

THE CHILI HAUNTS ME STILL

by Bradley Walton

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THE CHILI HAUNTS ME STILL

A One Act Comedy

by **Bradley Walton**

SYNOPSIS: Last night, Bobby Jefferson ate five bowls of chili. This morning, all that chili is haunting him. Literally. Like, there's an actual walking, talking ghost that only Bobby can see and hear... except for when the ghost sneezes. Everyone can hear the ghost sneeze. Only, they don't hear the sneezes as sneezes. They hear a different kind of noise that's a whole lot more embarrassing for Bobby. And the ghost sneezes a lot. To make matters worse, not only does Bobby have to go to school, he also has to give a presentation in front of his English class. Can Bobby get through the most humiliating day ever with his dignity intact?

DURATION: 30 minutes

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Bobby's Home and School.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6-15 either)

BOBBY/BOBBI JEFFERSON (m/f)..... A junior in high school. *(260 lines)*
 GHOST (m/f)..... The ghost of the chili Bobby ate for supper. *(124 lines)*
 SUSAN/SAM (m/f)..... Bobby's mother. *(57 lines)*
 JACK/JACKIE (m/f)..... Bobby's father. *(41 lines)*
 DRIVER (m/f)..... The driver of Bobby's school bus. *(5 lines)*
 STUDENT 1 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(4 lines)*
 STUDENT 2 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(1 line)*
 STUDENT 3 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(2 lines)*
 STUDENT 4 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(1 line)*
 STUDENT 5 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(1 line)*
 STUDENT 6 (m/f)..... A student at Bobby's school. *(1 line)*
 MRS./MR. STEVENS (m/f)..... Bobby's history teacher. *(14 lines)*

LAURA/LOGAN (m/f).....Bobby/Bobbi's secret crush.
(24 lines)
PRINCIPAL HARDING (m/f)Bobby's principal. (33 lines)
MRS./MR. WILLIAMSON (m/f)Bobby's English teacher. (5 lines)

CAST NOTE: Adjust dialogue as necessary to match the genders of the characters in your production.

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

STUDENTS 1-6 can be combined into STUDENTS 1-3.

With doubling, SUSAN/SAM, JACK/JACKIE, DRIVER, STUDENTS 1-3, STEVENS, LAURA/LOGAN, HARDING, and WILLIAMSON could be played by four (4) actors.

SET

Bare stage or basic. The play contains numerous transitions between relatively short scenes. To speed things along, a bare stage and minimalist approach are recommended. Lightweight chairs (or cubes) should be used for all scenes in which characters sit. Tables, desks, and properties (except for a blanket or sheet) should be mimed. Nine chairs or cubes are needed in total for a full-sized cast.

Settings included: Jeffersons' dining room, Bobby's bedroom, School bus, 2 blocks from school, History class, Lunchroom, School hallway, Outside Principal Harding's office, Inside Principal Harding's office, English classroom, Outside Bobby's house.

COSTUMES

Costuming for the GHOST is totally open to interpretation. For all others, costuming is contemporary clothing appropriate to the characters.

PROPS

- blanket or sheet

SOUND EFFECTS

- school bell ringing

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Bobby spends much of the play being annoyed or embarrassed. In real life, this might lead a person to be slow in responding to questions or comments—in other words, to pause a lot. In *The Chili Haunts Me Still*, excessive pausing would be deadly to the show's pace. Except where indicated in the script, pauses should be used very sparingly. Particularly when Bobby is being affectionately interrogated by his parents. Many of Bobby's responses in these scenes are a single word, so the dialogue should be rapid-fire. Bobby's reluctance to answer should be communicated to the audience through tone and posture rather than slow replies. Likewise, Bobby's dialogue exchanges with the Ghost and other characters should always be brisk and snappy.

Since *The Chili Haunts Me Still* contains a good number of scene changes, it is recommended that the director devote some rehearsal time exclusively to fine-tuning the transitions. Much like keeping pauses in the dialogue to a minimum, this will go a long way towards keeping your production moving at a brisk and entertaining pace.

AT START: *The Jeffersons' dining room. Three chairs are positioned around an imaginary table DL. SUSAN mimes setting the table with bowls. BOBBY enters from R.*

SUSAN: Hi, Bobby.

BOBBY: Hey, Mom.

SUSAN: How was school?

BOBBY: Okay.

SUSAN: How was forensics practice this afternoon?

BOBBY: Fine.

SUSAN: Did you get pulled over for speeding on your way home?

BOBBY: No.

SUSAN: I'm kidding. But can I have just a few details about your day?

Please? Did you present that fairy tale for English class?

BOBBY: No, they didn't get to me. I'm doing it tomorrow.

SUSAN: What's your fairy tale about?

BOBBY: It's a variation on "Cinderella." How long till supper?

SUSAN: Are you hungry?

BOBBY: Yeah.

SUSAN: What'd you have for lunch today?

BOBBY: Lunch was fine.

SUSAN: What did they serve?

BOBBY: I don't know.

SUSAN: You ate in the cafeteria. How do you not know?

BOBBY: I didn't make it to the cafeteria.

SUSAN: Why not?

BOBBY: I had sort of an extra practice with my forensics coach.

SUSAN: Your coach didn't give you a chance to go to the cafeteria?

BOBBY: I wanted to experiment with a couple of different scripts before the main practice this afternoon.

SUSAN: So you chose not to eat?

BOBBY: I guess.

SUSAN: I appreciate you wanting to do well in forensics, but you need to eat. You can't learn on an empty stomach.

BOBBY: Sorry.

SUSAN: Well, good news—I made your favorite tonight.

BOBBY: Pizza?

SUSAN: Your other favorite.

BOBBY: Tamales?

SUSAN: Look at the table. There are bowls on the table. Think of food that you eat from a bowl.

BOBBY: Chili?

SUSAN: Bingo!

BOBBY: Cool.

SUSAN: You can go ahead and sit down. (*Calling offstage L.*) Jack! Supper's ready!

SUSAN exits UC. JACK enters from L.

JACK: Hi, Bobby.

BOBBY: Hey, Dad.

BOBBY and JACK sit down at the table.

JACK: How was school?

BOBBY: Okay.

JACK: You say that every day.

BOBBY: Things are pretty much okay every day.

JACK: Details would be nice once in a while.

SUSAN enters from UC, carrying an imaginary pot of chili. SUSAN mimes setting the pot on the table, then sits.

SUSAN: Here we go. Everybody dig in!

BOBBY mimes scooping chili into his bowl. JACK and SUSAN do the same.

JACK: This smells amazing, Susan.

BOBBY: Yeah, it smells pretty good.

SUSAN: It's a recipe my mom sent me.

BOBBY digs into his chili ravenously.

JACK: Slow down there, Bobby. It's not an Olympic sport.

SUSAN: Bobby didn't eat lunch today.

JACK: Why not?

BOBBY: 'S no big deal.

SUSAN: Bobby was being a perfectionist in forensics.

JACK: That's great. But you need to eat.

BOBBY: I'm eating now.

SUSAN: You're vacuuming it out of the bowl.

JACK: What else don't I know about your day?

BOBBY: (*Speaking with his mouth full.*) Nofing.

SUSAN: You remember that Bobby's English teacher assigned everyone to create fairy tales? Bobby was supposed to present his to the class today, but they ran out of time and didn't get to him. He'll do it tomorrow. It's a variation on "Cinderella."

JACK: How did you get him to tell you all that?

SUSAN: I quizzed him aggressively as soon as he walked in the door.

JACK: Maybe I need to do that tomorrow.

BOBBY: Please don't.

JACK: I do have another question for now, though. Just out of curiosity—who's Laura?

BOBBY chokes on his chili a little.

SUSAN: Laura?

BOBBY focuses his attention even more heavily on his chili.

BOBBY: Nobody.

JACK: I emptied the trash can in your room while you were in the shower last night, and your phone was sitting right there on the nightstand. I wasn't trying to look at it, but I noticed a text exchange about whether "Laura" was dating anybody right now.

BOBBY: Dad...

JACK: Sorry—is that too personal?

BOBBY: Yes!

JACK: Would you like me to change the subject?

BOBBY: Yes!

JACK: You had a history test last week, didn't you?

BOBBY: (*Hanging his head.*) Yes.

JACK: Did you find out how you did?

BOBBY: Yeah.

SUSAN: So how'd it go?

BOBBY: I got a C.

SUSAN: How long have you known?

BOBBY: A couple of days.

SUSAN: How many days is a couple?

BOBBY: Five.

JACK: When were you planning to tell us?

BOBBY: Eventually.

SUSAN: Bobby, you don't have forensics after school tomorrow, do you?

BOBBY: No.

SUSAN: So there's no reason you need to drive yourself to school—you can take the bus.

BOBBY: Do I have to?

SUSAN: There's no point in wasting gas.

BOBBY: Is this because I didn't tell you about the C?

SUSAN: Maybe.

JACK: So is there something you'd like to say to us?

BOBBY: May I be excused?

JACK and SUSAN: No.

BOBBY: Can I please have some more chili?

Lights dim. Transition to BOBBY'S bedroom, the following morning. Chairs are carried offstage. A blanket or sheet is brought onstage and given to BOBBY, who lies on his side DR facing the audience and covers up with the blanket. GHOST enters and lies just upstage of BOBBY. Lights come up. BOBBY wakes and rubs his stomach.

BOBBY: Oh, man. I shouldn't have eaten all that chili last night—I feel like it's gonna haunt me all day long.

GHOST sits up or stands.

GHOST: You got that right.

BOBBY jumps to his feet, holding the blanket and attempting to cover up with it. (This is intended to eliminate the need for a costume change to bed clothes.)

BOBBY: Agh! Who're you?!?

GHOST: I'm the ghost of all that chili you ate.

BOBBY: There's no such thing as a food ghost!

GHOST: Did you ever eat something really thick and rich and you could still feel its texture in your mouth hours later?

BOBBY: Yeah.

GHOST: Have you ever eaten food with a flavor so strong you could still taste it the next day?

BOBBY: Yeah.

GHOST: Well, there you go. Those were the ghosts of your food.

BOBBY: That's ridiculous. What you're talking about is... I dunno... mouth memory or something.

GHOST: Now who's being ridiculous?

BOBBY: I've never eaten anything and then had it come back and talk to me before.

GHOST: You never ate five bowls of your grandmother's chili recipe in one sitting before.

BOBBY: I didn't eat five—*(Stops and counts on his fingers.)*—okay maybe I did. But you can't possibly be real. I'm hallucinating.

GHOST: Go ahead and think that if it makes you feel better. It doesn't change anything. You're gonna be stuck with me for a while.

BOBBY: How long is a while?

GHOST: Probably exactly what you said—all day long.

SUSAN enters from R.

SUSAN: Bobby! Time to—oh, you're already awake.

SUSAN looks at the blanket on BOBBY. BOBBY looks at GHOST, wondering if SUSAN can see it, and quickly figures out she can't.

SUSAN: Are you feeling okay?

BOBBY: Fine. Why wouldn't I be?

SUSAN: Well, you look like you might be cold. And I was also a little bit worried after you put away so much chili last night.

BOBBY: No—no. I'm great.

SUSAN: Glad to hear it. But please eat lunch today so you don't overdo dinner again.

BOBBY: Sure.

GHOST sneezes.

SUSAN: Ooh. That didn't sound good.

BOBBY: You heard that sneeze?

SUSAN: Bobby, give me a little credit. I know that wasn't a sneeze.

SUSAN exits R.

BOBBY: She couldn't see you.

GHOST: She probably didn't eat five bowls of your grandmother's chili.

BOBBY: But she could hear you.

GHOST: Only because I sneezed.

BOBBY: Why?

GHOST: I exist in a parallel dimension that's kind of overlapping with your body. That's why you can see me but nobody else can. Now, the thing about sneezes is, they're sudden, violent, and fast. When a ghost in an overlap sneezes, that punches a momentary hole in what's left of the barrier between dimensions and the sound passes through, although it gets... distorted.

BOBBY: So, to other people, the sneeze doesn't sound like a sneeze?

GHOST: Correct.

BOBBY: What does it sound like?

GHOST: Based on your mom's reaction, what do you think it sounds like?

Beat.

BOBBY: Oh, that's just perfect. Do ghosts sneeze a lot?

GHOST: No. Not often at all.

BOBBY: Hallelujah.

GHOST: Except for chili ghosts. We sneeze a lot. I think it's probably because of the pepper. Broccoli ghosts, too. Broccoli and cheese ghosts, especially. But I couldn't tell you the reason for that one. Do you eat broccoli?

BOBBY: I love broccoli.

GHOST: You are a strange young person.

BOBBY: Broccoli ghosts? For real?

GHOST: In the words of Shakespeare, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

BOBBY: Is that your way of telling me I need to stop asking questions?

GHOST: The answers would only melt your brain.

BOBBY: Fair enough.

GHOST: Go to college. Study Plato. Eat five more bowls of your grandmother's chili, and then we can talk about it some more.

BOBBY: No thanks. I'm gonna go brush my teeth.

GHOST: Lead the way.

BOBBY: I wasn't inviting you to come with me.

GHOST: Bobby, for all intents and purposes, I am chained to you and the chain is very short.

BOBBY: Is it at least long enough for you to wait outside the bathroom door?

GHOST: No.

Lights dim. Blanket is removed from stage. Transition to the school bus. DRIVER and STUDENTS 1-6 enter, carrying nine chairs and arranging them in pairs on the left side of the stage to represent the first two rows of seats on a school bus, with the ninth chair as the driver's seat. Chairs face diagonally DL. BOBBY and STUDENT 1 sit together in the passenger seat nearest the audience. STUDENTS 2-6 are seated beside, behind, and diagonally behind BOBBY and STUDENT 1. There is one empty seat. GHOST sits on stage beside BOBBY. Lights come up. STUDENTS 1-6 are talking, looking at their phones, looking out the window, etc. DRIVER mimes driving the bus. BOBBY appears self-conscious. This goes on for a few seconds, then GHOST sneezes. BOBBY bows his head sheepishly. ALL look at him, then go back to what they were doing. GHOST sneezes again. ALL look at BOBBY again, then go back to what they were doing, except for STUDENT 1.

STUDENT 1: Do you think you could hold the rest of it in until we get off the bus?

BOBBY: Um... actually... that wasn't me.

STUDENT 1: Don't lie. I'm sitting right here.

BOBBY: I'm not—sorry—forget it.

GHOST sneezes again. ALL STUDENTS are looking at BOBBY now.

STUDENT 1: I'm moving.

STUDENT 1 moves to the empty seat.

BOBBY: But—but—

GHOST sneezes again—hard.

GHOST: Sorry.

STUDENT 2: Cut it out! That's disgusting!

DRIVER: You got a problem?

BOBBY: No. Nope. I'm good.

DRIVER: Please don't make a mess on my bus.

STUDENT 3: Are you finished now?

BOBBY looks at the GHOST.

GHOST: *(On the verge of a sneeze.)* One more.

BOBBY: *(Helplessly embarrassed.)* One more.

STUDENT 3: For real?

STUDENT 4: What did you eat?

BOBBY: Five bowls of chili.

STUDENT 5: Five bowls?

BOBBY: Let's just say it's haunting me.

STUDENT 6: If I ate five bowls of chili, it'd be haunting me, too.

DRIVER: You sure you don't need me to pull over?

BOBBY: No. I'm good.

GHOST sneezes. ALL react in horrified disgust. DRIVER mimes pulling the bus over.

DRIVER: I'm pulling over. We're only two blocks from school. You can walk the rest of the way.

BOBBY: I'm sorry.

DRIVER: Nothing personal, kid, but I ain't takin' chances.

BOBBY and GHOST exit the bus and cross R. DRIVER mimes turning the steering wheel and pressing the gas pedal as if driving off. Lights dim on bus. BOBBY and GHOST stand at R.

BOBBY: Thanks a lot.

GHOST: For what?

BOBBY: For making me walk the rest of the way to school.

GHOST: It's not far. I can see the building from here.

BOBBY: That was humiliating.

GHOST: If you hadn't eaten all that chili, none of this would be happening.

BOBBY: I was hungry! And the chili tasted good and I was trying to avoid talking to my parents.

GHOST: By shoving chili in your mouth?

BOBBY: Yes.

GHOST: Should we be walking towards the school?

BOBBY: I'm hoping that if I don't hurry, you'll be gone by the time I get there.

GHOST: Then you might as well skip school.

BOBBY: My parents would find out and kill me.

GHOST: You could check into school and then go home sick.

BOBBY: I don't feel that bad.

GHOST: You could lie.

BOBBY: And then my parents would ask me a billion questions and blame it on the chili.

GHOST: But they'd be right.

BOBBY: And I would never hear the end of it. They can be pretty overbearing.

GHOST: Okay, then. I guess you've only got one option.

BOBBY: I have to go to school.

GHOST: I want you to know, I don't envy you right now.

BOBBY: I don't want your pity.

GHOST: It's not that I pity you. I'm just glad I'm not you.

Lights dim. Transition to the history classroom. Two chairs are carried offstage. The remaining seven chairs are moved to center to make one diagonal row of four chairs and one diagonal row of three. Both rows face DR. BOBBY sits in the chair nearest the audience and STUDENTS 1-6 sit in the other chairs. MRS. STEVENS, the teacher, enters and stands DR. GHOST sits on stage beside BOBBY. Lights come up. MRS. STEVENS is lecturing.

MRS. STEVENS: Near the end of the Roman Republic, Rome was in the midst of civil war between two members of the First Triumvirate. Crassus was already dead, so the war was between Pompey and... *(Trying to prompt an answer from the class.)* who remembers the third member of the First Triumvirate?

GHOST sneezes. ALL STUDENTS giggle. MRS. STEVENS looks disapprovingly at BOBBY, then continues.

MRS. STEVENS: So again, who can tell me the third member of the First Triumvirate?

GHOST sneezes.

MRS. STEVENS: Julius Caesar. Is there a problem, Bobby?

BOBBY: No, Mrs. Stevens.

MRS. STEVENS: Are you doing that on purpose?

BOBBY: Definitely not.

MRS. STEVENS: Because you don't usually have this issue.

STUDENT 1: I am so glad.

MRS. STEVENS: Do I need to stop my lecture? Because this is very distracting.

ALL STUDENTS: *(Ad lib.)* Yes! Please! That would be awesome!

MRS. STEVENS: And I'll give out the worksheet and you can all figure everything out on your own?

ALL STUDENTS: *(Ad lib.)* What? No! That's not fair!

BOBBY: I'm really, really sorry.

MRS. STEVENS: Do you anticipate any further disruptions?

BOBBY: I can't say for sure.

BOBBY looks at GHOST. GHOST shrugs.

BOBBY: But probably... yes?

MRS. STEVENS: Then how do you propose we deal with this... issue?

BOBBY: Um... could I be excused to go to the bathroom, please?

GHOST sneezes.

MRS. STEVENS: I'm going to ask you again... what's the problem?

And don't tell me there isn't one.

BOBBY: I ate five bowls of chili last night.

MRS. STEVENS: And you did it knowing that you were going to come to school and sit in my class today?

BOBBY: I was hungry.

MRS. STEVENS: What you eat on your own time is your business, but when it interferes with my instruction, then it's my business.

BOBBY: I'm sorry.

MRS. STEVENS: I believe you. And I can tell you're embarrassed. I feel bad for you—up to a point. Which is to say, the point where you were stupid. So here's what I need for you to do—

BOBBY: What?

MRS. STEVENS: I need for you to go to the bathroom. And stay there. For the rest of the period.

BOBBY and GHOST cross to DL. Transition to hall. Lights dim on the classroom. MRS. STEVENS and ALL STUDENTS exit R with chairs.

GHOST: Well, that certainly went better than your first period class!

BOBBY: How? How do you think that was better?

GHOST: Well, in first period, the class watched a video while the teacher caught up on grading and pretended not to hear everyone laughing and groaning whenever I sneezed. That demonstrated zero classroom management skill. This teacher showed a lot more backbone. She was very decisive.

BOBBY: She sent me to the bathroom for the rest of the period!

GHOST: You asked.

BOBBY: She's not sending me there because I asked, she's sending me because she wanted me out of class. It's embarrassing.

GHOST: At least I'll be able to sneeze without bothering anyone.

BOBBY: Isn't there any way you can control it at all?

GHOST: Well, if I scrunch my nose around the right way, I can make myself sneeze.

BOBBY: No! I mean the opposite of that!

GHOST: If I make myself sneeze frequently, then I won't sneeze at random nearly as much.

BOBBY: That doesn't help.

GHOST: Just remember how good the chili tasted.

Lights dim. Transition to the lunch line. STUDENTS 1-6 and LAURA enter and form a line at R, with LAURA at the end of the line. Lights come up. BOBBY and GHOST approach the line.

GHOST: I cannot believe the graffiti in that bathroom.

BOBBY and GHOST stop.

BOBBY: What about it?

GHOST: Don't the kids bother to proofread?

BOBBY: No.

GHOST: I'm so glad I don't exist in this dimension full time.

BOBBY: Me too.

BOBBY and GHOST begin walking again.

GHOST: So... where to now?

BOBBY: Lunch.

BOBBY and GHOST stop.

BOBBY: Oh shoot.

GHOST: What?

BOBBY: There's Laura right at the end of the lunch line.

GHOST: Who's Laura?

BOBBY: Nobody.

GHOST: She must be somebody.

BOBBY: Nobody you need to worry about.

GHOST: Oooh... I see. You like her.

BOBBY: None of your business.

GHOST: You really like her.

BOBBY: There's no way I'm standing next to her today.

BOBBY and GHOST start to cross L. LAURA sees BOBBY and calls after him.

LAURA: Hey, Bobby!

BOBBY and GHOST stop.

BOBBY: Laura—hey!

BOBBY and GHOST slowly cross towards LAURA.

BOBBY: Please don't embarrass me now.

GHOST: I can't help it. You know that.

BOBBY: This is important.

GHOST: I'll try.

BOBBY: Thank you.

GHOST: But it probably won't do any good.

LAURA: How's it going?

BOBBY: Great.

LAURA: Good.

BOBBY: So... any idea what's waiting for us when we get to the front of the lunch line today?

LAURA: I think they're serving chili.

BOBBY: You're kidding.

LAURA: No. Why?

BOBBY: Oh... no reason.

GHOST: Looks like you might be getting some more company.

BOBBY: No, I am not.

LAURA: Are you talking to somebody?

BOBBY: No. Just you.

LAURA: I wish they were serving pizza or something. Chili gives me gas.

BOBBY: It does?

LAURA: Sorry. TMI.

BOBBY: No, it's okay. I totally understand. I have sort of the same problem.

LAURA: Really?

BOBBY: Oh yeah.

LAURA: Wow. That's a relief. I mean, not that I'm glad you have it, too. Just that I don't feel as embarrassed now.

BOBBY: Oh, no. Don't feel embarrassed.

LAURA: Do you take medication for it?

BOBBY: They make medication for it?

LAURA: Yeah.

GHOST inhales as if feeling the beginnings of a sneeze coming on.

BOBBY: *(Trying to divert LAURA'S attention.)* Hey! Is that a substitute lunch lady?

LAURA: Where?

BOBBY: *(To GHOST.)* Don't.

GHOST: But she said—

BOBBY: I don't care. Don't!

LAURA: No. I think she's one of the regulars.

BOBBY: Yeah. I think you're right. Sorry. My bad. So, they make medication?

LAURA: Yeah. These little green capsules. *(Reaches into a pocket and mimes pulling out a small pill box.)* They relieve gas. They sell them pretty much everywhere. I've got a couple with me. You want one? Y'know... since they're serving chili.

GHOST inhales again. BOBBY looks desperately for an excuse to make his escape.

BOBBY: Uh... sure.

LAURA mimes handing BOBBY a small capsule from the pill box.

LAURA: Here.

LAURA mimes putting the pill box back in her pocket. BOBBY and GHOST begin to cross L.

BOBBY: Thanks. I'm gonna go take this right now.

LAURA: Okay. Hope it helps.

Lights dim on lunch line. GHOST sneezes.

BOBBY: That was close.

GHOST: I don't think she would've held it against you.

BOBBY: I don't care.

GHOST: You should be thanking me.

BOBBY: Why?

GHOST: Because of me, you've got something to talk about with her.

BOBBY: I think we can figure out other things to talk about.

GHOST: She likes you—I can tell.

BOBBY: Don't you dare try to give me relationship advice.

GHOST: I don't know how much good that capsule is really gonna do.

HARDING enters from L.

BOBBY: I needed an excuse to get away.

HARDING: What's that in your hand?

BOBBY: Nothing.

HARDING: No. That's definitely something. Let me see.

BOBBY hands HARDING the capsule.

HARDING: What's this?

BOBBY: Medicine.

HARDING: For what?

BOBBY: Gas.

HARDING: Are you being funny with me?

BOBBY: No, Mr. Harding.

HARDING: Go to my office.

BOBBY: Your office?

HARDING: Sit outside the door and wait for me. We need to have a talk.

BOBBY: Okay.

HARDING exits L.

GHOST: Well, he was kind of bossy.

BOBBY: He's the principal.

GHOST: Oh.

BOBBY: Yeah.

GHOST: So what are you gonna do?

BOBBY: I go to his office. It's not like I have a choice.

GHOST: What about lunch?

BOBBY: The last thing I need is more chili.

Lights dim. Transition to the outside of Harding's office. Four chairs are brought onstage. Two are placed side-by-side RC, and two are angled towards one another LC. BOBBY and GHOST sit in the RC chairs. Lights come up on BOBBY and GHOST. The other two chairs remain unlit. GHOST sneezes.

GHOST: You could say "bless you" once in a while, you know.

BOBBY: (*Sarcastic.*) Bless you.

GHOST: Thank you.

BOBBY: You're not welcome.

GHOST: Do you think he forgot about us?

BOBBY: Us? There is no "us" as far as he's concerned. Just me. I'm the one who's in trouble because of you.

GHOST: It's not my fault that you—

BOBBY: Ate five bowls of chili. I know.

GHOST: You could try telling him about me.

BOBBY: Are you out of your mind? I don't want the principal to think I'm crazy.

GHOST: Yeah. You're probably right. So... do you think he forgot about YOU?

BOBBY: I have no idea.

GHOST: How long has it been?

BOBBY: Two and a half hours.

GHOST: I think he forgot about you. You should get up and leave.

BOBBY: Then I'll be in even more trouble. He's got the capsule. He won't forget.

GHOST: Go ask the secretary to page him.

BOBBY: No. There's nobody in this back hallway to hear you sneeze, and even though I'm sitting outside the principal's office, it's not as awkward as hanging out in the bathroom for over an hour.

GHOST: Hey, I think your wait is over. Here he comes.

HARDING enters from R.

HARDING: May I help you?

BOBBY: You...

GHOST: See? He did forget.

HARDING: Hang on. You're the kid with the drugs, right?

BOBBY: Drugs?

HARDING: Yeah. That green pill. Come in my office.

HARDING mimes opening a door leading to the LC chairs. Lights shift to the LC chairs. HARDING and BOBBY sit on the LC chairs. GHOST stands upstage of BOBBY.

BOBBY: It's not a drug in the illegal drug kind of way.

HARDING: This is a high school. All drugs are drugs in the illegal kind of way. And you expect me to believe that was for gas?

BOBBY: Yes, sir. Look up gas relief capsules. That's what it was.

HARDING: *(Mimes pulling out and looking up something on his phone.)* Okay. Let me see. Huh. You're right. That's exactly what it looks like.

BOBBY: So does that mean I'm not in trouble?

HARDING: Of course you're in trouble. If you take something for a medical condition, your parents are supposed to bring it to school and check it in with the nurse, who keeps it until you need it. But you know that, right?

BOBBY: Yes, sir.

HARDING: So why did you have it?

GHOST: Be honest. Tell him where you got it.

BOBBY: I... didn't think it would be a big deal.

GHOST: You're not going to tell him where you got it?

HARDING: Well, you were wrong. It's a huge deal.

GHOST: (*Sighs.*) You're going to take all the blame for this.

HARDING: The school system has very strict rules about these things.

And you need to respect the rules. Everybody does.

BOBBY: I'm sorry.

HARDING: Sorry doesn't cut it. You screwed up. Big time. And I can't let that slide. Otherwise, I have a whole school full of kids carrying around who-knows-what. So I'm going to have to make an example out of you.

GHOST: What an unbelievable jerk.

HARDING: Much as I wish I could put you in stocks in the middle of the cafeteria, I don't have that option.

GHOST: No... this is too much. I'm not letting him do this to you.

BOBBY: (*To GHOST.*) What?

HARDING: Oh, come on. You don't know what stocks are? They're like a wooden wall with holes for your arms and neck, and you're stuck there so everybody who walks by can laugh at you. They were a big thing hundreds of years ago. Don't you pay attention in history class?

BOBBY: Right. Those. I know what those are.

GHOST: I'm gonna make myself sneeze.

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