

GHOST STORIES
By Emma Conner

TITLE SCREEN: Winter is the time for ghost stories.

PROLOGUE

A dark room. The PC stands among four ghosts. Each line is said upon interaction with one of the ghosts; after interaction, they begin to fade in and out and follow the PC.

GHOST 1

The nights are longer, you see. The ghosts need their time.

GHOST 2

So every year someone takes them out into the woods,

GHOST 3

where all the scents, feelings, warmths of the living are quieter.

GHOST 4

This year it's your turn to listen to their tales.

INT. MAIN CABIN ROOM - NIGHT

PC is in a small cabin, followed by the four ghosts. There is a fire in the fireplace, a bed, a table, and a chair. There is an exit north to the candle room, and south to the outside. Several objects are interactable.

SOUTH EXIT

It's dark and cold out there...

TEACUP

It's cold.

BED

(If the PC has not yet been to the candle room and lit all four of the candles)
I can't go to sleep until I light the candles.

(MORE)

BED (CONT'D)

(If the PC has lit all the candles; this results in a fade out and the game advancing to the next day.)

Good night, ghosts.

(If the PC is going to bed for their fifth night; the game ends on this narration)

Tomorrow, it'll be spring, and we'll go back to the village.

INT. CANDLE ROOM - NIGHT

The candle room is smaller, and contains only four unlit candlesticks upon pedestals. When the PC interacts with one, the candle is lit, and one of the ghosts following the PC leaves to stand by it.

CANDLE 1

It smells of pine smoke, ink-stained fingers, and a headache at the top of your spine.

CANDLE 2

It smells of leaf smoke, dusty earth, and flaking paint.

CANDLE 3

It smells of meat charring, pungent herbs, and a new moon.

CANDLE 4

It smells of hawthorn smoke, unwashed wool, and a crowded room.

ANY CANDLE

(If the PC has any items in their inventory, following the preceding dialog)

Should I leave an offering?

If the PC chooses to leave an offering, they will be directed to pick which item from their inventory to leave. Then, they will be shown the ghost dialog (See pg 6) that corresponds to the candle number and offering left, and returned to the candle room.

INT. MAIN CABIN ROOM - DAY

After sleeping, the PC again has all four ghosts following them. The exit south is now accessible.

TEACUP

Mmm, good morning.

EXT. CABIN CLEARING

The cabin is in the north of the screen, in a small clearing in the woods. There is a path with branches leading east, south, and west. The east branch leads to the campsite. The south branch leads to the mother-tree. The west branch is inaccessible.

WEST PATH

This path leads back to the village.

WEST PATH (CONT'D)

I can't take the ghosts this way.

EXT. MOTHER TREE

An area of woods that contains a fork in the path. The north exit leads back to the cabin clearing, and the two south exits both lead to the stream crossing. The area contains optional narration and two collectible pieces of wasp nest.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

Everyone says the mother-tree of this forest is somewhere around here, but no one can agree on which tree it is.

OPTIONAL NARRATION (CONT'D)

It's never spoken to you, whichever it is.

WASP NEST

A piece of last year's wasp nest, fallen from the tree and broken.

EXT. STREAM CROSSING

An area of woods that contains a stream, with a few large rocks forming a crossing. To the north, there is a fork in the path with two exits leading to the mother-tree. To the west is an exit to the stream bend. The area contains optional narration and two collectible river rocks.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

A line of deer footprints in the snow, leading off into denser forest.

RIVER ROCK

A small stone, worn smooth by the water.

EXT. STREAM BEND

The stream flows in from the west and bends to the north. A path runs along its eastern bank, with an exit to the west to the stream crossing, to the north to the west side of the lake, and a fork that leads to the east with an exit to the stone circle. This area includes optional narration.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

Some people claim if you sit still here long enough the river spirit will come out.

EXT. STONE CIRCLE

A stone circle dominates the northeast part of this area, surrounding a large mossy rock. There is a single exit west to the stream bend. This area includes optional narration and two collectible pieces of moss.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

Enough magic in the air to make your hair stand on end.

MOSS

A clump of moss growing on the stone.

EXT. LAKE WEST

The stream flows in from the south and widens to a large lake, which takes up most of the screen. There is a path in the southeast corner, and another in the northwest. The southeast path has an exit south to the stream bend and east to the east half of the lake. The northeast path has an exit north to the campsite, and contains optional narration and two collectible berries.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

Snow's melted a bit, and you see some snow fleas underneath.

BERRIES

Bright red berries, stark against
the bare branches.

EXT. LAKE EAST

The lake takes up the west half of the screen; there is a path that leads around the south bank of the lake and bends north to follow the eastern bank. There is an exit southwest to the west side of the lake and north to the fallen log. This area contains optional narration.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

You see beavers here sometimes, but
no sign of them today.

EXT. FALLEN LOG

The path leads from the south and bends west; to the southwest of the path is a clearing that contains a fallen log. There is an exit south that leads to the east side of the lake and west to the campsite. This area contains optional narration and two collectible pieces of fungus.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

A woodpecker rat-a-tats loudly. You
stop to look for it, but don't see
it before you get chilly.

FUNGUS

A shelf fungus, paths chewed into
it by beetles.

EXT. CAMPSITE

The path forks, with exits to the west, east, and south. The west exit leads to the cabin exterior, the south exit leads to the west side of the lake, and the east exit leads to the fallen log. There is a clearing that contains the remnants of a campfire. This area includes optional narration.

OPTIONAL NARRATION

In the summer, kids like to come
here to tell scary stories and
sleep under the stars.

EXT. ANY AREA - AFTER COLLECTING ANY TWO ITEMS

PLAYER CHARACTER

It's getting late... I should head home.

The player is taken back to the cabin exterior. If the player tries to take an exit away from the cabin, they are blocked, with narration.

EXIT NARRATION

It's getting dark.

The player can re-enter the cabin room at night, and is once again prompted to light the candles (pg. 1).

INT. GHOST DIALOG

A dark room, with only a ghost to interact with.

THE GRAVEKEEPER

(If moss was offered to the Gravekeeper)

If you spend long enough in an unchanging place you become an expert on all the things that change:

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

the slow wear of carved marble over many rainstorms, the creeping-up of ivy, the remnants of last years' leaves decaying.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

I like to sit on the back fence, my ghost drifting nearby, searching for deviations in her path between graves.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

I like to speak to her, and listen to her faraway voice. I like to imagine I can hear echoes of my words in hers, draw lines from my voice to hers and string them together into a conversation.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

But I have spent too long in this unchanging place to fool myself for long.

THE WITCH

(If moss was offered to the Witch)

Some days the village parents send their children to help me in the garden, if the weather is good and they can be spared from their lessons.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

Those are good days. I like to show them how to turn the soil, to share with them the names of herbs, and which ones can cure fevers, which ones soothe the mind, which ones make good soap.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

In the evenings I have to disappoint their parents, though, send them home with their children without pulling any of them aside, without whispering in any proud ears that their child has a knack for magic.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

I like that less, the expectant eyes, the occasional sigh; but they're good days, still.

THE SHEPHERD

(If moss was offered to the Shepherd)

Sheepdogs:

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

1. Rone, who grew as I grew, but learned much faster

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

2. Ayen, who once held a wolf at bay

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

3. Chance, who was always too small for her bark

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

4. Mickle, who loved to roll in the snow and track in great clumps of it

5. Sad-eyed Meander, who could always get an extra treat

THE SHOPKEEPER

(If moss was offered to the Shopkeeper)

She always got mad at me because I'd keep reading after she fell asleep. I miss half the story, she said.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

So stay awake, sleepy-butt, I said. Don't call me that, she said, and then we'd be arguing, and she'd forget.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I don't know how she did that.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I could never forget the things in the stories I read to her. I couldn't stop reading, even after I heard her breathing turn to snores.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

Strange landscapes, local magics, whole cities full of people.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

People who don't know you, and can't look at you with big sad eyes and tell you what a good brother you are, how you're growing up to look just like him.

THE GRAVEKEEPER

(If a river stone was offered to the Gravekeeper)

It's painful, to watch a ghost be born. Painful to the watcher, I mean.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

What does it matter, once you're dead, to be struggling, formless, an awkward mess of a being? But the living can't help but see pain in a writhing thing. The living can't help wanting to help.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

I saw many. Her ghost wasn't special. She wasn't graceful, spasming from the hard earth. Truth be told, I didn't notice her at all.

THE WITCH

(If a river stone was offered to the Witch)

By the time I take an apprentice I am already old.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

She is too, the shopkeeper's little sister, nearly grown by the time she shows me her gifts. She calls me foggy-head for the fine grey mist of my hair.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

I hope she will learn everything she needs before I am foggy-headed in truth; she is quick, clever, but I am tired.

THE SHEPHERD

(If a river stone was offered to the Shepherd)

Things I can't remember:

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

1. The names of the sheep born the year my mother first let me help with the lambing

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

2. How many journals I filled before the fire

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

3. The ways that my twin's laugh
was different than mine

THE SHOPKEEPER

(If a river stone was
offered to the Shopkeeper)
"Look after your sister when I'm
gone" is not a good thing to say to
a thirteen year old, I think. I
don't blame him. None of us know
how to die until we've done it.

THE GRAVEKEEPER

(If a wasp nest was offered
to the Gravekeeper)
A ghost can't love you. A ghost
can't know you at all.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

A ghost is an echo, a thread pulled
from the cloth of time.

THE WITCH

(If a wasp nest was offered
to the Witch)
The saying is, a witch is no baker,
and it's true how too much magic in
the air will kill your yeast.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

But we both find the unseen
surrounding us and nurture it, so
that it may help us later on. Yeast
or spirits, it's not so different.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

Are you listening, my pupil? Are
you writing this down?

THE SHEPHERD

(If a wasp nest was offered
to the Shepherd)
(MORE)

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

Songs my twin sang to me when we
took the sheep to pasture:

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

1. The fluffiest sheep in the whole
world

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

2. What are you always writing? Why
won't you let me see?

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

3. Hey diddle dee come eat grass
with me
4. What to do when your sister is
mean to you

THE SHOPKEEPER

(If a wasp nest was offered
to the Shopkeeper)

Once when she was nearly grown I
left for a week, walked to the next
town over.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I'm not accustomed to traveling. It
took me half the time I said I'd be
gone just to get there.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I stayed one night at the inn and
left in the morning.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

That night it was just me and a
serving boy and the old townsfolk
who never left.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

The boy was my age, more or less,
and he told me the town gossip, and
I told him things I'd made up about
being a traveler, stories about
places I'd never been.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

At the time, I thought he believed
me. His eyes were dark and kind. I
thought about kissing him, and
didn't.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I can't remember his name.

THE GRAVEKEEPER

(If fungus was offered to
the Gravekeeper)

You spend too much time among the
dead, my daughter, they said to me.
You're starting to sound like one
of them.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

Please, won't you come home more,
they said.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

It's just that we worry.

THE WITCH

(If fungus was offered to
the Witch)

Can I tell you a secret? I was a
sloppy child.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

There are few who would believe
this, and fewer still who know
firsthand, but it's true. It's hard
for me to remember a time as a
child when I wasn't dirt-covered,
scraped up, causing havoc.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

My precision is inherited from long
hours, one too many brew gone
wrong. I wear it easily, after a
lifetime. It might as well be my
nature.

THE SHEPHERD

(If fungus was offered to
the Shepherd)

Flowers I've pressed in the pages
of this journal:

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

1. Queen Anne's Lace that used to
grow by the edges of the pastures

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

2. A daisy that my love tucked
behind my ear the day we first met

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

3. A lily petal, from a funeral

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

4. A cardinal flower, from that day
by the river

THE SHOPKEEPER

(If fungus was offered to
the Shopkeeper)

The store was my father's, and his
parents', and probably one of their
parents before that. I didn't ask.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I always thought, once she grew up,
that's when I would go. But by then
it was the whole village that
needed me. Who else would know how
to find them their spices, their
special fabrics, parts for their
tools?

THE GRAVEKEEPER

(If berries were offered to
the Gravekeeper)

When I was a child I liked to dig.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

I liked the physical motion, the
effort that drives worry out, and I
liked the idea of it, of disrupting
the age-long continuity of the
earth, just a little. Of finding
hidden things, long-forgotten.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

The fact that I never found
anything more exciting than a few
old animal bones never really
dampened my enthusiasm any.

THE GRAVEKEEPER (CONT'D)

That's not what people want to hear
when they ask why you became a
graveyard-keeper, though. So I tell
them I like ghosts.

THE WITCH

(If berries were offered to
the Witch)

The witch's cabin has been standing
longer than any of the other homes
in the village, so they say.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

It's made well, thick stones cut
into even blocks by some long-
forgotton hand. I wonder what it
would be to build something that
lasts for so long, that holds so
many ages in the cracks of its
walls.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

But a witch's art is momentary, the
bringing of rain, the healing of
hurts.

THE WITCH (CONT'D)

How long will this cabin, this
village, these people--how long
will they remember me?

THE SHEPHERD

(If berries were offered to
the Shepherd)

Stories I heard on long winter
nights:

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

1. My grandfather, you know, he
moved here from across the sea, he
said people there have carts and
plows that drive themself

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

2. The stranger who tricked the
stingy old cobbler into giving him
a meal

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

3. Did you hear the blacksmith's
apprentice is in love with the
graveyard keeper, but they can't
get her to notice

THE SHEPHERD (CONT'D)

4. I saw a bear out in the woods
who was tall as a tree

THE SHOPKEEPER

(If berries were offered to
the Shopkeeper)

We always got sick in sequence,
one right after another. Even once
she moved out of the room over the
shop, somehow.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

I'm not good at being sick. Waiting
for it, after you first feel it
scratch at your throat. I get
frustrated, and restless. The
neighbors leave soup on the
doorstep instead of bringing it
inside because I'd snap at them, if
they did.

THE SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

If I got sick before her I'd always
try to open the shop, only go back
to bed when I got woozy and she got
mad. It was easier when she got
sick first, and I'd already closed
up to look after her.