

GHOST MALL

by

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Characters

Christine Montague, early forties.

Bill Armstrong, mid-thirties.

Bashir Hassan, early fifties.

Dan Bauer, mid-forties.

Bettie Wilson, nearing sixty.

Jamal Dabney, a teenager

Tiffany Waters, a teenager

Setting

Ghost Mall is set in a City Council conference room and at the South Hill Mall demolition site.

ACT ONE

Scene One

The Subcommittee on the Future of the South Hill Property is convening for the first time. A conference room. The room is set up with chairs and a table and a screen upon which South Hill, a '70's mall, is projected. The mall has a kind of ethereal, sculptural grandeur—the gleaming city on the hill—in the way the light hits the beige brick, casting a silvery pinkish glow. “South Hill” in large red lettering, is inscribed over the entrance visible in the projection. At the same time, viewed from another angle, South Hill appears hideous, a monstrosity and eyesore. Perhaps the mall shifts in color, brightness and tone throughout the scene, projecting a spiritual and emotional life of its own.

Subcommittee members, Bashir Hassan, Dan Bauer and Christine Montague sit together with the sub-committee chair, Bill Armstrong, along with invited guest-committee member, Bettie Wilson.

CHRISTINE

That mall was haunted.

BILL

Christine?

CHRISTINE

Or cursed.

BILL

That's a little dramatic. Could we—

CHRISTINE

Haunted or cursed.

BILL

If we could—

CHRISTINE

I don't know which is worse.

BILL

If we could please stick with—

CHRISTINE

Is it worse to be haunted? Or worse to be cursed?

BILL

--the *facts*?

CHRISTINE

South Hill—

BILL

--was built too fast, that's all.

CHRISTINE

There were evil forces there since opening day.

BILL

Christine.

CHRISTINE

Or some pretty angry ghosts.

(There is silence. Bill waits, defeated.)

BILL

(after a time) Go on.

CHRISTINE

That's all I have to say.

BILL

Okay. Thank you for your contribution. If we could move on—

CHRISTINE

It shook. The mall shook.

(a pause)

BASHIR

(apologetically) I'm afraid Christine is right. The crystal and the dinnerware came crashing off the showroom shelf. Every time a heavy truck went by. Making its way up I-275. The mall vibrated.

CHRISTINE

And the crack that opened up the length of the floor? At the end of the west corridor?

BASHIR

That was Wieboldt's. They covered it over. With steel plates.

CHRISTINE

How about the sewer? Inside Gordon Jewelers? The line broke under the diamond counter. Right before Christmas.

BASHIR

That was 1984.

CHRISTINE

The same year the tornado hit it. Blew the roof off of the north wing.

DAN

On a positive note—

(They all look at him.)

South Hill was one of the first malls to get its own exit ramp.

CHRISTINE

(unimpressed) That mall shook. And excuse my French, it stunk.

BASHIR

Due to the flooding . . .

CHRISTINE

I don't know, honey. I'll grant you it flooded after every major storm. But that odor. That was something special. South Hill smelled like a sewer.

BILL

Christine.

CHRISTINE

(shrugging) I'm only saying.

BILL

Can we agree that South Hill had been dying for years? And move on –

CHRISTINE

The three deer that panicked in the parking lot and crashed through Penny's window?

BASHIR

Miraculously, one did survive.

CHRISTINE

They ran through that mall, past all the screaming shoppers, bloodied and terrified.

DAN

I don't think you can blame *that* on South Hill.

BASHIR

It was a ghastly tragedy.

CHRISTINE

I think we should have taken it as some kind of sign.

DAN

The deer have nowhere left to go.

BILL

So they went shopping!

(No one laughs.)

CHRISTINE

The side-walks were a law-suit waiting to happen.

I wonder why nobody sued?

BASHIR

Perhaps South Hill had some angels, too.

BILL

(with finality) The developers cleared the land, put in fill and built South Hill. On the fill, too fast. That's all. The rapid settling of the structure—

BASHIR

--If I might? The sidewalk had dropped 18 inches at last measurement!

CHRISTINE

The whole place was sinking!

(A pause. Bill has given up again, sits quietly.)

(a tinge of irony) The saddest day was when they turned the fountain off. And the rotating sculpture.

(pause)

You just knew it was over.

You knew.

But it kept going. It wouldn't die. It just wouldn't give up the ghost.

DAN

I maintain that South Hill was good for this city. In its time. And deserves, at least, that recognition.

BILL

Dan's right. A moment of silence for South Hill, Christine?

CHRISTINE

Very funny.

Name one good thing that mall did?

BILL

I'll name one. Jobs. I'll name two. Jobs. I'll name three—

CHRISTINE

Oh, there are plenty of jobs.

The best thing for it was getting sealed and shuttered. And we'll all be better off when the demolition's done.

BILL

(with satisfaction) The demolition has been completed.

BETTIE

(who has been following the discussion carefully, but silently, sits up) It has? Since when?

BILL

Ten o'clock this morning. South Hill Mall is gone.

TO READ THE WHOLE PLAY AND FOR ANY OTHER INQUIRES, PLEASE
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