giggle in pantomime.)

And these six lovelies are the maids . . . Martha, Mary, May, Marie, Melissa and Cleo. Oh, no . . . no . . . they are not ghosts . . . They are very much alive . . . And so are the good doctor and his family . . . Would you like to hear what the little chickadees are saying . . . O. K.

(Vincent pulls his hand up . . . like raising a curtain in front of them to turn on sound. All talk and jabber and giggle at once.)

MARTHA. . . . And she told me she was getting a new dress . . .

MARY. . . . And new patent-leather shoes . . .

MAY. And new ribbons for her hair and everything.

MARIE. It's a crime her father won't let that poor little thing off of this property . . .

MELISSA. . . . You said it . . . she gets so lonesome she could cry . . .

CLEO. Sometimes she does cry. If it wasn't for us, Lily would go daffy as a June bug . . .

MARTHA. Be careful, they'll hear you. I heard her father say that if we ever . . .

(Vincent lowers his hand in the same manner, cutting off the sound which continues in pantomime.)

VINCENT. Don't you wish you could do that little trick? Makes life ever so peaceful . . .

(He repeats gesture and jabbering continues for a second and then he cuts it off again.)

Believe me, there are a lot of advantages to being a ghost . . .

(Vincent cuts sound on as Maids open the door. Ad-lib greetings, etc. Dr. Exex, a pixilated little scientist, his wife, Wilma, and their beautiful, whimsical daughter, Lily, are shaking rain off clothing.)

EXEX. . . . Not a fit night out for man nor beast.

(Dr. Exex, Wilma and Lily enter, dressed in black and white. Vincent cuts off sound. Dr. carries open umbrella, which he absent-mindedly forgets to lower. They, of course, do not see Vincent and are not aware that he exists.)

VINCENT. Now, these are the folks who live here . . . This is Dr. Exex . . . Dr. Milford P. Exex . . . That is spelled just the way it sounds . . . E . . . X . . . E . . . X . . .

(Vincent turns on sound.)

EXEX. . . . And believe me I'm glad we made it through the marshes before the storm . . . The bridge is probably out by now . . . I would be very . . .

(Sound on. All work with packages. Dr. and Wilma remove coats. Lily is in another world.)

VINCENT. This is the good Doctor's good wife . . . Wilma . . . She's the only one in this family that's got all of her marbles.

(Cut sound on.)

WILMA. That rain certainly is wet.

VINCENT. She's always coming up with little jewels like that. And this is their only child . . . Lily . . . Some dish, huh? . . . But as pure as the driven snow . . . Her mother was scared by Mary Pickford . . . Pure as the driven snow . . . And if the good Doctor has his say . . . He'll keep her that way. You see, he decided a long time ago that the world was a pretty lousy place for a young girl to grow up in . . . That's why he bought this forsaken place . . .

(Cut sound on.)

WILMA. Lily, darling . . . Hang up your cape. And why don't you put on your new dress?

LILY. What for . . . nobody's gonna see it . . . nobody. What good does it do to get all dressed up in a new dress . . . and fix my hair and everything when nobody is gonna see me . . . nobody . . .

WILMA. Your father and I will see you, dear.

(Cuts sound off. Lily exits up stairs.)

VINCENT. Now there is the problem. Right there, in a nutshell . . .

(Cuts sound on.)

WILMA. . . . And you can put down the umbrella now, dearest.

EXEX. Oh . . . so . . . yes . . . yes . . .

WILMA. And bring the other things to the kitchen.

EXEX. What things . . . oh . . . so . . . yes . . . yes . . .

(Wilma and Exex exit to kitchen. Sound off.)

VINCENT. Now, you must wonder why they look as they do . . . all black and white . . . Well, you see . . . in our world . . . the supernatural-market . . . so to speak . . . We're in living color . . . and everything in *their* world is grey and drab . . . and for this evening . . . you are one of us . . . so . . . get the point?

(Dr. Exex re-enters. He goes to large cabinet, unlocks two large doors and swings them open, revealing a maze of tubes, bubbling beakers, smoking potions. This is his lab and he works with this.)

Sure, he's a scientist . . . He's working on a secret potion. A potion that will make dreams materialize . . . become real . . . right in front of your eyes . . .

(Cut sound on. Wilma enters, prepares dinner table.)

WILMA. . . . For the life of me . . . Must you work tonight, dearest?

EXEX. Hmmmmmm? . . . oh . . . yes . . . the storm . . . Somehow I seem to get better results just after a storm . . . It is as though

the thunder and lightning . . . churn up the supernatural forces
. . . bring out the little devils and let them run wild . . .

WILMA. Yes, dearest . . .

(She exits. Sound cut off.)

VINCENT. He may be a nut, but he's got something there. Just get a load of this character. He talks to himself all the time . . . Listen . . .

(Vincent cuts sound on . . . moves to one side. Dr. Exex mixes potions as the music comes in. He watches smoke pour from bottle out into room. He grabs at smoke as if trying to grasp it in his hand.)

EXEX. You little devils . . . You're out there someplace, aren't you?

(He grabs at the air again, and then peeks in his clenched fist to see what he has.)

You little devils . . . One of these days, I'll unlock your crazy secret and bring you out of your hiding place where Lily can get a good look at you.

(Talked and sung.)

Every man who ever lived . . .
From Socrates to me . . .
Has sought the mystery
Of what he cannot see . . .
We know what makes the world go 'round . . .
The law of gra-vi-ty . . .
What goes up must come down.

Yes we even understand he-re-dity
By the monkeyshines seen on display
Oh we even understand astronomy - - -
And from here to a star
Is nearer by far
That it was yesterday.

But every man who ever dreamed
From Socrates to me
Has sought to find the key
To dreams he cannot see
The more we learn the less we know
On this we can agree
That a dream is but cannot be.

But we simply cannot get the slightest inkling of . . . what a dream is made of . . . and like the common cold it is downright exasperating. Now, you take my daughter . . . She goes around dreaming all the time . . . night and day . . . day and night . . . Like the beat . . . beat . . . beat . . . of a tom-tom when the evening shadows fall . . . I say to her . . . I say, "Lily . . . Lily,

what are you doing?" I say . . . and she says, "Oh, just dreaming" Night and day . . . day and night. Well, a girl can't be happy doing that all the time. And more than anything else in the world I want my Lily to be happy. I want her to not only have dreams . . . I want her to see them . . . get to know them . . . Any man worth his salt can give his daughter a new dress or a new toy to play with. Well, I am not just any man . . . I am a genius . . . and I want to give my Lily a dream to play with . . . and then she'll be so happy she won't need any of the degrading material things of life. She won't need anything or anybody . . .

(Lily enters and walks by.)

Lily darling . . . what are you doing?

LILY. Oh . . . just dreaming, Papa . . . just dreaming.

(She exits. He looks in the air as though she left her dreams behind her. He grabs at it and clenches his fist . . . Then he shoves the dream in a beaker and holds his hand over the mouth of the beaker.)

EXEX *(sings)*. What is the secret . . .
The formula for dreams?
Are they liquid or solid or gas?
What is the secret . . .
The formula for dreams?
Do they fit in any character or class?

(Repeat "Every Man" With Dance and Big Ending. At the end of number Dr. Exex returns to his frantic research. Wilma enters.)

WILMA. Dearest . . . I'm worried about Lily . . . She's acting so strangely lately . . . she is . . .

(Cut off sound.)

VINCENT. The plot thickens . . .

(Cut on sound.)

WILMA. . . . And did you notice the way she looked at that young shoe salesman this afternoon?

EXEX. She was just being polite . . .

WILMA. And he seemed to be quite taken with her. Did you notice him smile at her?

EXEX. He is paid to smile at customers.

WILMA. He was quite nice . . . Dearest . . . Maybe we should let Lily have a gentleman caller once in a while . . .

EXEX. No . . . absolutely not . . .

WILMA. You can't hide the world from her forever . . . dearest . . . She is 17 years old . . .

EXEX. I don't wish to discuss it . . .

(He carries two large beakers with him to the stairs.)

To the tower . . . I am going to the tower . . . On a night like this our belfry should be full of bats . . . *(turns back)* And those filthy little creatures know something I don't know.

(He exits, she calls after him.)

WILMA. Yes, dearest . . . dinner shortly.

(Cut off sound. Maids enter, place candelabra on table and light them. Maids and Wilma exit.)

VINCENT. He may be a genius when it comes to bats . . . But he hasn't got bat brains when it comes to seventeen year old girls . . .

(Vincent picks up a strange looking stringed instrument and starts to strum it. Music in background. "LOVE IS JUST A WHISPER AWAY." Lily comes down the stairs. She seems far away, almost as if she is aware of the haunting melody . . . in fact, she hums a bit of it here and there.)

Oh, she can't hear me playing . . . but I can hear her . . . and I can hear the melody that goes with a young girl's dreams *(pauses as she hums)* You see, that young shoe salesman did more than just smile when he slipped those patent-leather pumps on her foot . . . He squeezed her ankle . . . ever so gently *(pauses for her to hum, as she stands behind the candles)*. Um Hmmmmmm . . . ever so gently . . . but just enough . . .

LILY *(sings)*. And love is just a whisper away . . . away . . .
And love is just a whisper away . . .

(One by one the maids enter.)

MARTHA. Oh Miss Lily . . . you're singing . . .

MARY. We haven't seen you look so happy for a long time . . .

MAY. And what a beautiful dress . . . If I didn't know better I'd say you were expecting a gentleman caller.

MARIE. Are you, Miss Lily?

MELISSA. Is he coming here?

MARTHA. Is he?

MARY. Who is he?

MAY. You can tell us.

LILY. Don't be silly . . . of course not . . . No one is coming here.

MARIE. What on earth has happened to you?

MELISSA. Your eyes shine like diamonds.

(Lily whirls around.)

LILY. It's a secret . . .

MARTHA. Well, you always tell us your secrets.

CLEO. Sure you can tell us anything . . . what is it? We won't breathe a word.

(Lily gathers them around her.)

LILY (*Sung*): Have you ever been standing in a room?

MAIDS (*Spoken*): Yes.

LILY (*Sung*): Any room.

MAIDS (*Spoken*): Any room?

LILY (*Sung*): Any gloomy . . . empty room? . . . Like . . . say . . . a shoestore . . .

MAIDS (*Spoken*): A shoestore?

LILY (*Sung*): Well, there is nothing gloomier or emptier than a store full of shoes . . .

CLEO (*Sung*): With no feet in them . . .

LILY (*Sung*): Well . . . I was standing in a gloomy empty room . . . with stacks of shoes . . . on top of shoes . . . all sizes and shapes and kinds of shoes . . .

MAIDS. And what happened?

LILY. I was counting the boxes . . . 10 boxes on each shelf . . . 14 shelves high . . . and just when I was multiplying 10 by 14, for the lack of anything else to do . . .

CLEO. That makes one hundred and forty - - -

MAIDS. Shhhhhhhh . . . let her tell us.

LILY. Well . . . suddenly . . . suddenly . . . like someone turned on all the stars . . . I knew he was there . . .

MAIDS. Ahhhhhhhhhh . . .

CLEO. Who?

LILY. And I looked over my shoulder . . . and he was . . .

CLEO. Who?

MAIDS. Well, let her tell us.

LILY. And he bowed slightly and he said . . . "Madam, what can I do for you?" Well . . . (*sung*) All of my life I've known that one fine day I would look back over my shoulder and he'd be there . . . standing handsome and tall . . . and he was . . .

MAIDS. Ohhhhhhhhhh

LILY (*with disgust*). And so was Mama . . . and so was Papa . . .

MAIDS (*disappointed*). Ohhhhhhhhh . . .

LILY. And Papa said . . . "A pair of shoes for my daughter. The young man bowed again . . . and went right on about his shoe business without saying a word.

MAIDS. Not a word?

LILY. Not a word . . . But he knew . . . And I know . . . And he knew I knew he knew . . . And I knew he knew I knew . . .

(*Sung*): And it was wonderful . . . and it was wonderful
The small dusty stars shine ever so bright
Grey lingerin' shadows seem gay
A flickerin' candle lights up the night
When love's just a whisper away.

A lonely bird's song is a full symphony
A single red rose . . . a bouquet
A nothing at all is something to see
When love's just a whisper away . . . away
When love's just a whisper away . . .

(*The music sweeps up as the girls and Lily dance a gay floating waltz . . . blending with sung phrases of the song in harmony.*)

MAIDS AND LILY.

The darkest of clouds are swept from the sky
And winter is turned into May
And everything's right . . . the highest of high
When love's just a whisper away . . . away
When love's just a whisper away . . .

(*At end of the number, the girls strike a pose with a lovesick sigh.*)

MARTHA. Oh, Miss Lily . . . I'm so glad you've got a gentleman friend . . .

CLEO. That young shoe salesman fitted me one time . . . He has a neat way with an ankle.

(*They giggle.*)

MARY. Did you make a date to see him again?

LILY. Of course not. I'll never see him again . . . Not until I need another pair of shoes . . . and by then he may be gone . . . A man like that is bound to go places . . .

CLEO. Well . . . cut holes in the bottoms . . .

LILY. Oh, Papa would know . . . (*an idea*) But if I walked and walked and walked . . . I could wear them out sooner . . .

MELISSA. And when you get tired . . . we'll take turns wearin' them . . .

MAIDS. Yea . . .

MAY. Between us we can wear them out.

LILY. I'll start right this minute.

(She starts walking, followed by the girls.)

MARIE. Don't pick your feet up . . . just shuffle along . . . like this . . .

MARTHA. That's it.

MARY. They'll have holes in them in no time at all.

CLEO *(dreamily acting it out)*. And you'll be sitting in that shoestore . . . And he'll take your ankle in his hand . . . and look up into your eyes . . .

(Cut off sound.)

VINCENT. What a way to go . . .

(Cut on sound . . . A loud cry is heard off.)

EXEX *(off)*. Ahhhhhhhhhh . . .

(The maids jump up and scamper off in all directions, as Lily continues to walk. The Doctor comes down the stairs holding his finger.)

It bit me . . . that silly bat bit me . . . Wilma . . . Wilma!!!!

(Wilma rushes in.)

WILMA. Yes, dearest?

EXEX. What do you put on a bat bite?

WILMA. Come here, dearest . . . I'll kiss it and make it well . . .

EXEX. Old bat.

WILMA. What?

EXEX. Not you, dear.

(She kisses his finger as Lily continues to walk.)

Lily . . . pick up your feet . . .

LILY *(does not)*. Yes, Papa . . .

(He goes to cabinet, takes out a long hypodermic needle; goes to stairs . . .)

EXEX. I'll teach that silly bat a thing or two . . . He exits up the stairs.

WILMA. Lily, pick up your feet . . .