

GISS OF DEATH

By Kelly Meadows

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CHARACTER LIST

LISA - A bratty “popular” girl of about 16

CARSON - A more sensible but “unpopular” boy who goes to school with her, same age, and her date for the evening

LISA'S DEAD, BUT VERY CAFFEINATED, RELATIVES

GRANDMA - Disturbed from her eternal rest, resolves to teach LISA a lesson, more or less the “leader of the gang”

GRANDPA - Her husband

AUNT MARILYN - Prettier in death than in life, but not much

AUNT MOCHALATTÉ - An aunt

AUNT CARMELLATTÉ - An aunt

COUSIN COCOA - Thinks she's sexy... well once, maybe

UNCLE CAPPUCCINO - He's got an insult for everyone, but he's usually right!

GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT etc.
GRANDMA - She's been in this graveyard a long, long time.

UNCLE HENRY - Thinks he's King of England, or was that Queen of France? Who cares, as long as he can chop off some heads!

PRODUCTION NOTES

Ready for some gruesome make up? Some of these characters have been dead for a very long time. They don't look pretty, but have fun going for the ghoulish, both in makeup and costumes. If anyone wants to be really gross, but comically so, this is the time. This is a fast moving play with a lot of physical goings on, slapstick humor, and moving around on stage. Therefore, pay attention to the physicality of the show along with the delivery of the dialogue. You can get a good laugh not only from the dialogue, but also from how the characters react to how ugly everyone and everything is. Imaginative students can also have fun writing some epitaphs on the tombstones on the set.

LISA is of course the quintessential "popular girl," and CARSON, is a good kid but kind of nerdy at the same time. Keep that in mind as they react to the goings on, and as they 'grow' during the course of the show. Can they really rise to the occasion, or are they just doing what they have to do to get by?

The other characters all have their issues, which they have brought with them to the grave. GRANDMA and GRANDPA still argue, MARILYN is the "annoying aunt," HENRY is still dreaming about being King of England, and GREAT GRANDMA is cantankerous after several hundred years. And everyone is obsessed with a fresh cup of coffee.

PROPS

A bottle for HENRY
Severed head
Severed foot
Paper and pen for GRANDMA
Pills for GREAT GRANDMA

Paper coffee cups (with a warming sleeve) for the dead relatives. While they should carry them in, they can be put down and picked up when it helps the action.

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SETTING: A dark ugly old cemetery where all of LISA's relatives are buried. The stage should have a few (or several) tombstones, many of which can be conveniently shaped for people to sit on. LISA enters followed by CARSON; SHE's much more upbeat about this than HE is. They're both around 16 years old. SHE's one of the "popular" girls, HE's more of an "underling," but a nice guy on the whole who doesn't have a lot of experience with girls.

NOTES: *Since much is made of the dead rotting decomposed family, this play is a wonderland for folks who want to look like... well... dead, rotten, and decomposed corpses. The relatives can be in tattered and moldy clothes, and while most of them are recently deceased, GREAT GRANDMA, for instance, can wear period costume. HENRY might wear something that once looked like HE was royalty.*

LISA: **(goes up to a tombstone near center stage and drapes herself over it)** Isn't this romantic?

CARSON: **(afraid of the tombs, wants to get out of there)** No.

LISA: **(dreamy)** It's so quiet and peaceful.

CARSON: It's a cemetery!

LISA: **(losing her romantic posture)** Oh Carson, stop being a wuss.

CARSON: Lisa, I don't want to kiss in front of a bunch of dead people.

(HE tries to leave, and SHE grabs him, bringing him back. HE's a bit clumsy and almost falls over. CARSON gets pulled around a lot, so if HE can play it to a clumsy humorous effect, so much the better.)

LISA: Oh stop it. I bring all my boyfriends here to-

CARSON: **(regaining his balance)** You what?

LISA: **(getting out of it)** To... study my family history. **(points out various tombstones)** My grandparents are buried here **(indicates their graves)**, and my so are my Auntie Marilyn, my Aunt Carmellatté, Aunt Mochalatté, Cousin Cocoa, and my Uncle Cappuccino.

CARSON: Cappuccino? What did he die from?

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LISA: They all died young. Too much caffeine. **(points to a stone near the back)** Look, there's Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Grandmother... Or something like that.

CARSON: Ok, spare me the family record.

LISA: Look – we can't very well have a date at home with three little sisters and a parrot telling my father everything we were doing. We can't go to the library, although *you* probably think that's a *great* place to take a girl, and they just kicked us out of Starbucks.

CARSON: You wouldn't think...

LISA: No, you wouldn't. It's probably the first time anyone in our family got booted out of a Starbucks. **(aggressive)** Now... either kiss me, or it's goodbye forever.

CARSON: Forever? That's tempting. I wasn't enjoying myself that much anyway.

(Starts to leave)

LISA: **(pulls him back, almost into position to kiss)** Forever. **(HE still resists, so SHE motions around at the graves)** As you can see, Carson, forever is a mighty long time. **(as if SHE's a 'finer thing')** Just laying in the ground with no chance to taste the finer things in life.

CARSON: **(not impressed with LISA, looking her up and down)** I don't think I have that chance now.

LISA: **(not letting him get away)** You do, and you had better take it. Or I swear by my grandmother's grave that-

CARSON: Your grandmother's grave is over there, as long as you're swearing by it.

LISA: **(annoyed)** Oh, all right. **(Moves to GRANDMA's grave, over in a back corner of the stage.)** I swear by my grandmother's grave that I will never go out with you again!

CARSON: Sorry, Lisa, but this is not my idea of a good time.

LISA: **(almost shouting)** Carson, I demand you kiss me right now or it's over! It's over, do you hear me?

CARSON: **(wishes SHE would be quiet, backing away)** Lisa, everyone can hear you. You're loud enough to wake the dead. And **(scared)** this is not a good place to be quite that loud.

LISA: That is such a bunch of hocus pocus.

GRANDMA: **(enters, unhappy)** No, Lisa, it's not.

LISA: **(horrified)** Grandma?

GRANDMA: **(announcing herself with displeasure)** Grandma!

LISA: **(scared, runs behind CARSON, who's trying to move away as well)** But, you're dead.

GRANDMA: Most of the time, yes.

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LISA: But...

GRANDMA: It's awfully hard to rest when you're here making so much racket. I always told your mother you were nothing but trouble.

(CARSON tries to escape past her, but SHE reaches out and grabs his shirt or his collar) Where do you think you're going, young man??

CARSON: How about the land of the living?

GRANDMA: I wouldn't try it. You're just as responsible as she is. Coming here in the middle of the night like this. I demand to know exactly what you were doing!

LISA: We were...

GRANDMA: Oh... I know. **(Letting up a bit on her attitude, as well as CARSON.)** Your grandfather and I did the same thing.

LISA: **(approaches her just a bit, trying to reason with her)** Then you understand.

GRANDMA: Hardly. The older we get, the more unreasonable we become. You're going to make your grandfather turn over in his grave. Which is good, he needs the exercise.

CARSON: Lisa, let's get out of here.

LISA: No! **(confrontational, winding her way among the tombstones)** We're going to have this out. Grandma, you're dead. It was bad enough when you were walking this earth preaching your puritanical brand of unmitigated and outdated old school conservatism while masquerading it as modesty and decorum! **(GRANDMA and CARSON are, of course, amazed at her sudden burst of vocabulary.)** Now you're coming back from the grave to spoil what little fun I can have by escaping from my parents' lair.

CARSON: **(HE's been following her, trying to stop her, taps her on the shoulder)** Lisa!

LISA: **(whirls around)** What? This is my issue!

CARSON: **(wimpy, still afraid things might get worse)** Don't speak ill of the dead!

LISA: You have no idea what it was like having her around the house all the time! *Lisa don't do this, Lisa don't do that, Lisa stop it!* I thought the family name was Stopit!

GRANDMA: That's because you were a spoiled, incorrigible, foul-mouthed wretched little girl.

LISA: **(to CARSON)** She died when I was five.

GRANDMA: **(Still on a roll, following LISA, who tries to get away from her)** And look at you now. Traipsing around like some street corner trollop right in front of the family to make out with... **(up to CARSON, not liking what SHE sees)** that!

CARSON: I am not a *that*!

GRANDMA: I'll be the judge of *that*.

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LISA: **(more conversational)** He has self esteem issues. Deservedly so, but issues nonetheless.

GRANDPA: **(appears)** Mavis? What's going on? With all this racket I was about to turn over in my grave.

GRANDMA: I told you, you need to do that at least three times a day. You remember our granddaughter, Lisa.

GRANDPA: Ohhhh, yes. A spoiled, incorrigible, foul-mouthed, wretched young lady if there ever was one.

GRANDMA: **(aside to CARSON)** What did I tell you?

LISA: **(to CARSON)** He just died last year.

CARSON: Well, he's right. I was just dating you to make Andrea jealous...

LISA: **(interjecting)** As if she cares.

CARSON: ...and to prove to Jim Riley that you'd go out with me.

LISA: Carson! I've never been so insulted!

CARSON: You should have been! And often! By somebody who knows how. Look, when you have *my* kind of self esteem problems, your motivations are occasionally suspect.

LISA: **(to her GRANDPARENTS)** Will you both go back to sleep? You're dead! You're nothing more than...

GRANDMA: **(laughs)** Figments of your imagination? My dear, *life* is a figment of your imagination. One day you'll wake up and realize that.

GRANDPA: **(thinks, giggles, and nudges GRANDMA)** Should we tell her?

GRANDMA: I guess so. **(approaches LISA, who doesn't appreciate it)** We're in the middle of a family get-together. That's why we're all buried **(motions around)** here. **(explains a bit more)** Well, let's just say we're not the most popular family in the place, so they try to confine us to a dark and ancient corner of the cemetery. Now, since you've come to disturb our peace with your secret make out session-

LISA: It was *supposed* to be secret, but you ruined it.

CARSON: Thank goodness. Let's get out of here, Lisa.

GRANDMA: **(jovial)** Oh, stay, young man. The two of you can be the *life* of the party.

(GRANDMA and GRANDPA start to laugh hysterically, and some other relatives, MARILYN, MOCHALATTÉ, CARMELLATTÉ, COCOA, and CAPPUCCINO, enter from all points of the stage to join in. LISA and CARSON try to escape, but there's a disgusting relative at every turn. Finally LISA runs square into AUNT MARILYN, who pinches her cheeks, LISA screams.)

MARILYN: Lisa! My how you've grown!

LISA: Aunt Marilyn! **(does a double take)** You look so nice!

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CARSON: **(scared out of his wits)** That's nice?

LISA: You should have seen her before the wreck.

MARILYN: **(to CARSON and pinches his cheeks too)** And he's so cute. Is this your new boyfriend? **(sarcastic)** Well, this week anyway. **(to CARSON)** She's trash! Dump her.

CARSON: **(frustrated)** I'm trying!

(tries to leave, but MARILYN pulls him back)

MARILYN: You're not going anywhere. Not until you meet the family.

CARMEL: **(they all have "to go" coffee cups, and they approach CARSON, who is disgusted)** I'm Aunt Carmellatté. Try me.

(holds the cup out for him, but HE refuses)

MOCHA: I'm Aunt Mochalatté. I burned to an ugly and unidentifiable death in a Starbucks fire. **(proud)** Ground roast to perfection.

CARSON: Gross!

MOCHA: **(not so proud)** No kidding. You should have seen my press-ons.

COCOA: I'm Cousin Cocoa. **(sexy, though without good reason)** They call me Hot Chocolate!

GRANDMA: Not anymore, you're more like-

GRANDPA: Nestlé's Quick! **(GRANDMA and GRANDPA both laugh)**

COCOA: That's not funny.

GRANDMA: Actually, it is.

CAPPUCCINO: I'm Uncle Cappuccino. **(HE hands LISA his cup)** Try me.

LISA: **(takes it)** How old are these?

CAPPUCCINO: Oh, we've had them awhile. They're quite strong, and ... dusty. **(LISA lifts the lid and looks into it, is disgusted, replaces the lid and hands it back.)** We scare the gravediggers sometimes and they run off and leave their coffee behind. It's about the only way to get a fresh cup.

MARILYN: **(to LISA, who's really creeped out)** Except for bringing new family into the party.

CARSON: **(looking at MARILYN, and talking to the sky)** I will never listen to Marilyn Manson again. I promise.

CARMEL: **(comes up to CARSON, laughing)** Promises, promises! Promises don't matter, because you're going to die eventually anyway. Next time I'll do better, they say! **(bratty, up to LISA)** If only you'd been nice to grandma! Ha! There is no next time. So you just keep being the brat you are, Lisa. You might as well enjoy your life. **(to GRANDMA)** She was lucky to be rid of you and your stifling

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matriarchal tyranny. **(to LISA)** Mavis wouldn't know a good time if it slapped her in the face!

GRANDPA: Really? Let's see! **(tries to slap GRANDMA)**

GRANDMA: **(stops GRANDPA, and slaps him instead)** You're hardly a good time. **(pleased to see more relatives)** Oh, look, here comes Great Great Great Great Great or however many Grandma and Uncle Henry!

(HENRY and GREAT enter. HENRY looks as if HE wants to be some sort of royalty.)

GREAT: **(miffed over the greats)** That's Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Grandma to you, and don't you forget it. What's going on?

MOCHA: Sourpuss.

GREAT: I don't know, Miss Mochalatté. I think I'm pretty great.

CARSON: Don't you have a husband around here somewhere?

GREAT: He never died. He didn't want to spend eternity with me.

LISA: You mean...?

GREAT: Yes, that's why you always have problems with the grandfather clock. They had to put him somewhere.

HENRY: **(oblivious to most things, but introducing himself)** I'm Henry, King of England.

CAPPUCCINO: You are not!

HENRY: I am, Cappuccino, I am.

CAPPUCCINO: You're nothing of the sort.

MOCHA: You're insane, Henry. Are you taking your pills?

HENRY: Pills?

GREAT: He's been out of them for 15 years. He's crazy, I tell you. King of England, King of Denmark. King of the Zulus, Queen of France...

CARSON: Queen of France?

GREAT: It's ugly, let me tell you.

HENRY: **(with a royal gesture)** "Let them eat coffee-cake!"

CARSON: **(looks around at these people)** You're all ugly. This is gross. Lisa, I didn't come here to...

GRANDMA: Yes, you did. You came here to kiss, neck, and otherwise carry on in front of a bunch of dead and rotting relatives. It shows absolutely no respect. And when you get here permanently, you'll be lucky if anyone lays a hand on you, let alone talks to you.

GREAT: You have to plan for your future. It's a long one.

CARSON: Well, what do you do at these family reunions?

GRANDMA: **(witchy)** I talk about Lisa's mother! And what a bad job she did with her daughter.

CARMEL: Actually, we like to kick up a little dust, don't we, Cappuccino?

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CAPPUCCINO: Wake the dead.

HENRY: **(in his own world)** Off with their heads!

CARSON: **(scared)** Whose head?

HENRY: **(upbeat, holds CARSON's head)** Anybody's head. I just like to see them roll. **(CARSON squirms away)**

GREAT: It's an obsession.

HENRY: When I was King of England-

COCOA: You were never King of England.

HENRY: **(with English accent)** When I was king of England I chopped off heads with promiscuous impunity. **(disappointed)** And now I see they're all reunited with their bodies.

GREAT: **(bringing up the ugly past)** And what happened when you were Queen of France? Didn't someone do the same to you? It wasn't such fun, was it?

HENRY: **(with French accent)** I was never Queen of France!

GREAT: You were a gravedigger in this very cemetery, is what you were. You even dug your own. **(to LISA, chuckling)** One day he fell in, and his wife said "Just leave him there."

CARSON: Your family doesn't seem to get along all that well.

GREAT: Not after 200 years here.

GRANDMA: **(taking charge, bringing LISA and CARSON to center stage)** Well as long as Lisa and Carson have graced us with their presence, I think we should all play a game!

MARILYN: **(cheery)** A game!

CARMEL: **(just as cheery)** Yes, a game. We have such a nice young living boy who's ripe for a kiss. How about Spin The Bottle?

CARSON: **(scared)** Spin The Bottle?

(HE tries to leave, but some of them bring him back.)

CAPPUCCINO: Count me out. We're not kissing cousins.

CARMEL: Good. We want Carson. We want a young man, not a withered old coot. **(MOCHA, CARMEL, COCOA, GRANDMA, GREAT, and MARILYN surround CARSON, who is very nervous about now)** We spin the bottle, and Carson gets to kiss whichever lovely young lady it lands on.

GRANDPA: **(to GRANDMA)** Mavis, you're married. Get out of there.

GRANDMA: I need some action. I'm sorry, Purvis.

LISA: Grandpa's name was Purvis?

GRANDMA: Yes. And who wants to kiss a man named Purvis? I didn't then, and I don't now. Now, who's got a bottle?

CARSON: No one, I hope.

CARMEL: Not me. And we're not spinning my latte. I don't want to lose a precious drop of caramel.

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MOCHA: Me either.

MARILYN: No bottle here. Well, I have a bottle of perfume. They buried it with me.

GRANDMA: **(sarcastically pleasant)** Oh, that hauntingly familiar stench! **(honestly)** I always thought it was tuna.

COCOA: We wanted to get rid of it. My husband buried me with sixteen years of *National Geographic* and my entire Precious Moments collection just to get them out of the house.

MARILYN: Cocoa! You didn't like my perfume?

COCOA: No, it was horrid. Add that to your current state of decomposition and you're absolutely putrid. **(MARILYN is peeved and sits on a tomb; COCOA goes to comfort her,)** We all are, dear. I just held up better.

(puts her hand up to her hair to show it off, and a large chunk comes out; SHE tosses it down to the ground)

CARMEL: Who has the bottle? **(running up to each one)** Cocoa? Mocha? Grannnnnnnnndpa? **(they all deny it, and SHE goes to CARSON)** I want my chance at this fresh young man. **(pause, as they all realize who has a bottle and they turn to HENRY)** Uncle Henry!!!!

HENRY: You stay away from me, Carmel, or I'll have your head...

LISA: Who'd want it?

HENRY: You keep quiet, or I'll have yours too.

GRANDMA: Now that's a trophy no one has any use for.

HENRY: Perhaps, but I *will* have it!

(HE starts to chase after LISA, winding in and out of tombstones.)

LISA: Carson, help!

CARSON: Nope, you dug your own grave on that one!

LISA: That's not funny.

CARSON: **(shrugs)** It was between that and "the plot thickens." **(more assertive)** Look, you got us into this mess, and it's your family.

LISA: Carson! I'm sorry, okay?

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