

Non-descript set. Future scenes will require extensive set changes, and the rhythm of the play is meant to be fluid.

Throughout the play, the colour green will be associated with ghostly characters – after the first couple scenes, the audience should pick up on this. Hereafter, when the stage directions mention “ghost light,” it is to colour that they refer. Ghosts wear a white mask, and it is assumed the audience can identify ghost characters by this. The cut of each particular character’s mask differs.

SCENE ONE – WHAT GOES HA, HA, HA PLOP?

This story is told in a presentational style. Among the needed locations are the following: soccer field, restaurant, bedroom, living room. The three children and their parents act out what the children describe.

OLDEST: Once upon a time, there was a young man. His name is not important. He jogged every morning and went to the gym each afternoon. On the

weekends, he volunteered at a local veterinary clinic, and, every other Tuesday, he taught a disadvantaged child how to read.

MAN: There's a whole wide world ahead of you in books.

MIDDLE: He also coached a youth soccer team, where he could say things like:

MAN: Hustle!

MIDDLE: And:

MAN: Give it a hundred and ten percent out there!

YOUNGEST: And he knew that, when his players were dribbling the soccer ball down the field, it wasn't the opponents' goalposts they were running towards.

MAN: It's their future.

OLDEST: The young man never stopped running toward his own future. Medical school. Helping war victims in Africa. Canvassing for AIDS research.

MAN: Hustle!

MIDDLE: Young ladies often came to watch him coach his youth soccer team. They stood on the sidelines and cheered.

The girls (portrayed by OLDEST, MIDDLE, and YOUNGEST) and WOMAN cheer at the sidelines of the field during a game. WOMAN wears a white mask.

OLDEST,
MIDDLE, and
YOUNGEST: (variously, as the girls) Come on, team! You can do it! Goooooaaall!
Defence, defence! All right! Good one! Put some energy into it!
(together) Hustle!

YOUNGEST: When the young man's team won, which it often did, he would thank the girls for their support.

MAN: Can I offer you ladies a ride home?

YOUNGEST: And he usually could. But there was one young lady who didn't cheer. She sat by the corner of the field and watched in silence.

There is a goal. OLDEST, MIDDLE, and YOUNGEST cheer loudly, but WOMAN is silent.

MAN: So... do you like soccer?

MIDDLE: The young lady wasn't particularly beautiful, nor particularly ugly. She was plain. That was what made the young man notice her.

MAN: So, uh... I think we've got a shot at the finals if these guys really hustle.

WOMAN: I guess.

MIDDLE: Sometimes, she wore a black leather jacket, and other times, a white cotton sundress, but the young man always recognized her by one thing.

MAN: I like... uh, what you've done with, um, your accessories.

OLDEST: The other young ladies waved fistfuls of green gauze and tied green bandannas around their foreheads. They painted their faces green, the colour of grass, the colour of the soccer team's uniforms. This young lady always wore just one green ribbon, the colour of an emerald on a bed of dark velvet.

MAN: Can I offer you a ride home?

WOMAN: I don't want to take you out of your way.

MAN: Well, which direction are you headed?

WOMAN: Which direction are *you* headed?

YOUNGEST: At a restaurant, on their first date, he told her about the organizations he joined.

MAN: And you feel like you're helping people, you know?

WOMAN: So....

MAN: Are you busy after the game next week?

MIDDLE: They went out again. This time, they told each other more. Like what they were afraid of.

WOMAN: Being buried alive.

MIDDLE: And what they wanted.

MAN: To get out there in the real world.

MIDDLE: And what they prayed for.

WOMAN: Understanding.

MAN: A cure for cancer.

WOMAN: Really?

MAN: Why not?

OLDEST: On their third date, they found out even more about each other.

WOMAN: Briefs?

MIDDLE: You get the idea.

YOUNGEST: It wasn't always by talking that they found things out, either.

MAN and WOMAN are making out.
MAN takes off various articles of her
clothing. Then his hand moves to the
ribbon. WOMAN jerks away.

WOMAN: No!

MAN: What's the matter?

WOMAN: Just – don't touch it...

MAN: All right.

They continue making out.

OLDEST: The young man thought it was odd his girlfriend refused to take off her
ribbon.

MAN and WOMAN are in bed, post-
coital.

WOMAN: It's a family heirloom.

OLDEST: There was something in her voice that made him not sure she was telling the truth. Still, he loved her.

MAN: More than anything.

OLDEST: So he put it from his mind. Besides, there were more important things to worry about.

MAN: Will you marry me?

WOMAN: You mean it?

MAN spins her around. Together, they walk down the aisle. As the children speak, the pair mime going through the ceremony.

OLDEST,
MIDDLE, and
YOUNGEST:

For better or worse, for richer or poorer, until death do you part.

WOMAN freezes, but MAN lifts the veil to kiss her.

MAN: You're still wearing it.

WOMAN: I told you, it's an heirloom.

They kiss. MAN picks up WOMAN and carries her over the threshold of their new home.

OLDEST: And they were happy. But the young man couldn't stifle his curiosity.

MAN: Please. It would be hot.

WOMAN: No.

MIDDLE: The young man had never been married before. He looked up articles on the Internet.

MAN: Sometimes women need their space.

YOUNGEST: But he couldn't stop wondering.

MAN: Why won't she confide in me?

YOUNGEST: And what could she be hiding?

MAN: Hiding?

MIDDLE: Why not?

MAN: If she had a... a hairy mole... some kind of birth defect... a tracheotomy... Well, I'd still love her. I'd love her no matter what.

YOUNGEST: But once he started thinking, he couldn't stop.

MAN: A tattoo – a prison tattoo. Cult insignia. A vampire bite.

MIDDLE: He went to see a counsellor.

OLDEST: (as a counsellor) Communication is the most important part of a committed relationship.

MAN: Honey? Honey, it's just... I just wanted to ask... that ribbon of yours... it's not really a heirloom, is it?

WOMAN: No, it isn't.

MAN: Then why –

WOMAN: I can't tell you.

MAN: Don't you trust me?

WOMAN: Don't *you* trust *me*?

YOUNGEST: I don't want to give the wrong impression. Their marriage was otherwise healthy.

MAN: I love you more.

WOMAN: No, *I* love *you* more.

MIDDLE: Besides, there were more important things to worry about.

OLDEST is born.

MAN: Dada! He said Dada!

WOMAN: (kissing MAN on the nose) She's got your nose.

MAN: Who's daddy's little girl?

OLDEST: There were a lot of more important things to worry about.

MIDDLE and YOUNGEST are born.

WOMAN: What have your father and I told you about hitting?

MAN: Uh, Horsey's tired right now, okay?

WOMAN: It's your sister's turn to have the blue cup.

MIDDLE: The man – we can't quite call him young anymore – didn't think of the ribbon around his wife's neck.

MAN: I have put it from my mind.

OLDEST: But, when he volunteered at the veterinary clinic, sometimes he wondered whether it wouldn't be easier on everyone to put down unwanted puppies.

MAN: Of course not.

MIDDLE: And when he taught disadvantaged children how to read, he asked himself whether he was really improving their lives.

MAN: Studies show literacy is key in breaking the cycle of poverty.

YOUNGEST: And, when he coached his youth soccer team...

MAN: Hey, so we lost. That's okay, too. It's only a game.

OLDEST: When his children became teenagers, the man and his wife were left alone more often. (to MAN and WOMAN) I'm going to Laura's house to study.

MIDDLE: Dave's having a party.

YOUNGEST: Can I have the car tonight?

WOMAN: It's nice to have some time to ourselves, isn't it?

MAN: Honey?

WOMAN: Hmmm?

MAN: Will you ever tell me about your ribbon?

WOMAN: Is that all you can think about?

MAN: Will you?

WOMAN: Wait.

OLDEST: Their children grew older and left the house. They became veterinarians, teachers of disadvantaged children, and youth soccer coaches.

MIDDLE, and
YOUNGEST: Hustle!

MAN: Now?

WOMAN: Not yet.

MIDDLE: The children got married and had children of their own.

MAN: Now?

WOMAN: Not yet.

YOUNGEST: And their children's children became teenagers and left their parents alone more often.

WOMAN: Not yet.

MAN: Haven't I been a great husband, a wonderful father, a good friend? Haven't I shared my deepest and darkest secrets with you? Don't I deserve to know this one little thing? (beat) Don't you love me?

WOMAN: Of course I love you.

MAN: Then why won't you tell me why you wear that ribbon?

WOMAN: Soon. Very soon.

YOUNGEST: The old man didn't want to be told soon. He wanted to be told now, yesterday, long ago on their very first date.

MAN: What could she want to keep so private?

YOUNGEST: But he was patient.

MAN: I've waited this long.

YOUNGEST: Besides, there were more important things to worry about.

WOMAN is dying, lying on their bed.
MAN holds her hand. OLDEST,
MIDDLE, and YOUNGEST enter. Each
kisses WOMAN on the cheek and leaves.
MAN doesn't move.

MAN: Should I call a doctor?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: Does it hurt?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: Don't leave me alone.

WOMAN: It's time.

MAN: Time for what?

WOMAN: You may untie the ribbon now, if you like.

MAN: Untie it?

MIDDLE: His hand seemed to stretch across a vast chasm to reach the frayed end
of the green ribbon

WOMAN: Just remember, I love you.

MAN grasps the ribbon.

WOMAN: And I'm sorry.

OLDEST: With one swift yank, the old man pulled the ribbon loose.

MAN pulls the ribbon loose.

YOUNGEST: And that was when her head fell off.

MAN holds WOMAN's mask. Tableau.
CHORUS 1 enters stage centre, carrying a rose. The tableau of WOMAN lying on the bed is still in the background.

CHORUS 1: At our last black-tie gala,
 My love wore a shroud.
 While the rest of the guests waltzed,
 She lay on the floor,
 Her arms crossed over her chest.
 There were pennies on her eyes.
 The other dancing couples stumbled over her.
 She never flinched.
 The punch was blood-red.
 “Darling,” I said. “You’re making me look rather a fool.”
 She’s just jealous.
 I’ve always been the life of the party.