

"The Ghost of Lamford Castle"

Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. PUB - EVENING

In a tiny English tavern, a few LOCALS sit drinking. JACK, a young American man, approaches the bar.

JACK

Hi. I'll have a pint of whatever's  
cheapest.

The BARTENDER pours him a drink. A BARFLY notices him.

BARFLY

Ey, up. Are you American?

JACK

Yeah.

BARFLY

What brings you 'round here, then?

JACK

I was visiting my grandparents in  
Manchester.

BARFLY

Manchester! But that's miles away.

JACK

I'm on my way back right now. But  
I'm a paranormal investigator, and  
I've read that Lamford is one of  
the most haunted villages in all of  
Britain, so I thought I'd do some  
field work.

BARFLY

What, you're a ghost hunter?

JACK

Yeah, twelve years now. It's a fun  
job. Pays well, too, if you know  
how to market yourself.

BARFLY

People pay for that sort of thing?

JACK

Oh, yeah. Old money inherits a creaky house, weird stuff happens, they want answers. Happens all the time.

BARFLY

...ghosts? Happen all the time?

JACK

Well, no, not really. Every case I've ever taken has been totally explainable. Usually structural stuff like loose hinges or sloped floors. But supernatural encounters can sometimes have really bizarre origins. This one time, I checked out a house where the plumbing was vibrating at the exact resonant frequency of the human eyeball. You know how you see spots when you rub your eyes? Well, if you stood in the basement in just the right spot, the sound waves would do that and make you see figures out of the corner of your eyes.

The barfly rubs his eyes to test.

JACK (CONT'D)

The human psyche is surprisingly powerful. When it comes to things that only exist in the mind, there's a fine line between belief and reality. And honestly, I'm starting to doubt that ghosts really exist.

BARFLY

No(!)

JACK

Yeah. But I've been doing this for years now--maybe I've gotten too comfortable to try anything else. Anyway, if there really are such things as ghosts, then I'm sure I'll find one around here. So, do you happen to know about any haunted spots nearby?

BARFLY

Well, I never believed in ghosts till I visited the ruins of Lamford castle, just past the train station. They say that back in the Middle Ages, it got attacked by an army that came from nowhere and left no trace... and no survivors. No one knows what happened. But at night, you can still hear the screams.

JACK

Fascinating. And you've experienced this yourself?

BARFLY

Oh, sure. Once, in sixth form, me mates dared me to spend the night in the ruins. The sounds didn't scare me. But then I sat and I waited, and I started to see... things. I don't know what. Maybe you could figure it out, eh?

JACK

Oh, I'm definitely going to try!  
Thanks!

He pays for his drink and heads out.

BARTENDER

"Lamford castle"? The leftovers from that old film set?

BARFLY

"Paranormal investigator". What a nutter.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

Jack arrives in what remains of an opulent courtyard, holding a hand scanner, and begins exploring.

JACK

Hello? My name is Jack Cantrell, and I come in peace. I wish to commune with the spirits of Lamford castle. If you can hear me, please give me a sign.

A sudden gust of wind blows by.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ah, aha! I recognize your presence, spirit. Can you show yourself?

For a long while, nothing happens at all.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, he said he sat and waited.

He sits down.

JACK (CONT'D)

I can wait for you, spirit. Show yourself in your own time.

Hours pass.

EXT. RUINS - MORNING

As dawn breaks, Jack struggles to stay awake. Suddenly, he sees her: LADY GENEVIEVE OF LAMFORD, a young woman in colorful medieval dress, standing with her back to him. She is out of focus and partially transparent.

Jack jumps to his feet and points his scanner at her. It does nothing.

JACK

Cheap Chinese crap. Hello! Are you the spirit of this castle? My name is Jack.

She turns to look at him. She looks frightened, and her voice echoes unnaturally.

GENEVIEVE

Hello? Where am I? What happened?

JACK

A real ghost! Can you hear me?

GENEVIEVE

Yes, I can. Where am I? It's so cold. I'm frightened.

JACK

Relax, I'm here to help. What's the last thing you can remember?

GENEVIEVE

I retired to my bedchamber. Then I heard screaming, there were blades and fire and blood, and then... nothing. Absolutely nothing.

JACK

It's alright. Just relax. Now, can you tell me your name?

GENEVIEVE

My name... I can't remember.

JACK

Just think. What's the first thing that comes to mind?

GENEVIEVE

Genevieve... I think my name is... Lady Genevieve of Lamford.

JACK

"Lady Genevieve". You're royalty? Uh, Your Highness?

GENEVIEVE

Well, I must be, mustn't I? Oh, it's so difficult to remember! What happened to me?

JACK

You died, My Lady. Hundreds of years ago.

GENEVIEVE

What?

JACK

An army attacked your castle. There were no survivors. I'm sorry.

She begins to cry.

GENEVIEVE

I'm dead. And yet, I've not passed on. Does Heaven not await me?

JACK

I'm sure it does. You just have some unfinished business here.

GENEVIEVE

All I wish is that I had not spent my final moments alone. But... you are here. For some reason, I trust you, Jack. Would you remain by my side as I rest?

JACK

Of course, My Lady.

He sits down and she curls up on the grass. Almost immediately, he falls asleep, and she fades away.

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

Jack wakes up, alone.

JACK

Whoa... what a dream.

He checks the time on his cell phone.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

He gets up and runs off for the nearby train station.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Back in America, Jack sits in his living room with his roommates KAYLA and CARTER.

JACK

...and that kebab place was still there. Still hadn't done anything about the rat problem.

CARTER

But were the kebabs as good as you remember?

JACK

Oh, even better.

KAYLA

Alright, Jack, enough dodging the big question. You have to tell us: Did you finally catch a ghost?

JACK

For the last time, I'm not a Ghostbuster. I just investigate potential instances of paranormal activity--

CARTER & KAYLA

--instances of paranormal activity.

CARTER

Come on, you know what she means. You were going to that haunted village.

JACK

Okay, well, I went there...

KAYLA

And?

JACK

And nothing. I mean, I had a weird dream, but nothing out of the ordinary. The spectro-spectrometer never logged anything, there were no physical signs, nothing.

KAYLA

Almost like ghosts don't exist.

JACK

Look, I don't mind if you're a skeptic, but this is my job, okay? And last I checked, I was earning more than enough by doing it, and I'm still kinda jet lagged, so could you just give it a rest?

KAYLA

Alright! Sorry.

CARTER

You just need to unwind. We got some new stuff in at the dispensary last week. Wanna try it?

JACK

Sure.

Carter grabs a jar, pipe, and lighter from a nearby table, and begins preparing it.



CARTER

Any for you, Kayla?

KAYLA

No thanks, I work tomorrow. In fact, I should probably turn in now. You boys have fun.

JACK

Alright, good night.

CARTER

Night, babe.

KAYLA

Good night.

Kayla kisses Carter and leaves.

CARTER

You first.

JACK

Thanks, man.

Jack takes the pipe and smokes, then hands it to Carter, who finishes it off.

JACK

Oh, wow, that hits hard and fast.

CARTER

Right? I've got my famous corn on a bun on standby in the freezer.

JACK

Hey, Carter? Be honest: Do you believe in ghosts? I mean, now that the missus isn't here.

CARTER

I don't know, man. Whenever you get back from a job, you talk about how everything was really some Scooby-Doo villain using special effects to terrorize a golf course or whatever.

JACK

That only happened once, and it was a hotel. But listen: When I went to Lamford, I think I really did see a ghost.

CARTER

You're shitting me.

JACK

No. I mean, I was really tired, but this was more real than any dream I've ever had. There was this girl, Lady Genevieve, who died in the Middle Ages. I didn't really see her with my eyes, but it was like... I could tell how she looked.

CARTER

So was she a spooky ghost girl or a sexy ghost girl?

JACK

Oh, come on. I'm serious!

CARTER

Yeah, so am I.

JACK

Fine. I guess she was... pretty.

CARTER

Aw, yeah! You saw some haunted hooters? Phantom fanny? Some, uh... ghostussy?

JACK

Come on, don't be a perv. She died, like, a thousand years ago. You're getting horny for someone whose body is just, I don't know, bone fragments.

CARTER

I bet you wanted to bone her fragments.

Jack tries to get angry at this, but laughs instead.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Look, I believe that you believe you saw a ghost. But I also believe that you're wacko, Jacko. Oh, dang! Wacko Jacko! How did we never think of that until now?

JACK

I think you've said that before.

CARTER

Yeah... I probably did. Hey, how's the weed, by the way?

JACK

It's nice, thanks. Little strong for me, but I think I'm keeping it together.

CARTER

Really? 'Cause I'm swimming right now. Holy hell.

JACK

Yeah, this is making me drowsy more than anything. I'm going to bed.

CARTER

Nightstimes, Del Boy.

JACK

What?

CARTER

I don't know, it's something from The Jeffersons.

Jack exits.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack stumbles on his way to the bed. He laughs.

JACK

Maybe it's hitting harder than I thought. Huh, look at me, talking to myself. Like a wacko. Carter was right. Well, hello, nobody. I'm here talking to you!

GENEVIEVE

But you're speaking to me.

He turns around to see Genevieve standing right behind him. He suppresses a scream.

JACK

Genevieve! What are you doing here? Didn't you pass on?

GENEVIEVE

I know not what has happened, only that I find myself with you once again.

JACK

Damn it. Damn it! You've latched on to me somehow. Like I picked you up by hanging around your castle. You're a spiritual bedbug!

GENEVIEVE

I wish you no harm, Jack. The reason I find myself here is as much a mystery to me as it is to you.

JACK

So you're not doing this on purpose?

GENEVIEVE

I see no reason for doing so.

JACK

Once I sober up, I'm gonna figure this out.

GENEVIEVE

Might I remain here with you again?

JACK

Ugh, that's probably what caused this in the first place. But fine. Why not? I need to change, though. Do you mind stepping out for a second?

GENEVIEVE

Very well.

She floats backwards and phases through the door. Jack stares in disbelief, then begins undressing.

JACK

So, uh... what did you used to do for fun?

GENEVIEVE

For fun?

JACK

Yeah. You know, when you weren't holding court or whatever it is you did. How did you like to spend your free time?

GENEVIEVE

It's still so difficult to remember, but I believe I often dreamt of the heavens. Of how the stars moved in the sky. Oh, how I wished to hear the music of the spheres!

JACK

So physics and math and stuff?

GENEVIEVE

I suppose. At times, I imagine such things to be words in the language of creation.

Jack finishes changing. Without being told, Genevieve returns.

JACK

Yeah, I sort of see that. I heard somewhere that, if we ever meet aliens--uh, visitors from beyond this world--the easiest way to show them that we're intelligent would be to give the proof for the Pythagorean theorem.

GENEVIEVE

And what is this proof?

JACK

Well, two sides of an isosceles triangle--no, a right triangle--the square of those sides... oh, I can't explain right now.

GENEVIEVE

I think I understand. Take that painting....

She points to a painting on the wall consisting of a large square canvas with a rotated square, its points touching the edge of the canvas, inside.

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

There are four identical triangles. The canvas has sides as long as the sum of the triangles' shorter edges, and the edges of the square in the middle are equal to the triangles' longest edge.

JACK

I still don't know what you mean.

GENEVIEVE

Let me show you. I think I can.... Close your eyes and clear your mind.

He does. We see, superimposed in the same way she is, the painting warp into an algebraic proof of the Pythagorean theorem. He gasps.

JACK

Clever! Oh, you're very clever.

GENEVIEVE

Am I? Yes... I suppose I am, aren't I?

JACK

I'm serious. I've had that thing since I was a kid, and I've never thought of that. I've gotten pretty good at deduction, but I could never wrap my head around math stuff.

GENEVIEVE

Oh, you're too kind.

JACK

So Genevieve, if you don't mind me asking, how old are you?

GENEVIEVE

I died in the year of our Lord 1208. What year is it now?

JACK

I mean, how old were you when....

GENEVIEVE

I was twenty-three. And, alas, never married. I'm an old maid, I'm afraid.

JACK

No, that's actually young by today's standards. People live a lot longer now. Or maybe that's just a myth, but still. Anyway, if--and I'm not saying this'll happen, but if you can't pass on, and you're stuck haunting me, do you think you'd be okay?

GENEVIEVE

I could think of worse afterlives than this. If I must stay here, I would be honored to stay as your friend.

JACK

Friend, right. That's probably a good idea. Let's try to learn more about you tomorrow.

He gets into bed. She follows.

GENEVIEVE

Good night, Jack.

JACK

Good night, Genevieve.

Fade to:

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jack wakes up and looks around. Genevieve is nowhere to be seen, at least for now. He goes to his computer and begins research.

There are no relevant search results for "Lamford Castle" or "Lady Genevieve of Lamford". On a street view, a building near the supposed castle is marked "Dancing Swan Cinema". Lamford's Wikipedia page notes that the village was once home to a film studio called Dancing Swan, best known for their adaptation of the fantasy novel Blind the Wind. He finds a torrent of the movie and watches it, skipping around until he finds this scene:

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

THORIL, a barbarian warrior, approaches a well and lifts a pail of water. The sorcerer NEAVE approaches behind him.

THORIL

Blast that Druthwyn! May the gods spit upon his grave.

He splashes some water into his face.

NEAVE

What ever shall you do? Even the magics of my ancestors cannot protect us from his dark guardians.

THORIL

No. But suppose there's another way into his tower.

NEAVE

Is the great Thoril Moravyn finally thinking with more than his sword?

THORIL

Don't let's bring that up again, Neave. Follow me. I have an idea.

Thoril leads the way to the same ruined courtyard that Jack visited in Lamford. He draws his sword and aims it at the center. Glowing runes appear on the ground.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jack watches the movie in horror. Pan over to show Genevieve now standing over his shoulder.

JACK

It was a movie set from the '70s. There was no Lamford Castle.

GENEVIEVE

But there must have been. How else could I be here?

JACK

I really am going crazy.

GENEVIEVE

What?



JACK

Of course. You somehow speak Modern English, there's no record of your life or your kingdom, your castle never existed. The first time I saw you, I was sleep deprived, and the second time I was high. I must have already been cracking. I'm going insane!

GENEVIEVE

If you are, indeed, mad, what of me? Who am I?

JACK

You're... a symptom. I need to go.

He runs off.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Jack runs outside and heads for his car. Genevieve stands beside the driver's door.

GENEVIEVE

Where are you going?

JACK

I don't even know. A psychiatrist?

GENEVIEVE

And what do you wish to accomplish?

JACK

I don't know! Getting rid of you, I guess.

GENEVIEVE

But I've done you no harm! If you feel you need help, so be it, but please, please let me remain. This is the closest I've come to being alive in over eight hundred years. Perhaps the closest I've ever been.

JACK

Okay, you haven't hurt me yet. But what if you try something?

GENEVIEVE

I have no body. Even if I wanted to, what could I do? And besides, right now, you're not the one being threatened with oblivion.

JACK

Yeah, but... you aren't real.

GENEVIEVE

What does it mean to be real? You once said, 'when it comes to things that only exist in the mind, there's a fine line between belief and reality.'

JACK

Okay, fine. So?

GENEVIEVE

Who are you, really? What is "Jack" but a place in your mind whence come certain thoughts and feelings? A character your brain invented that it might better understand the world around it? Are you not merely a figment of your own imagination? If so, how am I any different?

JACK

I guess you have a point. How did you ever think of that?

GENEVIEVE

You believed I existed, which caused me to exist. You made me believe I was clever, meaning....

JACK

Oh, Genevieve, thank you. Thank you! And I can at least tell that you don't physically exist, so I probably don't have psychosis. Maybe I'm not normal, but at least I'm well. We'll figure this out.

GENEVIEVE

That may be reason to seek psychiatric help: Not to destroy me, but to help us learn to live in harmony.

They smile. He opens the door and they both get into the car.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

One year later. Carter sits watching TV. Genevieve, using the body that was once only Jack's, sits at a desk working on a laptop. A spectral Jack stands beside her. Enter Kayla, holding a few envelopes. She gives one to Genevieve.

KAYLA

Hey, Jenny. Letter for you.

GENEVIEVE

Aha! My title. Thank you.

She opens the envelope.

CARTER

Are you getting your own car?

GENEVIEVE

No. This is a title of nobility, issued by the Principality of Sealand. Though it's not recognized by other nations, at least in one small country I'm recognized as an individual. And, at last, I can officially call myself Lady Genevieve.

JACK

Those titles are a scam.

GENEVIEVE

(Mind voice)

You also think that Cabbage Patch Kids are a scam.

JACK

You get an adoption certificate, but you can't claim them as dependents on your tax return. That's the definition of a scam.

Genevieve laughs. The others notice.

KAYLA

What's so funny?

GENEVIEVE

Oh, Jack's just said something starkers again. What matters is, this is the most life affirming thing since we learned to switch.

CARTER

It's still so weird, seeing you two use that body like a timeshare.

GENEVIEVE

If I weren't here, do you think we would be taking engineering courses? Jack would still be in a rut, pretending to believe in ghosts.

JACK

I'm still trying to keep an open mind.

KAYLA

It looks like being plural has helped you guys so much. I've been wondering... is it possible to make a headmate on purpose?

GENEVIEVE

We can certainly point you in the right direction.

CARTER

Hang on, am I about to get a second girlfriend? Or a boyfriend? Nice.

GENEVIEVE

(Mind voice)

Oh, Jack, thank you for awakening me. I love you.

JACK

I love you too.

For a moment, Genevieve and Jack both become solid and the world around them fades. They hug.

THE END