



GHOSTS, YOU SAY?

GRADES 4 - 8

Presented by St. George's Elementary School, Paradise River,
Labrador.

This is a dramatization based upon a compilation of several
stories in "Them Days" magazines.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Old Timer	-	Margaret Brown
Uncle Ambrose	-	Fern Learning
"Devil" & "Troubadour"	-	Maynard Brown
Jack	-	Curtis Brown
George	-	Ruth Brown
Jim	-	Leon Mesher
Arthur	-	Melba Lethbridge (who also quotes her own poem)
Thorwald	-	Paul Mesher
Albert	-	Dean Heard
Script	-	Dorie Brown
Director	-	Dorie Brown
Stage Manager	-	Herb Brown

GHOSTS, YOU SAY ...?

Curtain opens on dimly-lit stage. An Old-Timer is seated on an upturned crate or short stool, on the apron of the stage, at the right. He takes his pipe from his mouth, as he begins to speak. Back-drop is either simply the stage curtain (if it is light), or a scene of snow-covered hills on a screen.

Old-Timer: (half-addresses the audience; half-addresses his imaginary listener):
Ghosts, you say? You want to know if there be's any ghosts in Labrador?
HaH! Ghosts stories is only a big laugh with me...

...Like old Uncle Ambrose... One Sunday he said he was coming up to Northwest River and I don't know who it was, his parents, I suppose, didn't want him to come on a Sunday...

ENTER UNCLE AMBROSE, running beside an imaginary dog-team. Spotlight on him, to throw large shadow on back-drop. MUSIC as of a chase.

OLD-TIMER: When he got to a island called Dog Island...

AMBROSE: (mimes as if dogs take off at a fast run) HEY! "Lasses!
Turpentine! Slow down there! No need to take off on an old feller, like that! I'm gettin' feeble, you know. Hold in, there! Whoa! Slow up, now hear? By t'goodness, ye'd think ol' Satan hisself was after ye!

(He continues to mime as if dogs pick up speed. Ambrose looks back to see "Devil" miming a hot pursuit.)

AMBROSE: (yells) EE-IY-EEEE! You fellers got better eyesight than this old cob, fer sure! It is himself after we! HI-YAH! Get on! Move yer all-fours fer all for!! EE-IY-EEEE!

("Devil" takes out an eye-ball and throws it at Ambrose. Ambrose ducks as it lands beside him. Ambrose looks back, and sees "Devil" getting close. He urges dogs to go faster...)

AMBROSE: Boy, gully the devil is gonna have me this time!

(He jumps for komotik, but falls off again, scrambles up, as "Devil" throws second eye-ball at him. Ambrose looks back over his shoulder, saying...)

AMBROSE: Boy, he's got me this time! I knows I'm got! OO-WAH!

(Ambrose runs off, stage-left; "Devil" throws back his head, laughing and coolly haeads off, stage-right. Lights dim. Spotlight returns to OLD-TIMER.)

OLD-TIMER: He made it to Northwest in the end, and the devil never got 'em, o'course...

(Swift and silent scene changes; screen of interior of cabin. Place rough table, wood-box with splits, kerosene lamp on table. A rough hewn door is at center back. Camp-stove to the left of the door. Windows on either side of door.)

OLD-TIMER: (continuing)...But then, there was the time me and Jack - that's my brother, put up in that old house over to Turner's Bight ...

(Lights dim. Spotlight to center stage. Enter Jack and George, stomping in through door, dressed in oil-skins, dripping ...)

JACK: Some wet, eh boy? We might as well forget the camp, and just put up here in the house.

GEORGE: Might as well, this stove's as good as ours, I s'pose. Look here -- even some fire-wood left -- lucky for us!

(George builds a fire; Jack rolls out bed gear; soon they turn in.)

JACK: (climbing into his sleeping bag) I'm so tired, I've got to get rested before I even think about eatin'. I'll grab a bite in the mornin'.

GEORGE: Me, too. Good night, Jack.

(They settle in. A few minutes later:)

JACK: Hey! Cut that out! That's not funny!

GEORGE: Cut what out! I didn't do nuthin'.

JACK: Always the joker, eh boy? Somebody just spit in my face, and I don't suppose it was the floor!

GEORGE: Well, it wasn't me, that's for sure. Maybe the roof leaks. Maybe You're dreaming. Maybe you're crazy ---I'll lay my money on that last one!!

JACK: Crazy, huh? Well, I can't wipe off something I only inagined! (He wipes his face). AND THAT'S WET!!

GEORGE: Go to sleep.

(Both lay back down --Jack muttering the whole time.)

GEORGE: (as an afterthought)...I still think you're crazy!!

(Jack kicks him)

(A few minutes later)

GEORGE: (comes up swinging) It's not enough You drool all over yerself --now yer spittin' on me, too! Well, buddy, it won't work! I still don't believe you!

JACK: What're you jawin' about --I never touched you!

GEORGE: O' course you didn't touch me --I never said anything about yer touchin' me! I guess I know the difference between bein' touched and bein' spit at --AND I WAS SPIT AT!!

JACK: (smiling calmly) No, I think you're "touched" (he gestures) -- in the head! HAR!! HAR!!

GEORGE: (grabs him by the throat) You spit in my face!

JACK: No, boy, I swear I didn't. But, if 'twasn't you who spit at me, and 'twasn't me that spit at you, then I don't want to stick around to find out who it was spittin' at the bot' of us!! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!!

(They scramble up their gear and run out)

(Stage lights dim; spot returns to OLD-TIMER)

OLD-TIMER: HEE,HEE! That must've looked pretty queer -- two strappin' big young men scrabblin' out of a perfectly empty house in a storm, 'cos they was afraid of "the ghosts". HEE,HEE! I s'pose 'twas the roof leakin', now's I looks back on it ... (pause) ... I s'pose it was the roof...

...Oh, and then there was old Uncle Jim who went out to Table Bay, and stayed to the old house out there ... there was lots o'queer things happened in that old house ...

(Enter JIM. He turns back at the door and calls out:)

JIM: No, I'll be all right, here, Mick. Youse go on up to yer own place -- I'll stay here for the night, and come up to fetch you in the mornin'. B'night, now!

(He turns in to the cabin, and shuts the door. He busies himself with building a fire, setting on the kettle, getting water, etc. Soon he hears a knock at the door.)

JIM: Come in, then -- I s'pose ye've got two legs and arms!

(ENTER ARTHUR)

ARTHUR: Good night, Jim! I been out tailin' traps, and I seed the light in the window, here, and said, 'Now I must go see who's in the old house tonight'. I figgered if 'tweren't you, then it must be a ghostie!
(Both laugh)

JIM: Come in, boy come in! I'm just making a pot o' tea. Roll out yer things -- ye're welcome to stay the night. I'm just here sort of temporary, meself! Mick and they is up to their own place, and I'll be going back with them tomorrow.

(They bring in his gear, and settle down at the table with tea)

ARTHUR: Do ye ever make up songs or poems when ye're out alone? I do, I know.
Like:

Labrddor, our cold and merciless land-
Your people have known hardships and dread
And caribou hoofs printed in the sand,
Telling us there were once great herds of caribou
That roamed on the land
Of our Labrador.
Great flocks of birds fly over,
Packs of wolves cross valleys,
Climb up steep mountains,
To get one lone caribou for their dinner --
In our cold and merciless land.

JIM: You made that up? That's not bad at all. Naw, me, I just recites what I can remember of what others have wrote, like:

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold.
The Artic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold.
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see ...

(CRASH!! Arthur's chair suddenly collapses; Arthur spills off onto floor.)

ARTHUR: I -- Wha-a? I wonder if the Northern Lights have seen that sight?! That's the queerest I ever did see! Mighty weak chairs, Jim, mighty weak!

(Both kneel down to examine the chair)

ARTHUR: No, it's not, either! Look here. There's nothing the matter with this chair! The rungs are all still holding -- nothin's give out!

JIM: You're right, sir. Nothing's come abroad at all!

(They pick the chair back up, and sit down again and resume their tea.)

ARTHUR: They always say there's some mighty queer things goes on in this house, but I never believed 'em before. You, Jim?

JIM: 'Tis all nonsense, eh boy? Mick and they wanted me to come with them up to their place for the night, but I said 'twas no need of it -- that's only old foolishness is all that is!

ARTHUR: (trying hard to convince himself) Ye-es, some people's imaginations just never knows when to quit. (He drains his cup in one fast gulp).

(Putting down his cup hurriedly) Well, Jim, thanks for the tea. I gotta be gettin' on. (He gathers his things)

JIM: Wha-a? I thought you were going to stay the night...? Nobody here, just me and the ghosts ...

ARTHUR: (laughing bravely, but unconvinced) Ha, ha. You and the ghosts! No, I always sleeps in camp when I'm out tendin' traps -- brings me good luck. See you around!

(Arthur leaves)

JIM: (looks up and around, talking to the ceiling) Well, ghosties, what do ye make o' that? You scared him off, after all! (He chuckles to himself, as he rolls out his bed gear. He blows out the lamp, and crawls in his bed roll.)

(Voices off-stage start, and build up, as a crowd of people, talking. Jim sits up, looks around, listens; crawls out of bed and goes to check first the window, and then the door. When he throws open the door, the talking stops abruptly. He shakes and scratches his head, looks out again, and wanders back to bed, shaking his head all the way. As he crawls in, he looks up to the ceiling, as if checking out the "ghosties".

As soon as he is settled again, the talking starts once more, building louder and louder. Again, he sits up, looks around, climbs out of bed, and checks the window and then the door; again, when he throws open the door, the talking stops. He turns back in to the cabin, shaking and scratching his head; looks up at the "ghosties", and very suddenly and quickly begins to scramble up his bed-roll, calling as he goes out:

JIM: Hey Arthur! Make room fer me, too! These ghosties is havin' a party and I don't b'lieve I was invited!!

(He exits, leaving the door swinging)

(lights dim; spot returns to OLD_TIMER).

OLD-TIMER: (shaking his head and laughing) I heard Uncle Jim talk about that lots of times, poor old chap ... Guess ghosts was just a laugh with him, too ... Ha, ha.

But, y'know, there is one story that has never been explained ...

(Voices off-stage)

THORWALD: There! That's the last of the birds cleaned. Not a bad haul — how many is it altogether?

ALBERT: Well, count 'em up: with yesterday's fifty-two, and now today there's my goose and your six partridges — that's fifty-nine birds. Here, let's take two of those partridges in for our supper.

THORWALD: All right. But help me tie the rest of 'em up here in the tree. I shot 'em, and I don't intend to share 'em with no wandering thief!

(Sound of them stringing up the birds. Then both enter, with partridges in hand. They set about building their fire, and putting on the birds to cook)

ALBERT: I don't think you need to worry about no wandering thief — did you notice all that sinky moss over to the one side? Anybody steps in that, and they'd leave a mark for sure... And there's branches all around the entire cabin — anybody steps on those rattly boughs and ... well, I'm sure we could hear even a jay or a squirrel running over them!

THORWALD: I guess you're right — we should have plenty o'warning if man or beast comes near.

(Albert lifts the lid off the pot, to check on the birds; then heads back to lie on the bed).

ALBERT: Well, nothing to do now, only wait — hope those fellers hurry up, or I'll just settle to eat 'em raw!

(Albert lies on the bed, his arms behind his head. He begins to hum. Thorwald cleans his gun).

(Off-stage, four knocks are heard, as if on the door).

(Albert and Thorwald, startled, look up at one another, and call out loudly together:)

BOTH: Come in.

(Four knocks are again heard, this time louder. The fox-trap chain, which is used to fasten the door is pulled, hard. Albert and Thorwald look questioningly at each other.)

ALBERT: (deliberately) Pass me my rifle!

(Thorwald cautiously passes him his rifle; Albert quietly levers a cartridge into the breach. Thorwald picks up his own rifle and cautiously picks his way across the cabin to stand behind the door:)

THORWALD: You give the word -- I'll fling the door open!!

ALBERT: Open it quick, and step to one side. I'm going to shoot if I see anything.
(pause) Now!

(Thorwald throws the door wide open, stepping behind it. Nothing is to be seen except the bright stars of the night. Thorwald steps out of doors going one way around the cabin. Albert picks up his gun, and goes out the other direction.)

(Actually they go off stage, and cross the stage, behind the curtain, to re-enter from the opposite side from which they exited. Each is seen cautiously approaching the door of the cabin, backing past the windows towards the door. MUSIC - stealthy music would be most suitable. (eg. Pink Panther) When each is equi-distant from the door, but right in front of one of the windows, each hears the other, and challenges with his gun; then moves the next step or two, to meet in front of the open door, facing one another, rifles "at ease", sighing with relief:)

BOTH: Oh! It's you! Did you see anything? (ad lib) No, nothing. No tracks nothing.

(They enter the cabin, and fasten the door)

THORWALD: I don't know, I just kon't know what to make of that, do you?

ALBERT: No, boy I don't. I know I don't like it! Those were no timid knocks - whatever it was, was strong!

(They examine the door)

THORWALD: That's for sure - did you see the way he pulled on that chain? And the knocks -- they sounded like they came about here (he points to the door, at the height of an average man) -- so the thing must have been a fair size.

ALBERT: I don't like it, boy; I don't like it. (He shakes his head)

THORWALD: If it comes again, and if it knocks like that, let's say, one more time: 'Come in.' If it still doesn't answer, we start shooting, right through the door. O.K.?

ALBERT: Right. (He is still shaking his head, and heads for the stove) You want some supper? Birds are done now.

THORWALD: No, boy, I've lost my appetite. I'll just sit here and wait. (He sits in a chair, pointing himself and his gun towards the door).

ALBERT: Funny, I was starved a few minutes ago and now I couldn't eat a bite.

(Lights dim; both fall asleep in their positions. Lights begin to rise slightly, signifying dawn. Thorwald stirs, and heads out the door. Soon he returns, just as Albert is waking.)

THORWALD: I was just down to the beach. There's no tracks, other than our own. But when I was coming back, I noticed something strange -- the birds are gone! There's nothing there! The seven shell-birds were unhooked -- not pulled down -- unhooked from the tree! Not a branch broken. The partridges were unhooked, too; the big log where we put the ducks is bare. And your goose -- 'tis like something tore off one of its legs right off close -- couldn't have cut it any cleaner if you'd taken a sharp axe and chopped it off! I even crawled up in the tree to find the mark of the axe, but there was none there! What could it have been?

ALBERT: I don't know, boy. (He shakes his head). I don't know, but I don't like it. Let's have another look - see ...

(They both head out)

(Lights dim. Spot returns to OLD-TIMER)

OLD-TIMER: What could it be? What was it? Did it have eyes that could see through darkness? Could it see them, through those small windows, sitting on the bed holding guns at the ready? Did it know when they were asleep so that it could do its work and take all of their game? How did it move amongst those rattly branches without waking them? It is a mystery that will never be solved.

(brightening, as if he's afraid he'll start believing all this:)

Ghost stories, you say? Yes, there's ghost stories around Labrador ... but then, ghost stories is only a big laugh with me!

(Lights rise slightly on stage, to give eerie light. OLD-TIMER picks up his pipe, fools with it, and replaces it in his mouth. He crosses his legs and leans forward, musing on all that he has said.

Meanwhile, "Troubadour" enters, strumming guitar, singing, "Nobody Lives There", and is gradually joined by the successive casts of the scenes previously acted. Each actor continues to mime the characteristic actions of his skit, as he sings along with the "Troubadour". As the song finishes, lights dim, OLD-TIMER gets up from his crate, and walks off, with a shake of his head.

CURTAIN

*Characteristic actions:

Ambrose: putting traces on dogs, loading komotik, riding on sled
Jack & George: getting splits ready; rolling out bed gear
Jim: wandering around listening for ghosts; inspecting chair
Arthur: preparing traps
Thorwald: cleaning gun
Albert: stirring pot on stove; lying on bed, studying the door

NOBODY LIVES THERE

Camping there beneath the pines,
Where the bubbling water winds,
Dancing gaily by its golden shore,
That's where Pearl River makes its way
Out into Mulligan Bay ---
But nobody lives there anymore.

CHORUS

Nobody lives there; nobody lives there,
Nobody lives there anymore;
It was once a trapper's home
As Pearl River it is known,
But nobody lives there anymore.

Proudly stand the mighty trees
Swaying gently in the breeze
As they stood so many years before
When children played there, to and fro
Oh, so many years ago
But nobody lives there anymore.

Where the old homes used to stand
Proudly on that Virgin land!
Now flowers bloom and beautify the shore
You can hear a summer breeze
Singing softly in the trees
But nobody lives there anymore.

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- Ben Best, Mud Lake: "Ghost Stories is a Big Laugh With Me"
Vol. 3 No. 1, Sept. '77 (OLD-TIMER)
George Rich, Rigolet: "How I Became Part of a Ghost Story"
Vol. 3, No. 1 Sept '77 (Jack and George)
Anne Rich, Northwest River: "Stories My Father Told Me"
Vol. 3, No. 1, Sept. '77 (Ambrose)
John C. Davis, Happy Valley: "Haunted House at Table Bay",
Vol. 3, No. 1, Sept. '77 (Jim and Arthur)
Thorwald Perrault, Happy Valley: "Mystery Unsolved",
Vol. 2, No. 4, June '77. (Thorwald and Albert)
Gerald Mitchell: "Nobody Lives There"
Robert Service: "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (Jim's poem)
Melba Lethbridge (student, Paradise River Elementary, 1979):
"Labrador, Our Cold and Merciless Land" (Arthur's poem)