

SYNOPSIS OF THE GALLERIST **(A Tale of Desecration and Desire)**

TIME: the present and 1919

PLACE: The cities of New York in the present and London in the past. A stylized set represents a police station, a pet shop, a cafe, several parlors, and an art gallery.

CHARACTERS: (an ensemble of seven actors: three men and four women)

THE NEW YORKERS

BERTRAM (BIRDY) PLOVER, a British born gallerist; age late forties

CHARLOTTE LIMPKIN, a Manhattan real estate agent; age early forties

THE LONDONERS

LUCILLE GREY PLOVER, Bertram's great-grandmother; age early twenties

SELENA FEATHERSTONE, a musician and bestiary keeper; age early twenties

LAURA FEATHERSTONE, Selena's cousin, a painter; age early twenties

DOMINIC FEATHERSTONE, Selena's deceased father; age late-forties

VANESSA FEATHERSTONE, Selena's devoted mother; age mid-forties

SIMON SPARROW, a London Times art critic; age early thirties

DOCTOR NORMAN CRANE, a physician; age late forties

ROGER GANNET, a former soldier and student; age mid-twenties

DOCTOR BAINES BUNTING, DOCTOR PERCY SNIPES

FATHER FINCH, FATHER QUAIL, FATHER GROUSE

PLOT SYNOPSIS: From his cell in a Manhattan jail, the British-born gallerist, Bertram Plover, speaks to his fellow prisoners. Charged with assault and vagrancy, he claims his behavior was caused by a painting depicting a grotesque monkey whose sordid history was recorded by his great-grandmother nearly a century ago. The monkey was euthanized by its dying owner, a distinguished zoologist who owned a pet shop. He insisted that the monkey's corpse be preserved and buried beside him, but his rebellious wife burned the beast in a furnace. Seeking revenge, the monkey's malicious spirit took possession of their daughter, Selena, who was driven to slaughter all the animals in the shop, then consigned to an asylum. When she returned home, Selena had visions of the souls of the slain animals, and asked her artist cousin, Laura, to paint her vivid descriptions. The paintings evolved into whimsical masterpieces, and the women opened a gallery to critical acclaim. Meanwhile, the possessed Selena became *unpossessed* when Laura painted the monkey's image, thereby capturing his spiteful soul. But Selena's possession was soon replaced by a romantic obsession for her cousin which caused a tragic confrontation and abandonment. The gallery closed, and the paintings were stored until Bertram discovered them, shipped them to New York, and opened his own gallery. Once there, the monkey's singular power to possess continued to wreak unholy havoc.

THEMES: The Gallerist explores the timeless power of art, the futility of unrequited love, and the effects of repressed passion. The play was inspired by the character of Iago in Shakespeare's Othello, and the metaphysical assumptions of two classic ghost stories: Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde and The Portrait of Dorian Gray.

