

A Dying Business

A One-Act by Melanie Kamaau

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Cast of Characters:

MARIE — adult female or fem-presenting

DANA — adult female or fem-presenting

GISELLE — adult female or fem-presenting

**Diverse casting is encouraged*

Synopsis:

Marie needs a way to keep her bed and breakfast running. Dana is desperate for any sort of work as a medium. The two conspire together to create a business that won't die, even if some of the guests might already be dead...

Production History:

This play has no production history, though it has gone through some readings and edits.

SCENE 1

Lights up on a hotel room where DANA is setting up for a seance. She has a box with equipment in it. She holds a remote.

DANA

Test one.

She pushes the button and the lights turn unnatural and spooky.

DANA

Check.

She pulls out a fog machine from the box and plugs it in, turning it on.

DANA

Test two.

The fog machine turns on.

DANA

Check.

DANA pulls a bluetooth speaker out of the box and places it in the room. She turns on a spooky ambience.

DANA

Ambience? Check.

She closes her eyes as she speaks.

DANA

Are there any spirits in the area who are listening? *(Beat.)* Is anyone there? *(Another beat.)* Okay, what am I missing? I've dimmed the lights, I've filled the air with mist, I've got the mood music, if you can call it that. If there are any spirits nearby, please show yourselves.

There is a knock at the door.

DANA

An answer! With whom am I speaking?

MARIE

It's me, Marie. Is everything okay in there?

DANA

Oh! (*Frantically, returning the room to its normal state, but forgetting the fog machine.*) Yep! Everything is all good! Why do you ask?

MARIE

I just thought I saw smoke go through the door.

DANA

It's a part of my setup! Don't worry! (*She quickly turns off the fog machine.*)

MARIE

I figured, but I wanted to check. I also brought some dinner to share.

DANA opens the door. There is some fog lingering as MARIE glances around the room, holding a takeout bag.

DANA

Wow, that's so nice of you. I wasn't expecting that. Uh, come on in. The room is a little...

MARIE enters.

MARIE

You're just doing your job. Testing things, I get it. (*She holds out the food bag.*) Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you, but I wanted to sort of check in? And I brought food to smooth things over.

DANA

Smooth what over?

MARIE

To be honest, you seem a bit unconfident, so I wanted to give you an option to leave. You don't have to do this.

DANA

Well... It's, um — I am confident. I really am. I'm very good at this. Um, would you like to have a seat?

DANA pulls out a chair and table from the wall, and MARIE sits down, taking out the food boxes.

MARIE

And take some food. Whichever one looks best to you.

DANA

Thanks.

She grabs a takeout box and awkwardly hovers in the area.

MARIE

You should sit down too.

DANA

Oh, yes.

DANA decides between the options of a reclining chair or the edge of the bed and settles for the bed. There is an awkward silence.

MARIE

You don't actually design haunted houses, do you?

DANA

Not exactly.

MARIE

I saw it in your face when we signed the contract. I debated and debated letting you try, but I can find someone else—

DANA

Hey, a contract is a contract. I signed that, and I am determined to make this a haunted hotel even if it kills me. *(She gives an awkward laugh.)* Not really, but you know. Don't want to actually make it haunted. *(Like a ghost.)* Oooohhh.

MARIE

Look, I know you mean well, but I can tell you're out of your element. And you were really kind to reply to my post. So, no hard feelings, but—

DANA

Don't fire me!

MARIE

I just want this to feel as real as a "haunted hotel" can be. This is my Hail Mary for this place.

DANA

I'm confident in my ability to— No. I should be honest here. The truth is I'm not a designer; I'm a medium. So I can really summon spirits. I, um, misunderstood your post, but after setting the terms, I thought I could still make it work.

MARIE

Oh.

Silence.

DANA

I'm sorry I accidentally misled you, but I thought actually making it haunted would still get you what you needed, and it would help me get some work. Things have been hard for me too, so being able to do this would really mean a lot to me.

MARIE

That's not what I was expecting.

DANA

Yeah, I was worried explaining it at this point would make things even more awkward.

MARIE

I don't believe in mediums or ghosts or anything like that.

DANA

So then you think I'm crazy?

MARIE

No, I think you're desperately trying to sell me the fact that you're the best for this job.

DANA

That's also true. But I really am a medium!

MARIE

I mean, if you're able to convince me that ghosts are real, I'm not going to complain. Having real ghosts haunting this place would be more than I could ask for. If that were possible.

DANA

So...

MARIE

I guess I just wanted to give you an out because you seemed in over your head. But if you really believe you can do this—

DANA

Yes! The contract is still on. If I scare you, then you pay me.

MARIE

All right. Then it's still on. I hope you can actually convince a skeptic like me that you really are a medium.

DANA

I will.

MARIE

What's it like to be a medium?

DANA

Nothing crazy. I eat, sleep, and do my job.

MARIE

But the job part specifically — how did you become a medium?

DANA

I guess I've just always had this gift.

MARIE

And you found a way to profit off of it?

DANA

To be honest, it's not an industry with great job security, and I'm freelancing right now, so the paychecks aren't consistent. I haven't gotten paid in several months.

MARIE

I see why you're so desperate for this.

DANA

But I don't want it to sound like I'm a bad medium! I am very good. It's just a hard time right now, you know?

MARIE

I know exactly what you mean. I took over this place when my mom died a little over a year ago, and I hardly get any guests anymore. I don't know what I'm doing wrong.

DANA

Me either. I mean, I also don't know what you could be doing wrong. It's a lovely little place. Very quaint. Very cute.

MARIE

I'm glad people still feel that way about old fashioned bed and breakfasts. Ever since the big names in the hotel corporations started showing up around here, people have lost interest. Nothing beats the convenience of that I guess. So I thought I'd switch marketing tactics, maybe change the name. It sort of feels gimmicky, but what can you do?

DANA

Well, once I'm through with this place, it will be more than a gimmick! Or less than a gimmick? It will actually be haunted.

MARIE

Can I watch you do it?

DANA

Do what?

MARIE

Your seance or whatever.

Now?
DANA

Yes!
MARIE

But the food.
DANA

Okay, we'll clean up, and then you'll do it.
MARIE

Well, I was never planning to have a spectator during the seance. I was hoping for you to meet the spirit after they were already summoned.
DANA

What happened to all that confidence?
MARIE

It's just really weird for someone to watch me.
DANA

I want to know that it will be good.
MARIE

And it will be. You will be able to experience the hauntedness for yourself soon. But I'm not going to perform a seance in front of you. Sorry.
DANA

Fine. Do it how you want, but I'm just saying, it won't be easy to convince me.
MARIE

Trust me, I will. We're on the same team here. We both want this to be a success.
DANA

I like your enthusiasm.
MARIE

MARIE begins cleaning up the table.

DANA

And I like your *(she fishes for the word)* everything. I mean, everything about this place. It's nice. It will do well. Um, thanks for the food.

MARIE

You too. I think you're an interesting person, Dana, and I am looking forward to whatever you have planned, real or not real. Call me when you're ready.

DANA

Of course.

MARIE exits.

DANA

Well, there's no faking it now that she knows what I can do. Or what I should be able to do. Please, please listen to me this time, spirits.

DANA takes a breath and gets her equipment back out, setting up again.

DANA

Lights. Fog. Ambience. What else is there?

As she rummages through the box, she sees the candles.

DANA

Oh, I forgot the candles! Let's start with that.

She sits down, placing them around her, and lighting them one by one. Then she closes her eyes.

DANA

Are there any spirits in the area who are listening? Show yourselves please. *(Beat.)* If you are there, take my hand. *(She reaches her hand out, but nothing happens. She opens her eyes.)* I don't understand. *(This time with her eyes open.)* Please spirits, I'm desperate. I need your help. This is my Hail Mary too. *(Beat.)* You don't have to show yourself, but please give me a sign if you are there.

The candles flicker out.

DANA

I'll take it. Spirits, please assist me. I will do whatever it takes in exchange. Within reason.

GISELLE appears.

DANA

Oh my god, are you a real spirit?

GISELLE

Yes. *(Skeptical.)* Are you a real medium?

DANA

Yes!

GISELLE

You said you would do anything in exchange for my help, so I'm here.

DANA

Yes, yes anything! Within reason. You heard that part too, right?

GISELLE

My request isn't unreasonable, but it isn't exactly going to be easy.

DANA

I'll give it my best shot.

GISELLE

First, I'm a little confused. What is this place? I don't recognize it. I thought I would be at my house where I died.

DANA

This is "Giselle's B and B." The name might change though.

GISELLE

Giselle's? But I'm Giselle! So this *is* my house! Who's the owner now?

DANA

Her name's Marie.

GISELLE

Interesting. My daughter's middle name is Marie.

DANA

Now that I've answered that, will you help me?

GISELLE

Well, no that's not what I need. And I also don't know what you want me to do.

DANA

It's really simple. I just need you to scare Marie. What do you want me to do?

GISELLE

Arrange a meeting with me and Marie.

DANA

I'll arrange that after you've scared her.

GISELLE

And how do I do that?

DANA

That's part of what we need to brainstorm.

GISELLE

Or I can just go talk to her now. Find another spirit to haunt this place.

DANA

No! Please! I really need this to work out. I might not be able to find another one.

GISELLE

So you just had a bit of dumb luck.

DANA

It's complicated right now.

A sudden knock on the door startles DANA.

MARIE

Dana, can I talk to you?

DANA

I'm in the middle of my seance.

GISELLE

No, she's not. Come in, Marie.

DANA

Shhh! I don't want her to know you're here yet! Go hide somewhere! You've got time. She can't come in without—

MARIE unlocks the door and enters.

MARIE

I own this place. I have a set of master keys. (*Observing GISELLE with no surprise.*) So this is the "ghost"?

DANA

Well...

GISELLE

You're so grown up now.

MARIE

Do you know me?

DANA

I'm not ready yet for this to be the official demonstration. Could you give us a little bit longer? An hour?

MARIE

No. I did some digging, Dana.

DANA

Oh?

MARIE

I know what's really going on here. "Medium" was the keyword I was missing when I was looking into you before.

DANA

There's a misunderstanding...

MARIE

You're a fraud, aren't you?

GISELLE

I knew it. You're not a medium.

DANA

No, no! I am! Or, I was. No, I still am! I'm just freelancing now.

MARIE

Your agency fired you.

DANA

Because they have very strict quotas!

MARIE

Quotas?

DANA

I've been a little inconsistent in communicating with spirits lately. I really was born with this gift. It's all I know how to do. But it just kind of flickered out.

MARIE

So that's why you weren't confident. Not because you're not a designer but because you're a bad medium.

DANA

I... Yeah.

GISELLE

But you did bring me here.

MARIE

And who are you supposed to be?

GISELLE

Marie, I am your mother.

MARIE

Not a chance in hell. My mom passed away from cancer. You don't even look like her. (*To DANA.*) You're not just a fraud, you're an asshole, Dana. But I guess those do go together.

DANA

I'm not— Look, I don't know why she said that. She might be your mom or maybe she's—

MARIE

No. We're done here. Pack up and leave.

MARIE exits.

GISELLE

I've got to talk to her.

DANA

She's not going to talk to you now. Why would you claim to be her mom like that? Whatever you were hoping for is gone. And now my history is exposed and... Neither of us are getting what we want.

GISELLE

I can't cross over. And I need her to do that.

DANA

Why do you need her?

GISELLE

When I was dying, while I was between consciousnesses, I was saying something on my deathbed. Something to my husband. But I don't remember what. I was too dead for it to be a living memory and too alive for it to be a dead memory. But I know it was important, and somehow I forgot. And my conflict about it won't let me go.

DANA

Well, why don't I find your husband and ask him?

GISELLE

I think he's passed on.

DANA

So then why don't you find him in your realm?

GISELLE

I mean he's passed on to the afterlife. I couldn't find his spirit in my realm or his living body in yours. And that was many years ago. Probably. Time is difficult when you're dead.

DANA

So you're hoping to find your daughter because she might know your last words.

GISELLE

Yes. It's my only chance.

DANA

Okay, I'll try to convince her to come back. But I need this too, so I'll only do it on the condition that you'll actually scare her first.

GISELLE

Thank you.

DANA exits as GISELLE exits another way/disappears and the lights shift to a part of the stage designated for outside the hotel room. MARIE is caught in emotions, holding the contract and envelope with DANA's check, considering ripping it.

DANA

Marie, I'm sorry.

MARIE

Why would you do that?

DANA

Do what?

MARIE

Tell her to pretend to be my mom.

DANA

I didn't tell her that. She has her own issues. Unfortunately — or fortunately — she's a real spirit, so I don't have any control over what she does or says.

MARIE

But you'd have more control over a living person?

DANA

Maybe? Humans have things like contracts and money to motivate them.

MARIE

These haven't helped either of us yet.

DANA

I know she said some stupid things without thinking. She's desperate. Like us, I guess. I think it would be in all of our best interests to give this another shot. Let me actually prove myself here.

MARIE

Fine. One more chance.

DANA

Right now?

MARIE

I can't afford to waste more time on something that isn't going to work out. What else do you need to set up anyway? You already have your "ghost."

DANA

Sounds like you're not a believer yet. Well, if all I'm able to do is convince you, I'll take it.

MARIE

You'll still have to scare me to get paid for this though.

DANA

That's valid. Speaking of, are you set up to—

MARIE

My watch can monitor my heart rate. I have an app. Let me send you a link so you'll be able to monitor it in real time and see if it crosses 130.

MARIE pulls out her phone to set it up.

DANA

Not if, but when.

MARIE

(Playfully.) We'll see about that. Okay, I just sent it to you. Let's do this.

DANA

All righty. Give me just one second to check on things there though.

DANA enters the room again. There is no ambience, no special lighting, nothing — just a normal room.

DANA

Giselle, I convinced her to come back, but you need to give it your all to scare her. She'll only talk to you if you do that. I believe in you. *(Beat.)* Can you give me some indication that you're ready?

The lights flash. DANA opens the door for MARIE.

DANA

Thank you for giving me another chance.

MARIE

Cheers to being desperate.

DANA

Cheers.

DANA pantomimes "cheers," and MARIE laughs.

MARIE

But if this lady tries to claim she's my mother again, it's over.

DANA

She won't. Just relax. Well, don't relax. Be ready. You're about to meet a real ghost.

DANA exits.

MARIE

Base: 92 BPM. All right. Where are you crazy lady? Prove to me that you're a ghost and make me scared.

The lights shift and the fog and ambience start.

MARIE

You've got to do better than that.

GISELLE (O.S.)

Ooooooohhh.

MARIE

Okay, let's just talk.

GISELLE appears.

GISELLE

That's what I wanted to do from the beginning.

MARIE

Convince me.

GISELLE

Is Marie your middle name?

MARIE

No, convince me you're a ghost, not my mom! I'm not doing this.

MARIE tries to exit, but the door is somehow stuck.

GISELLE

You wanted to talk. Let's talk.

MARIE

What did you do to the door?

GISELLE

Is Marie your middle name?

MARIE

121. *(She takes a deep breath.)* This is going to read like I am scared if I'm not careful. Fine. Yes, Marie is my middle name.

GISELLE

Why do you go by your middle name?

MARIE

Because for some reason it's a tradition to name the oldest girl the same name every generation.

GISELLE

That's my tradition!

MARIE

There's no way. What name runs in your family?

GISELLE

Giselle.

MARIE

Well, mine is Anna.

GISELLE

Oh.

MARIE

And my mom went by the name Amelia. I'm Anna Marie, and she's Anna Amelia.

GISELLE

So, neither of you are Giselle.

MARIE

No.

GISELLE

Did you know of any Giselle's?

MARIE

I guess this place is named Giselle's B and B, but to be honest I never knew why.

GISELLE

How did you get this house?

MARIE

My mom bought it when an old man moved out. Then she turned it into this B&B.

GISELLE

So then she might know!

MARIE

I don't know. I feel like it's a long shot that she'd know your dying words. And she's dead now.

GISELLE

But she named it after me, right? There's got to be something there! Let's get Dana to contact her!

MARIE

Contact my mom? But that's— *(Reading the monitor.)* 125. Calm down, calm down. I'm not even scared.

GISELLE

But the man she bought it from had to have been my husband! Your mom must have met him, right? Otherwise, why would she name it after me?

MARIE

I thought the name "Giselle" was supposed to make it elegant-sounding or something. She never mentioned naming it after someone.

GISELLE

We have to contact her!

MARIE

I'm not sure that—

GISELLE

Go get Dana.

MARIE

Can't you—

GISELLE

Get her.

Something about GISELLE's demeanor has changed. She is scarier. And MARIE's heart rate hits 129.

MARIE

The door is locked!

With a lightning flash and sudden crack of thunder, the door swings open and DANA is standing right there. MARIE yelps and her heart rate goes up to 137. An alarm in DANA's hand goes off.

DANA

Looks like it broke 130.

MARIE

You're not supposed to scare me! Why were you just standing there?

DANA

I saw your heart rate hit 129, and I wanted to be nearby when it happened. Looks like Giselle opened the door right as I got here.

GISELLE

Dana, I have a new idea, and I need your help.

DANA

What's up?

GISELLE

We need to contact her mother.

DANA

Is her mom your daughter?

MARIE

No! My mom's name is Amelia!

GISELLE

Her mother bought the property from my husband. She might know something.

MARIE

I doubt she does. And I don't approve of contacting her! What about consent? I don't consent to letting you contact my mom! Even if I did believe in this, I've barely made peace with everything that happened, and now you want me to wake the dead?

GISELLE

Not you. Her.

MARIE

No. Let her be at peace.

DANA

Well, if she comes here, that means she was never at peace. She's probably stuck here.

GISELLE

Like me. But maybe talking to you could bring her peace.

DANA

What would you say if you could talk to your mom again?

MARIE

Nothing.

DANA

Really?

MARIE

I don't want to talk to her again.

DANA

Are you scared to talk to her?

MARIE

No!

DANA

Your heart rate says otherwise.

MARIE

I'm just worked up! And anxious! And I don't really believe in any of this anyway, but now I'm talking like I do — and I don't — but there is a small part of me that wonders, "What if it is real? What if I do see my dead mom? And what if she hates me?"

DANA

I doubt someone who hated you would turn her business over to you before she died.

MARIE

No. She didn't hate me then. But her beloved business is dying, and now I'm trying to turn it into some gimmicky "haunted hotel." I think that's reason enough to start to hate someone.

Beat.

GISELLE

Let me say something. Clearly you're concerned that you're desecrating your mother's business. But you're not concerned enough that you're not still going through with it, so you may as well actually talk it over with her. If you don't talk to her when you have the chance, then you're going to be hung up on this for the rest of your life. To the point that it might affect you in the afterlife. You might end up like me — unable to move on from a thought to cross over.

DANA

And, I don't know if this is a selling point or not, but since I'm not very good at what I do right now, there's a chance that I'm not even able to contact her.

MARIE

To be honest, I was becoming convinced, but now I'm unconvinced again.

DANA

But, I did get Giselle here! Maybe I just lost my groove for a bit, and it's back now. It's worth a shot, right?

MARIE

I still don't fully believe any of this, but...

DANA

You've got nothing to lose if it doesn't work.

GISELLE

And you have your mother's approval to gain if it does.

MARIE

Fine.

DANA

Let me get the candles, but sit down and hold hands.

DANA starts setting up the candles.

MARIE

She has to be here too?

GISELLE

I also have things I want to ask your mother.

DANA

Both of you are essential to this process. It's one thing to call out for any spirit, but to summon someone specific, I need Marie to be the beacon that reaches out to her mom because she has that personal connection, and Giselle is like an antenna to the spirit realm. It's more likely it will work this way.

All three hold hands. MARIE squirms at GISELLE's touch.

DANA

Oh, you've never touched a spirit before. It's a strange sensation, but you get used to it after a while. Now hold still and close your eyes. *(As part of the seance.)* Spirits of the world, please help me find the mother of this woman here. *(To MARIE)* Did you say your mom's name was Amelia?

MARIE

Yes.

DANA

Please help us locate the woman, “Amelia,” who is the mother of Marie. *(To MARIE)* Now, just think to her. Think all the thoughts you want to communicate to her.

Silence.

MARIE

I don’t think this is working.

GISELLE

Because you don’t believe.

MARIE

I’m believing as much as someone like me can. Maybe it’s not working because Amelia was her middle name. Her full name is Anna Amelia Blossoms.

DANA

In theory, a full name doesn’t actually— Never mind. I’ll try again. With confidence and with her full name, in case it makes a difference. Spirits of the world, please lead us to Anna Amelia Blossoms. Now Marie, keep thinking to her.

MARIE

Maybe I don’t know how to “think to her.”

DANA

Then talk out loud. It’s less private, but the important thing is that you try to communicate with her.

MARIE

Mom? Are you there? It’s me, Marie. You probably know that. I don’t know why I feel like I need to say who I am. If you’re there. If any of this is real. Are you there? Mom? I want to talk to you again. One last time. I just want to know if I’m disappointing you. I don’t know what I’m supposed to do. I’ve tried all the traditional advertising methods, but nobody’s interested. So I had this idea, and I want to know if you approve of it. I— I don’t want to do something that you’d disapprove of. Or make you angry. I’ll give it up if you are. I just—

DANA (as AMELIA)

I'm not angry. I'm not disappointed.

MARIE

Dana, are you trying to—

GISELLE

That's your mother, Marie.

MARIE

What...? In Dana...?

AMELIA

This is all I'm able to sustain at the moment.

GISELLE

Do you know the old man who sold you this property?

AMELIA

Let me speak to my daughter first.

MARIE

No, first you need to prove that you're actually my mom and not just Dana playing some trick.

AMELIA

When you were in high school, I helped you plan how to ask Taylor to homecoming. You always sleep with your stuffed tiger. You didn't stop wetting the bed until—

MARIE

Okay, I'm convinced!

AMELIA

Now, why do you think I'd be disappointed in you?

MARIE

Because this was your passion project. And I'm worried I'm ruining it.

AMELIA

I just wanted to create a business that I enjoyed in my life. I only handed it down as I was dying because you seemed interested in keeping it going.

MARIE

So you don't care what I do with it?

AMELIA

I want you to find your own passion project. Whatever that looks like. Even if that means stepping away from the hotel.

MARIE

Or transforming it?

AMELIA

Or transforming it.

MARIE

So if I turn it into a haunted hotel...?

AMELIA

You have my permission, though really, you never needed it.

MARIE

Mom, I miss you.

AMELIA

I miss you too.

MARIE hugs AMELIA, but then has a realization that it's not her mom's body.

MARIE

Oh. Was that—

GISELLE

Can I ask my question now?

AMELIA

You want to know about your husband, is that right?

GISELLE

Yes. I don't know what my dying words to him were. I worry it was important, and I've forgotten it.

AMELIA

I can't help you remember something.

GISELLE

But you met him, right?

AMELIA

When I was alive, yes, but if you can't contact him now, then I certainly can't. Not until I cross over, and then, you know.

GISELLE

But I know he must have mentioned me to you! Isn't this place called Giselle's B and B?

AMELIA

Yes, he told me that the house was a product of your love, and that whatever I did, you needed to be in its name.

MARIE

I probably shouldn't change the name then.

GISELLE

No, you can call it whatever you want. I think my husband was just trying to honor his promise to remember me in — Wait! That's it! Those were my dying words! "Remember me in everything you do." Thank you! Thank you, Amelia! That's exactly what I needed. I can finally cross over now.

AMELIA

Go and find the bridge, Giselle. I'll see you there.

GISELLE

Yes! Thank you!

MARIE

Wait! Who's going to haunt my hotel now?!

*GISELLE gets up and begins to walk away.
MARIE tries to stop her, but she can't grab
on. GISELLE exits the stage, entranced.*

MARIE

Giselle! Giselle! Wait! I'm a believer now! Please just stay a little bit! Just enough to earn the reputation of being haunted!

AMELIA

She's on her way now.

MARIE

Mom, what am I supposed to do now?

AMELIA

Our connection is weakening without her. I don't think I can stay much longer. It's going to be my turn to cross soon too.

MARIE

Mom, no! Don't go! Mom! You have to help me!

AMELIA

I love you, Marie.

MARIE

Mom! You can be the ghost in my hotel! Please stay here! Just for a while!

AMELIA

I can't stay here. I'm only using this medium's body temporarily. I'm too far away.

MARIE

Please! Just for a year! Or a month! Or a week! Just enough so that someone can see that this place has a real ghost!

AMELIA

The connection is fading, Marie.

MARIE

No! We'll find a way!

AMELIA

Ask the medium...

AMELIA/DANA isn't able to sustain the connection anymore.

MARIE

The medium? Dana? Ask her what? Can she bring you back?

DANA

What?

/MARIE

Dana? Are you back? Or are you still my mom?

DANA

I guess your mom used me to talk to you. I've heard of it happening, but never — but if — then that — I actually did it! It worked! This is great! I've got my gift back, baby!

MARIE

No. It didn't work. Giselle left and my mom is gone.

DANA

Giselle crossed over?

MARIE

Yeah, my mom actually was able to tell her something useful. She remembered her dying words.

DANA

And how did your conversation with your mom go?

MARIE

She was fine with it. She gave me permission. She said I didn't even need it. I tried to get her to stay but she couldn't. So how am I supposed to do this? I thought I could just hire someone to rig something, but I have to be honest; after experiencing that, I need a real ghost. My hotel has to actually be haunted. But we don't have anyone now. Unless we contact Giselle again! Let's do the thing we did with my mom to Giselle! I'll convince her to come back!

DANA

I don't think there's any convincing her. And I don't think we can reach her again without another spirit here being that antenna.

MARIE

Another spirit! We need another spirit! Get another spirit!

DANA

You said it yourself, I'm a fraud. My agency fired me because I can't consistently do this.

MARIE

But you've done it twice in a row now. You've made me, the skeptic, a believer. If you do it one more time, then surely... *(An idea.)* Wait! If we can get another spirit here, then we can have them haunt the hotel on the condition that we help them cross over — kind of like we did with Giselle! We'd be helping the ghosts, and they'd be helping my business! It's perfect!

DANA

But I don't—

MARIE

I'd pay you. Consistently. If you get me another ghost, then I'll pay you again.

DANA

You haven't even paid me for this job.

MARIE pulls out the check.

MARIE

It's yours. You fulfilled your contract and scared me.

DANA

But it's not haunted anymore.

MARIE

Unless you stay with me and find another one. What were you going to do after this? Your agency fired you.

DANA

I was going to go back and show that... *(She reads the check.)* Wow! This is way more than I asked for!

MARIE

I knew that if you scared me, then you'd really have earned it. Stay with me. I believe in you and what you can do. You helped me talk to my mom! And even if you have bad days — even if there are months that you can't get anyone to haunt this place — you have my trust.

DANA

But if I'm never able to contact another spirit, then your business...

MARIE

You were so confident a minute ago when you realized you did it again! You said you got your gift back! Where did all that go?

DANA

But if I am not able to be consistent, then it's the same. You'll just...

MARIE

I'll have you work the front desk too. What if we gave it a year? You'll have a job here with the only condition being that sometime within that year you summon another ghost. And I promise I won't fire you before then.

DANA

(Interested, but skeptical.) And you have enough money to keep this going another year?

MARIE

I'll take out some loans if I need to. But I'm confident that it's not going to take that long. What have you got to lose?

DANA

Well, nothing. If you're willing to take a risk with me, then...

MARIE

Then it's a deal!

MARIE hugs DANA with excitement. DANA is unsure how to react at first, but hugs her back.

DANA

Pleasure doing business, partner.

Blackout.