

SCHOOL SPIRIT

By George Zarr

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SYNOPSIS: After a nighttime brush with the supernatural, will Michelle's first day of High School be her last?

DURATION: 30 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 females, 4 males, 3 either)

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| MICHELLE (f) | Young teenager about to enter high school. She is feisty, smart, and about to do a lot of screaming. <i>(166 lines)</i> |
| MOM (f)..... | Michelle's long-suffering mother, who is constantly trying to contain her daughter's joie de vivre. <i>(23 lines)</i> |
| DAD (m)..... | Michelle's level-headed father, who is rewarded for his devotion and dedication by being tortured and boiled. <i>(28 lines)</i> |
| MARCY (f)..... | Michelle's school chum, also starting high school. Until she chokes up. <i>(23 lines)</i> |
| PENS AND PENCILS (m/f)..... | Yes, normal pens and pencils. Possessing a high-pitched giggle, they aren't quite so normal after all. <i>(11 lines)</i> |
| GHOUL (m/f) | A fear-provoking phantom who stalks and bedevils Michelle with shrieking threats. <i>(31 lines)</i> |
| NEWSCASTER (m) | Solid broadcast professional. <i>(1 line)</i> |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| FEMALE TEACHER (f) | Strict disciplinarian who puts up with nothing and considers homicide an efficient aid to learning. (29 lines) |
| FIEND (m)..... | Hulking ogre who attempts to help his brother. (5 lines) |
| MONSTERS (m/f)..... | A fear-provoking phantom who stalks and bedevils Michelle with shrieking threats. (4 lines) |
| MR. JAMESON (m) | A dedicated academic who administers exams and lends a hand with torture. (14 lines) |
| MRS. STANTON (f)..... | Teacher's aid who guards the high school door. (7 lines) |

PROFESSIONAL AUDIO RECORDING AVAILABLE

Scan the QR Code below to purchase the professional Audio Recording of *School Spirit*. This radio play was recorded live before a terrified audience at the Von Ayres Cultural Center in Wallaceburg, Ontario, for broadcast on CFCO AM 630 / 92.9 FM – Chatham and CHRW 94.9 – London on Halloween night 2005.



SCENE 1

MUSIC: OPEN OF SHOW

MICHELLE: (*Firm, loudly.*) I don't care, Mom, I'm not going, and that's final. Look, I know you have all sorts of ideas and plans for my future – but you'll just have to forget it. I've made up my mind. It's hard enough –

SFX: DOOR KNOCK

MOM: (*Calling through door.*) Michelle? Michelle, are you in there? Who are you talking to in your room?

MICHELLE: Um, I – uh –

SFX: SEVERAL QUICK BARE FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD

SFX: QUICK RUSTLE OF SHEETS AND BLANKET ON A BED BEING THROWN BACK, THUMP OF MATTRESS AND SPRINGS AS SHE LANDS IN BED, QUICK RUSTLE OF SHEETS AND BLANKET PULLED IN PLACE

MICHELLE: (*Calling hoarsely.*) No one, Mom. I'm in bed. I'm too sick to – (*Coughs.*) – to talk to anyone.

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR OPENS

MOM: (*After a moment, suspicious.*) I could swear I heard you arguing with somebody.

MICHELLE: (*Hoarsely.*) How can I argue with anybody when I have a sore throat?

MOM: (*Skeptical.*) I see.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS OFF. RUNNING UP STAIRS, THEN WALKING BRISKLY ON WOOD AND COMING ON, UNDER

DAD: (*Off, huffing up steps, then coming on.*) Michelle, I heard you downstairs in the living room, you were talking loudly in here too –

MOM: (*Calm.*) She's not talking to anyone, Steven. (*Sarcastic.*) Not when she has a sore throat.

MICHELLE: (*Hoarse.*) Mom's right, Dad. (*Coughs.*)

DAD: Sore throat? The night before she starts high school?

MOM: Quite a coincidence, isn't it, Steven?

MICHELLE: (*Hoarse.*) The odds are astronomical, but here I am, Mom.

MOM: Do you always go to bed with all your clothes on?

MICHELLE: (*Hoarse.*) I took off my shoes.

DAD: You know, Michelle, I was sick the night before I started high school, too.

MOM: As I said, what a coincidence.

MICHELLE: (*Hoarse.*) Maybe it's hereditary, Mom. If Dad got sick the same way I got sick, then –

MOM: (*Stern.*) Your father wasn't sick, he was faking. Like you. (*Beat.*) Right?

MICHELLE: (*Beat, not hoarse, insulted.*) Why don't you ever believe me, Mom?

MOM: I'll give you two guesses, and the first one isn't "because you're known for telling the truth." Why do you keep doing things like this? Why?

MICHELLE: Why not?

DAD: Oh, now, Janine, aren't you being a little rough on Michelle? It probably is hereditary.

MICHELLE: (*Beat, incredulous.*) It is?

DAD: Sure. Michelle is as scared as I was the night before I started high school.

MOM: Is that true, Michelle? (*Concerned.*) Why didn't you tell us you were scared?

MICHELLE: I couldn't, Mom. It's easier to fake being sick.

DAD: High school is just continuing where you left off, honey, that's all. They have books and tests and desks like your old school.

MOM: Teachers and homework, lunch, it's all the same. It's just that you're a young woman now, and capable of accomplishing so much more. You're moving up to the next step because you're ready.

DAD: There's nothing to be afraid of. Okay?

MICHELLE: Okay.

MOM: Now you need to go to sleep. Tomorrow will be a very exciting day.

MICHELLE: All right, Mom. I'll put my pens and pencils and books and stuff in my backpack and arrange my clothes for tomorrow morning. I'll get right to bed.

DAD: You're sure you're okay?

MICHELLE: Ummm –

DAD: You're not okay? Why?

MICHELLE: Why not?

DAD: (*Firmly.*) Good night, Michelle

MOM: Good night, darling. We love you.

MICHELLE: Nite Mom, Dad.

DAD: If you need us, we're here.

MICHELLE: Thanks.

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR CLOSSES

MICHELLE: *(Exhales.)*

SFX: PHONE RINGS

SFX: PHONE RECEIVER PICKED UP

MICHELLE: Hello?

MARCY: *(Filtered, over phone.)* Hi, Michelle.

MICHELLE: Hi, Marcy.

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* So, are you staying home from school tomorrow?

MICHELLE: No. I need more practice making believe I'm sick.

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* Too bad. It didn't work for me, either. I have to go to school, too.

MICHELLE: Look, Marcy, I can't talk, I have to organize my stuff before I go to sleep.

MARCY: Why?

MICHELLE: Why not? I'll see you tomorrow.

PENS AND PENCILS: *(Muffled, little titter.)*

MICHELLE: What's so funny?

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* What?

MICHELLE: You started laughing.

PENS AND PENCILS: *(Muffled, little titter.)*

MICHELLE: You're not funny, Marcy, stop laughing.

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* What are you talking about, I –

SFX: INTERNAL PHONE HANG UP, THEN DIAL TONE UNDER

MICHELLE: Hello, Marcy? *(Beat.)* Some friend.

SFX: EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER HANG UP

SFX: DIAL TONE CUTS OUT

PENS AND PENCILS: *(Muffled, titter.)*

MICHELLE: *(Leery.)* What's that? Where is that noise coming –

SFX: PHONE RINGS

SFX: PHONE RECEIVER PICKED UP

MICHELLE: That you, Marcy?

GHOUL: *(Filtered.)* You can't avoid high school, missy. And now, listen to the pens and pencils laughing.

MICHELLE: Excuse me? Who's this? Are you calling for my Dad?

SFX: INTERNAL PHONE HANG UP, THEN DIAL TONE UNDER

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, EXTERNAL RECEIVER HANGS UP

SFX: DIAL TONE CUTS OUT

MICHELLE: (*Chuckles.*) It sounded like he said pens and pencils laughing.

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Muffled, titter.*)

MICHELLE: What is – (*Realizes.*) My backpack. I left my player turned on in my – (*Giggles.*)

SFX: RUSTLE OF BACKPACK FILLED WITH SCHOOL SUPPLIES

MICHELLE: (*Effort.*) Ugh. What's wrong with this zipper? (*Strains.*) Why is it stuck? Mom just bought it.

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Muffled, titter.*)

MICHELLE: Those batteries are going to wear down if I can't get this backpack open. (*Strains, then it opens suddenly.*) Ugh!

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER QUICKLY OPENS, UNLEASHING –

SFX: TORNADO AND WIND UNDER, AND –

SFX: REVERBED MAD LAUGHING AND HOWLING AND SCREECHING UNDER, AND –

SFX: CLACKING AND BANGING UNDER, AND –

SFX: OTHER SWIRLING HELLISH NOISES UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Yelling above the noise.*) Aaaahhhh!! (*Straining.*) I've – got – to – shut – this – (*With great effort.*) – zipper!

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER QUICKLY CLOSES

SFX: ALL SOUNDS OUT WITH A WHOOSH

MICHELLE: (*Out of breath, shocked.*) What – what was coming out of my backpack?!! Wow, I think my player has a short or something. What's that on the – All my pencils and pens fell out. (*Heavy breathing continues under.*)

PENS AND PENCILS: (*After a moment, an unmuffled, titter.*)

MICHELLE: Hmph. The pens and pencils are making the noise. Probably microchips. (*Beat, inspecting.*) Hmm, this one looks normal, no electronic advertising stuff stuck on it or anything. So where is –

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Titters, continues under.*)

MICHELLE: (*Struggling.*) Stop, no, you can't – stop pulling me! Stop, stop, get away from my backpack! I – I – can't let go!

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Join in the tittering, continue under.*)

MICHELLE: (*Straining.*) Stop, no, it's hooking into – no, leave it alone, leave the zipper --, no! No!!

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER QUICKLY OPENS, UNLEASHING –

SFX: TORNADO AND WIND UNDER, AND –

SFX: REVERBED MAD LAUGHING AND HOWLING AND SCREECHING UNDER, AND –

SFX: CLACKING AND BANGING UNDER, AND –

SFX: OTHER SWIRLING HELLISH NOISES, UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Yelling above the noise.*) No, no – nooooo!! (*Fighting back.*) Get – no – get in – stop! (*Great effort.*) Uhhh!

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER QUICKLY CLOSES

SFX: ALL SOUNDS OUT WITH A WHOOSH

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Stop.*)

MICHELLE: (*Still yelling.*) Stop! Get back in! (*Big heaving breaths, continues under.*)

SFX: SEVERAL POUNDING KNOCKS ON BEDROOM DOOR, THEN –

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR FLIES OPEN

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD RUNNING SEVERAL STEPS, OFF COMING ON UNDER

MOM: (*Concerned.*) Michelle, I heard you shouting, what's the matter?!

SFX: FOOTSTEPS OFF. RUNNING UP STAIRS, THEN WALKING BRISKLY ON WOOD AND COMING ON, UNDER

DAD: (*Off coming on, out of breath.*) Is everybody okay? Are you okay, Michelle?

MOM: I think she had a nightmare, Steven.

MICHELLE: (*Trying to talk through the panting.*) No, no nightmare, no nightmare. The pens and pencils, laughing, out of my backpack, horrible, pens and pencils, horrible things and –

DAD: (*Incredulous.*) What?

MOM: (*Exasperated.*) Are you fooling around again, Michelle?

MICHELLE: (*Taken aback.*) What? No, Mom, I –

MOM: (*Firm.*) Get into your bed this instant. You can wake up a little earlier tomorrow to organize yourself for school.

MICHELLE: Mom –

MOM: Really, Michelle!

DAD: How are you going to make it through your first day of high school if you don't sleep? Look, I had nightmares the night before, too. But I jumped right back into bed.

SFX: PHONE RINGS, CONTINUES UNDER

MOM: If that's Marcy, tell her you'll speak to her tomorrow, understand? Goodnight, Michelle. Come on, Steven.

DAD: Good night.

MICHELLE: *(Exhales.)* 'Nite.

SFX: TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD, SEVERAL STEPS

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR CLOSES

SFX: PHONE RINGS FOR A FEW SECONDS MORE, THEN

SFX: PHONE RECEIVER PICKED UP

MICHELLE: *(After a moment, guardedly.)* Uh, hello?

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* Michelle? I heard a lot of noise from your house.

MICHELLE: *(Sarcastic.)* I'm throwing a party.

MARCY: Really? Why?

MICHELLE: Why not? Of course I'm not having a party, Marcy. It was a nightmare.

MARCY: *(Filtered.)* Well, whatever you're –

SFX: INTERNAL PHONE HANG UP, THEN DIAL TONE UNDER

MICHELLE: Marcy?

SFX: EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER HANG UP

SFX: DIAL TONE OUT

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, PHONE RINGS

SFX: EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER PICKED UP

MICHELLE: Is your phone broken, Marcy?

GHOUL: *(Filtered.)* Tattletale. You told them about the pens and pencils, didn't you?

MICHELLE: *(Irritated.)* Who's this?

GHOUL: *(Filtered, shrieks.)* You told them about the pens and pencils, didn't you!!

SFX: INTERNAL PHONE HANG UP, THEN DIAL TONE CONTINUES UNDER

MICHELLE: *(Shocked.)* Oh! *(Beat.)* Hello? *(Beat, small.)* Hello?

SFX: EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER HANGS UP

SFX: DIAL TONE OUT

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, PHONE RINGS, CONTINUES UNDER

MICHELLE: *(Frightened.)* I don't care, I'm not answering it!

SFX: AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, QUICK EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER PICK UP

GHOUL: (*Filtered, after a beat.*) You're going to long for high school, missy. And now, watch the books and rulers fly.

SFX: EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER SLAMS DOWN

MICHELLE: No!

PENS AND PENCILS: (*Muffled, titters.*)

MICHELLE: (*Quietly.*) No.

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER STARTS WORKING ITSELF OPEN

MICHELLE: (*A little louder.*) My backpack, no!

SFX: BACKPACK ZIPPER QUICKLY OPENS

SFX: QUICK WHOOSH

SFX: OTHERWORLDLY HOVERING HUM, CONTINUES UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Stunned.*) How is – how is that notebook –? It's floating.

SFX: PAGES TURNING, CONTINUE UNDER

MICHELLE: What? It's turning it's pages!

SFX: PAGE TURNING STOPS

MICHELLE: Twenty- two. What's on page --. (*After a moment, reading.*) "See the ruler twirl. See the twirling ruler. See the –"

SFX: BOOK SNAPS SHUT

MICHELLE: (*With a start.*) Oh! It almost snapped shut on my nose!

SFX: ROTO-SWISHING OF WHIRLING, HOVERING RULER

MICHELLE: What's that? (*Recalls.*) "See the twirling ruler." My ruler?

SFX: WHIRLING RULER MAKES A QUICK SLICING DIVE AT HER AND MISSES

SFX: A FEW OBJECTS FALL OFF HER BUREAU

MICHELLE: (*A small scream.*) That thing almost sliced my head off!

SFX: WHIRLING RULER MAKES ANOTHER QUICK SLICING DIVE AT HER AND MISSES

SFX: GLASS LAMP GETS SLICED IN TWO

MICHELLE: (*A small scream.*) That almost – it sliced the lamp in half!

SFX: RULER HOVERS IN MID-AIR A MOMENT, THEN QUICK SUCKING WHOOSH AND IMPACT TO BACKPACK AS IT FLIES BACK IN.

MICHELLE: (*Disbelieving.*) It flew back into the – (*Resolute.*) Oh no you don't!

SFX: QUICK CLOSE OF BACKPACK ZIPPER

MICHELLE: There you go, you're not getting out of that backpack again! That's enough.

SFX: RUSTLE AS SHE PICKS UP THE BACKPACK

SFX: SEVERAL BARE FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD

SFX: BEDROOM WINDOW OPENS

SFX: LOW VOLUME OF HEAVY RAIN AMBIENCE UNDER

MICHELLE: That's enough, dream or no dream! Out! (*Effort as she tosses the backpack out the window.*)

SFX: WINDOW QUICKLY SHUT

SFX: RAIN AMBIENCE OUT

MICHELLE: Whew.

SFX: PHONE RINGS, CONTINUES UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Gives a start.*)

SFX: SEVERAL RUNNING BAREFOOT STEPS ON WOOD

SFX: PHONE RECEIVER PICKED UP

MICHELLE: (*Yelling into phone.*) I threw it out the window, leave me alone! (*Several beats of heavy breathing, then tentatively.*) Are you –? (*Two beats of breathing.*) Hello?

SFX: AFTER A BEAT, EXTERNAL PHONE RECEIVER HANGS UP

SFX: SEVERAL BAREFOOT STEPS ON WOOD

SFX: CLICKING ON TV

Filter on TV voices different than phone.

NEWSCASTER: (*Filtered, cuts in mid-word.*) – because rain is once again in the forecast for tonight. Flood warnings are in effect and the rain will be heavy at times. We'll bring you the best in television sports right after this commercial.

MUSIC: FILTERED NEWS REPORT JINGLE OUTRO

GHOUL: (*Filtered, shrieking.*) You threw the backpack out the window!

MICHELLE: (*A quick scream of shock.*)

GHOUL: (*Filtered, yelling.*) Why did you throw the backpack –

SFX: CLICKING OFF OF TV

MICHELLE: (*Heavy breathing and small whimpering.*)

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, SEVERAL TAPS ON THE BEDROOM WINDOW GLASS

MICHELLE: (*Stops whimpering with a start and listens.*)

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, SEVERAL TAPS ON THE BEDROOM WINDOW GLASS

MICHELLE: (*Disbelief.*) Who's – this is the second floor, who's outside the window?

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, SEVERAL TAPS ON THE BEDROOM WINDOW GLASS

MICHELLE: (*Whispered in horror.*) It's my backpack!

SFX: SEVERAL RUNNING BARE FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD, UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Growing terror.*) No, no, Mom, Dad!

SFX: TRYING TO OPEN A LOCKED BEDROOM DOOR

MICHELLE: Who locked my door??

SFX: MORE FRANTIC YANKING AT THE BEDROOM DOOR, THEN IT STOPS

MICHELLE: (*Quietly.*) No.

SFX: SEVERAL TAPS ON THE BEDROOM WINDOW GLASS

MICHELLE: (*Screams.*)

SFX: WILD POUNDING WITH FISTS ON THE BEDROOM DOOR, UNDER

MICHELLE: (*Yelling.*) Let me out! Let me out!

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR OPENS

MICHELLE: (*Sobbing.*) Mom, Dad!

DAD: Michelle's not here.

MOM: I guess she's brushing her teeth in the downstairs bathroom.

MICHELLE: Mom?

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR CLOSES

MICHELLE: (*Hysterical.*) No, wait, don't go!

SFX: YANKING ON LOCKED BEDROOM DOOR

MICHELLE: The door!

SFX: WILD BANGING ON BEDROOM DOOR WITH FISTS

MICHELLE: Mom, Dad, help me!

SFX: OPENS BEDROOM DOOR, UNDER

MICHELLE: (*With door, strains.*) Got it.!

GHOUL: There's a backpack at your window

MICHELLE: (*Shrieks.*)

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR SLAMS SHUT

MICHELLE: (*Sobbing.*)

SFX: CLICK OF LIGHT SWITCH

MICHELLE: The lights, who turned them out? Who –

SFX: SEVERAL TAPS ON THE BEDROOM WINDOW GLASS

MICHELLE: *(Yells.)* Go away, leave me alone! *(Sobs.)*

SFX: SEVERAL TAPS ON WINDOW GLASS, THEN

SFX: WINDOW GLASS VIOLENTLY SHATTERS

SFX: LOW VOLUME OF HEAVY RAIN AMBIENCE UNDER, THEN –

MICHELLE: *(Screams.)* My backpack!

PENS AND PENCILS: *(Muffled, tittering, continues.)*

SFX: QUICK ZIPPER OPEN

PENS AND PENCILS: *(Tittering now unmuffled.)*

SFX: TORNADO AND WIND UNDER, AND –

SFX: REVERBED MAD LAUGHING AND HOWLING AND SCREECHING UNDER, AND –

SFX: CLACKING AND BANGING UNDER, AND –

SFX: OTHER SWIRLING HELLISH NOISES

SFX: AFTER A MOMENT, THE NOISES SOAR OUT WITH A WHOOSH, LEAVING –

SFX: REVERBED DRIPPING CAVE AMBIENCE, UNDER AND –

SFX: REVERBED DEEP GRINDING AMBIENCE, UNDER

All following sounds and dialogue in large room reverb.

MICHELLE: *(Stunned.)* What happened to my room? The walls are dripping!

SFX: DOOR KNOCK

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR OPENS

MICHELLE: Marcy? What are you doing in my house?

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR CLOSES

SFX: FOOTSTEPS RUNNING ON WOOD, COMING ON UNDER

MARCY: *(Running on, panic.)* Michelle, help me, you have to help me, please!

MICHELLE: What is it?

MARCY: She's right behind me! I didn't know, really, I didn't know!

SFX: SEVERAL DOOR POUNDS

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR OPENS

FEMALE TEACHER: *(Off, booming.)* Marcy?!

SFX: BEDROOM DOOR CLOSES

SFX: FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING ON WOOD, UNDER

FEMALE TEACHER: (*Coming on, slowly booming.*) Where is your assignment, young lady?

SFX: FOOTSTEPS STOP

FEMALE TEACHER: Well?

MARCY: (*Panicky.*) The first day is tomorrow. (*To Michelle.*) Right, that's when it begins, Michelle, right? (*To Teacher.*) I – I don't know what the assignment is, my first day of high school is tomorrow and –

FEMALE TEACHER: (*Booming.*) Liar!

MARCY: (*Sotto voce.*) Michelle, you always do your homework, let me borrow it, quick!

MICHELLE: (*Sotto voce.*) What homework? I don't have any homework!

FEMALE TEACHER: (*With composure.*) You do know the old saying, don't you Marcy?

MARCY: (*Small.*) No.

FEMALE TEACHER: (*Calmly.*) "The world has no use for the girl with the excuse." Say it.

MARCY: (*Quivering.*) The world has no –

FEMALE TEACHER: (*Shrieks.*) Louder!

MARCY: (*Shouts.*) The world has no use for the girl with the excuse!

SFX: SEVERAL STEPS ON WOOD

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