

Green Tea

A Lurid Tale of the Supernatural

by Fengar Gael

Adapted from the Ghost Stories
of Joseph Sheridan LeFanu
from Dublin, Ireland

(1814-1873)

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Adapted from Green Tea and Mr. Justice Harbottle

Green Tea is freely adapted from the ghost stories of Joseph Sheridan LeFanu. Liberties have been taken with regard to the plot, characters, and much of the dialog is inspired by the tales rather than quoted directly. The play is approximately one hour in length, and may be performed with the others in any order, any two constituting an evening of theatrical horror.

CHARACTERS

THE LIVING

JUSTICE ELIJAH HARBOTTLE, age 60
GERTRUDE HARBOTTLE, his wife, age 35
DOCTOR MARTIN HESSELIUS, age 70
DORA TRIMMER, a housekeeper
THOMAS CARWELL, a servant

THE DEAD

LEWIS PYNEWECK, age 40 when he died
CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD, ancient when he died
MATILDA DUNNIGAN, a juror
JOSEPH JARLCOT, a juror
JANE SULLIVAN, a juror
DINGLY CHUFF, a juror
OFFICER OF THE COURT

FERA ONE, a hideous monkeyish creature of slight stature
FERA TWO, another such creature with a deep raspy voice

Note: The play can be performed with a cast of eight with doubling:
Dora Trimmer/Matilda Dunnigan; Gertrude Harbottle/Jane Sullivan;
Thomas Carwell/Officer of the Court; Doctor Hesselius/Chief Justice
Fera One/Dingly Chuff; Fera Two/Joseph Jarlcot;

TIME

1880

PLACE

London, England. The study of Justice Elijah Harbottle.
There are several well stocked bookcases, a sofa, desk, chairs
and an oriental rug.

SCENE 1

(The elderly JUSTICE ELIJAH HARBOTTLE sits reading in his study. His housekeeper, DORA TRIMMER, enters and curtseys.)

DORA

I beg yer pardon, sir, there's a gentleman t' see yer lordship.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Blast! Well, who is he?

DORA

He wouldn't say his name, sir.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Send him home then! I haven't the time to give every man in England a private audience!

DORA

Yes, sir, but he says he's got intelligence o' the very greatest importance t' communicate, and he's stooped n' queer lookin' n'...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, stop your confounded prattle, and send him in. (*muttering*) Impudent wench.

(LEWIS PYNEWECK, a pale apparition who died at age forty, enters.)

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

I ask yer pardon, my lord.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Yes, how can I serve you?

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

There was, my lord, a prisoner in Bunclody jail charged with forging a bill of exchange for a hundred and twenty pounds. His name was Lewis Pyneweck, a grocer of that town.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Well, what of it?

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PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

You presided over his trial, my lord.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! Pyneweck...? Pyneweck, Pyneweck,...Lewis Pyneweck? Ah, yes, yes, of course. He was tried and found guilty in the Court of Common Pleas. That was about a year past, wasn't it? Yes, he was executed accordingly -- hanged, which in my opinion is the only way to keep the high roads safe. Remember, sir: "Foolish pity ruins a city!"

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

Yes, my lord. I am not personally concerned with Mister Pyneweck's case, but a fact has come to my knowledge which it behooves you well to consider.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And what may that fact be? I'm a busy man, sir, and beg you to use dispatch.

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

It has come to my knowledge that a secret tribunal is in the process of formation, the object of which is to take cognizance of the conduct of judges.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Who are of it?

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

I have not as yet a single name, but they call their cabal "The High Court of Appeal." From what I gather, they desire revenge upon certain judges.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! And who are you, sir? What is your name?

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

Hugh Peters, my lord.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And how came you to be privy to such insolence, Mister Peters? Answer me that!

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

My lord, a person in whom I take an interest has been seduced to take part, but is resolved to inform for the crown.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

He resolves wisely. Does he know the persons who are in the plot?

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

Only two, my lord, but he will be introduced to the club in a few days, and will then have more exact information. He claims that it is said that the trial of Lewis Pyneweck has

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT (cont'd)

shortened your lordship's days.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! This business smells strongly of blood and treason. The queen's attorney will know how to deal with it.

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

I must leave now, your lordship, but I shall call again as soon as I have more to impart.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

So, so, Mister Peters, and see you play me no tricks in this matter. If you do, by God, I'll lay you by the heels!

PYNEWECK'S SPIRIT

You need fear no tricks from me, my lord. Had I not wished to serve you and acquit my own conscience, I would never have come all this way. Good day, your lordship.

(The JUDGE returns to reading his book. As PYNEWECK opens the door to leave, TWO FERA, who appear as hideous hunched-over monkeys, scurry into the room and hide behind the sofa. Before PYNEWECK closes the door, HE turns his head towards the FERA and smiles. The JUDGE, who hasn't seen the creatures, snaps shut his book.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Dora! Dora!!

(DORA enters and curtsseys.)

DORA

Yes, sir?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Tell my wife to come down here!

DORA

Yes, sir.

(After DORA departs, FERA ONE throws a book from a shelf, then hides. The JUDGE leaps to his feet.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What's that?! Who's there?! Damn!

(The JUDGE replaces the book, then sits as the FERA snicker. The JUDGE hears them and looks about, but sees nothing.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Gertrude! Gertrude!!

(GERTRUDE, a handsomely dressed woman of thirty-five, enters.)

GERTRUDE

Shhh, calm yourself, Elijah! I'm here, darling. Is anything the matter?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

S'blood! The old bastard has half-spoiled my supper!

GERTRUDE

Who, Elijah? Good, heavens, you're quite unsettled.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Did you happen to see the gentleman who just called?

GERTRUDE

No, I was upstairs.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! Well, he says there's a conspiracy afoot, and Pyneweck's involved.

GERTRUDE

I don't understand. He's been dead for more than a year.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I know, but the scoundrels are trying to bamboozle me, take revenge on me because they think the trial was unfair. The buffoons! What do they know about justice?

(FERA TWO pops his head up in full view of the judge, belches, then disappears. JUDGE HARBOTTLE gasps, leaping from his chair.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

S'blood! Did you see that?! Did you see it, Gertie?!

GERTRUDE

See what?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

A beast! A hairy little devil!

GERTRUDE

Why no, darling, I didn't see a thing.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Good God in heaven! I thought I'd...oh, never mind. (*rubbing his eyes*) It must be my nerves. Tell me, Gertrude, had your husband ever mentioned a brother?

GERTRUDE

Piggins full!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Come, madam! Don't weary me, and give me an honest answer.

GERTRUDE

Lewis had a brother, but he died in Jamaica.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

How do you know he died?

GERTRUDE

Because he told me so.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Is that all? Humph! Then there's a good possibility that this Hugh Peters is his brother. He had the same thin lips and villainous brow.

GERTRUDE

But that's preposterous. Lewis had no reason to deceive me on that account.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Lewis was a damn liar on all accounts, and get that pained expression off your face!

GERTRUDE

Please, Elijah, let's not speak of him.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Well, admit it: you didn't love the old rascal. Say it!

GERTRUDE

I'm blest, Elijah, I think you're jealous.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hang him!

GERTRUDE

You did.

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

(snickering) Heh, heh!

(The JUDGE starts, pulling at his ear.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! Every lawyer knows when you bring a man from his shop to the dock, the chance is ninety-nine out of a hundred that he's guilty. Now admit it, Gertie, you never loved him and you're blest he's gone.

GERTRUDE

Our life was nothing but spiteful bickerings, as you very well know. He was always cruel and I've done with him long ago.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And he with you, by George! When he took your fortune, he had all he wanted of you! Ha, ha! You never cared a brass farthing for the villain, body or soul. Why, if he were alive today, he'd steal your guineas all over again, and then find some other wench to harvest his mill. You never wished him well -- if you say you did, you lie!

GERTRUDE

That's true, Elijah, but I never wished him dead.

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

(laughing) Ha, ha, ha!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Did you hear that, Gertie?!

GERTRUDE

Hear what, Elijah?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Laughter! Wicked sniggering!

GERTRUDE

No. *(pause)* Oh, Elijah, don't be so gloomy. We have a good life here. No one will ever recognize me.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! It would be the worst scandal that ever blasted a judge.

(FERA TWO pops up from behind the sofa and whispers into the judge's ear.)

FERA TWO

Blast the judge!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What?! What did you say?!

(FERA TWO hides as the JUDGE shakes his head, then stands and paces.)

GERTRUDE

Bunclody is far enough away and who sees me in any case? I never leave the house. Why, for all anyone knows, poor Gertie Pyneweck is dead and in her grave. But what does it matter? Now I'm the lawful wife of the Honorable Lord Justice Harbottle, and I'm proud to be so, my darling. Why ruin our happiness with fancied vexations?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I didn't fancy Hugh Peters! He was real enough, confound his impudence! I swear his face was powdered, some playhouse impersonation to trick me!

GERTRUDE

Shush, Elijah, enough of this.

(The JUDGE draws GERTRUDE onto his lap.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What a nuisance you are, Gertie, my girl. And what a saucy little hide you have!

GERTRUDE

We can still stir the embers, can't we, my darling?

(THEY embrace and kiss. Then FERA ONE bites the judge's foot and FERA TWO yanks his hair. HE shrieks, tossing GERTRUDE onto the floor as the FERA back off, tittering.)

GERTRUDE

Elijah! Whatever...?!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Go! Go away!

GERTRUDE

If you insist.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

No, not you! Them!

GERTRUDE

Who?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Them! Those devils! Vile devils!

GERTRUDE

What devils?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

There! There!

(The JUDGE begins to chase the FERA who retreat behind the furniture.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Blast! They're gone! Behind the bookcase!

GERTRUDE

Who's gone?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

There's two of them now -- nasty monkeys with glowing eyes and sharp teeth!

GERTRUDE

There's no one here but us, Elijah.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What?! You didn't...?

GERTRUDE

No.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Nothing...?

GERTRUDE

No

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

(pause, slowly sitting) God help me, I'm going insane.

GERTRUDE

Shush, my dear. Should I call Doctor Harley?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Yes, yes, my foot's blazing. Must be the gout, yes, 'tis nothing but the gout.

(DORA enters.)

DORA

I beg your pardon, sir: here's your afternoon mail.

GERTRUDE

I'll bring some tea, Elijah, and then you must go to your room and rest.

(DORA and GERTRUDE exit. FERA ONE jumps up from behind the sofa and leans over the judge's shoulder, reading the envelope in a hideous, rasping voice.)

FERA ONE

"To the Honorable Lord Justice Elijah Harbottle, of his Majesty's Court of Common Pleas."

(The JUDGE gasps in terror as FERA TWO scampers into his lap, snatching the letter. FERA ONE pins down the judge's shoulder, forcing him to remain seated as FERA TWO reads the letter.)

FERA TWO

“I am ordered by the High Court of Appeal to inform your Lordship that an indictment lieth against you for the murder of one Lewis Pyneweck, citizen of Bunclody. The Court hereby claims Mister Pyneweck was wrongfully executed for forgery by the willful perversion of evidence and undue pressure put upon the jury by your Lordship. Your trial is fixed for the tenth day of February. Should the jury find you guilty, the Honorable Lord Chief Justice will fix the day of execution for the tenth day of March.)

FERA ONE

“Signed, Caleb Searcher, Officer of the Crown, Solicitor in the Kingdom of Life and Death.”

(FERA ONE releases the JUDGE who snatches the letter and tears it in half.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

S’blood! Get out! Out! No one tricks a man like me with this buffoonery!

(The FERA dance around the JUDGE while laughing and belching)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Ahhhhhh! Get away, you filthy beasts! Leave me be! Get out! Ouuuuuu!

(FERA TWO pokes the judge in the belly; FERA ONE kicks him from behind. HE falls, wailing in terror, covering his head. GERTRUDE and DORA dash in as the FERA retreat.)

GERTRUDE

Elijah! Darling, are you alright? What’s happened? Dora, quick! Fetch Doctor Harley!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Gertie, Gertie, they’re driving me mad!

GERTRUDE

Come now, Elijah, there’s no one here but me, and don’t I take good care of you?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I’m a dead man.

GERTRUDE

Doctor Harley will be here soon, so go to your bed and I’ll bring your tea.

(GERTRUDE leads the JUDGE from the room with the TWO FERA scampering behind him.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

They're following me; they're right on my heels! I'm damned! Damned!!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(One week later. GERTRUDE is in the study, shuffling through the judge's papers and books. DORA enters, startling Gertrude.)

DORA

Excuse me, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Oh, Dora, heavens, you frightened me! I thought you were my husband.

DORA

No, ma'am, I've only come to dust, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Can I trust you to keep a confidence? There's no one else I can turn to.

DORA

Oh, yes, ma'am, o' course, ma'am, I keep a secret like a corpse.

GERTRUDE

Bless you. I haven't much time. The judge is always in his study, and I know I'm prying, but he's undergoing some strange illness, and any evidence to show what might be the cause could help us get to the bottom of it.

DORA

Yes, ma'am, even the liveryman's noticed it, ma'am. He says he jumps n' fits like he's got the blue devils.

GERTRUDE

These books on his desk are in German, but here's one in English, and he has some passages marked: (*reading*) "Once the inner eye is sealed and the victim ceases to array himself on the side of the disease, the Fera can no longer operate on the senses."

DORA

What's "the Fera" ma'am?

GERTRUDE

I don't know, but listen to this: "The delight of Fera is the delight of hell: to do evil to man and hasten his eternal ruin. They have been known to indulge in fluent speech that is harsh and grating to the ears."

DORA

Oh, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Dorrie, put on a kettle of green tea, and bring it to the judge.

DORA

Yes, ma'am, but if ye ask me, it's his drinkin' too much o' that wretched stuff that gives him the sulks an' jitters.

GERTRUDE

Nonsense, Doctor Harley says it's good for his digestion.

DORA

Shush, ma'am, the judge's comin'!

(DORA departs as GERTRUDE hurriedly replaces the books. The JUDGE enters, followed by the TWO FERA.)

GERTRUDE

Elijah, why aren't you in your bed? Doctor Harley gave you strict instructions.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Doctor Harley is one of the greatest fools I've ever met! (*to the Fera*) Ah! There you are!

GERTRUDE

Whatever do you mean? He said it's all related to your being overcharged with gout, and you should take the waters at Buxton. You said it yourself.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Yes, but I know better and so do you. I say, Gertie what are you doing in my study? You know I don't like anyone snooping about my books.

GERTRUDE

I was only searching out a novel, something to pass the time and keep my mind off worrying. I can't help but see you've collected some quaint old books here. This is German, isn't it? What are you studying?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Metaphysical medicine.

GERTRUDE

And what is that, pray tell?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! That is precisely what I'm trying to find out. Unfortunately, I'm no damn good at German. (*picking up a book*) See this? The author is Doctor Martin Hesselius, a man who understands affliction.

(FERA ONE hisses and the JUDGE hisses back.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Now, what was I saying?

GERTRUDE

You were speaking of Doctor Hesselius. Oh, Elijah, let's find him and enlist his help!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! He's at least ten years my senior which gives him a good chance of being dead. Besides, he's not a true physician, but a chemist. My only purpose in finding him would be to secure a translation and save myself the bother.

GERTRUDE

Elijah, darling, listen to me. Perhaps Doctor Harley's prescription is a sound one. A brief vacation may be just the medicine you need. Please, Elijah, for my sake. I can't bear to see you so low and nervous.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Perhaps you're right. You usually are, God bless you. It's odd, you know, Gertie, but whenever you're near me, I fancy I feel somewhat better. I've changed, Gertie, oh, how I've changed. I once had reputation as the sharpest judge to ever sit on the bench. I could keep the pantries safe and make thieves and vandals wish they were never born! "Foolish pity ruins a city," I'd say, and hang a fellow for filching a spoon, ha! (*pause*) Dear God, sometimes I think the devil himself had a hold on me. Before you, Gertie, my life was a desolate ruin. Yes, a man without a wife is a pitiful waste of baggage!

GERTRUDE

And a woman without a husband is very sad indeed, but sadder still is a woman with a sickly husband.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

They're all saying the judge is in his vapors.

GERTRUDE

Oh, Elijah...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I've been thinking of retiring from the bench.

GERTRUDE

What?! Nonsense! Whatever for?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Because they're right! I *am* in my vapors!

GERTRUDE

Then that settles it! You're going to Buxton tomorrow! When's your next case?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I'm free until the eleventh.

GERTRUDE

Then you can stay until the ninth! I'll tell Dora to pack your things right away!

(GERTRUDE exits as the TWO FERA, recalling the indictment, sit on either side of the JUDGE, echoing each other.)

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

"And the trial for the said indictment is fixed for the tenth day of February."

(The JUDGE shudders, then grabs a cane and swings at the FERA until THEY scamper behind the sofa. Suddenly books begin tumbling from the shelves as if they were being pushed from within. The JUDGE continues swinging as GERTRUDE and DORA enter, gaping.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I know you're there! Come out, you monsters! You damn parasites of hell! Come out!

(The JUDGE turns, sees the WOMEN and drops to his knees, weeping. GERTRUDE and DORA exchange pitying glances, then rush to his side.)

GERTRUDE

Oh, darling, oh, my poor dear Elijah.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(Several days later. GERTRUDE is reading the judge's books. DORA enters.)

DORA

I beg your pardon, ma'am. The gentleman's arrived, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Oh, good! Dorrie, fix some tea and cakes and show him in.

(DORA escorts DOCTOR MARTIN HESSELIUS into the study. He is a well groomed elderly man with a slight German accent.)

GERTRUDE

Doctor Hesselius, how good of you to come. You've no idea how much your being here means to me.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

It is my pleasure, I am sure, madam.

GERTRUDE

My husband is at Buxton taking the waters. I had a terrible time persuading him to go alone, but I had to speak with you. You see, he's interested in metaphysical medicine, and has your book here in the original German. Is it available in translation?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

No, madam, I'm afraid it is not.

GERTRUDE

Oh, dear. I asked the publisher, but all he knew was that it was out of print in the original German.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

So it is, and has been for some twelve years, but it flatters me to find Justice Harbottle has not forgotten my little book. I suppose something has happened lately to inspire his interest...?

GERTRUDE

Well, yes, something has. You see, I was hoping you would explain your...your ideas. Please, believe me, I have good reasons for wishing to know.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Certainly, madam, with pleasure. The book is entitled *The Interior Senses and the Conditions of their Opening*. It is a collection of cases concerning a phenomenon which I call an intrusion of the spirit world upon the domain of matter. In other words, some people through various abuses, are able to open an interior sense which enables them to see and hear entities from the spiritual dimension. The same senses are opened in delirium tremens and shut up again when the prodigious ingestion of alcohol is terminated. Ah, I see your husband has Swedenborg's folio.

GERTRUDE

And these entities of the spiritual dimension -- what are they?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Well, with each man and woman there are at least two evil spirits which represent their particular lusts and torments.

GERTRUDE

Yes! And those are the Fera! Isn't that so, doctor!? The Fera!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Ah, you must be doing some research of your own.

GERTRUDE

Oh, please, doctor, please explain further. I want to know everything! (*brimming with tears*) You see...oh, please, please forgive me.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

There is nothing to forgive, madam. Command me when and how you like, and I can assure you that your confidence is sacred.

GERTRUDE

Oh, how very good of you! Pardon me, doctor, but my poor husband's health breaks down in the most sudden and horrible ways. Oh, heavens, you can't imagine. He'll be proceeding in his usual way in conversation or on the bench, then suddenly he falls into

GERTRUDE (cont'd)

swinging about violently and cursing, and other times he drops to his knees and prays, his hands and eyes uplifted, pale as death. Naturally, everyone thinks he's raving.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Has he developed a peculiar way of looking sidelong upon the carpet as if his eyes followed the movements of something there?

GERTRUDE

Yes, oh, yes! He searches for whatever it is, but doesn't always seem to find it. Once he mentioned seeing monkeys, devilish little monkeys. They're the Fera, aren't they? That's what he's looking for, isn't it?!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Yes. I've never seen them myself, but I've been told they resemble black monkeys, are ever-vigilant, and possess a character of intense and malignity.

GERTRUDE

Oh, heavens.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

It seems as if the judge has not been spared much.

(DORA enters with the tea and cakes.)

GERTRUDE

Oh, Dora, this is Doctor Hesselius. She's been a witness to everything I've told you.

DORA

Have you come to cure the judge, sir?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Well, I cannot guarantee a cure unless I have the full and unreserved confidence of the patient himself.

DORA

Well, sir, he's a stubborn one, though I must say o' late that he's gettin' right holy, prayin' day n' night n' all. My opinion o' the case is that...

GERTRUDE

Alright, Dora, that's quite enough. You may leave now.

(DORA exits, leaving the door ajar to eavesdrop.)

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Quite often, the opinion of a servant is more acute than those of us who are emotionally involved. For example, I think I can already tell you two or three things about the judge.

GERTRUDE

Really?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS.

Indeed, to be begin with, he married late.

GERTRUDE

Yes, that's true.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

He has recently been pricked by his conscience -- for something he has done in the past, an unwise decision perhaps, or an unkindness to a loved one.

GERTRUDE

Well, yes, in a way.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

And although he occasionally drinks spirits, he prefers tea, or at least did prefer tea -- extravagantly.

GERTRUDE

Why yes.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

And the tea he drinks is green tea, a special brew of "thea sinensis" from Farrukhabad, India.

GERTRUDE

How very odd! Green tea is a subject on which he and Dora used almost to quarrel. Good heavens! Do you mean to imply that his tea has had this effect on him?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Yes, and I implore you to see that he's not allowed another drop.

GERTRUDE

Oh dear, how extraordinary! Pray, doctor, tell me more.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

With pleasure. In fact, I recently published a tract whereby I prove the circulation of venous fluid propagated through one class of nerves can be returned in an altered state through another. The nature of that fluid is spiritual, though not immaterial, and by various abuses, such as the habitual use of Farrukhabad tea, this fluid may destroy one's mental equilibrium.

GERTRUDE

I'm not certain I understand.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

This fluid congests upon masses of brain tissue, and forms a surface unduly exposed so that disembodied Fera may become visible to the human eye. The Fera can also communicate with the souls of the deceased, some of which are powerful enough to materialize.

GERTRUDE

But why? Why did it happen to my dear Elijah?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Oddly enough, solitary sorts like bachelors and ecclesiastics are most prone to be affected, especially if they are guilty of some moral indiscretion.

GERTRUDE

Tell me, doctor, how does one destroy these Fera?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Unfortunately, few cases can be treated exactly alike and none with rapid success -- although I recently sealed an inner eye by the generous application of eau de cologne.

GERTRUDE

Good heavens! If only it were so simple, I would be overjoyed!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Well, Mrs. Harbottle, your husband has been preserved by God thus far, and by ceasing to drink his tea and with his further cooperation, I have no doubt that I can at first dim, and ultimately seal that sense which he has inadvertently opened. Now I'm afraid I must be leaving, but tell me where I can reach the judge as soon as possible.

GERTRUDE

Permit me to arrange a meeting. He'll be at Buxton for a few more days, but I'll contact you as soon as he returns. Doctor, you are a saint!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

No, madam, I am your humble servant, Martin Hesselius. I treat and God cures. Good day, madam.

(DOCTOR HESSELIUS exits. GERTRUDE sits, tapping her fingers. DORA enters.)

DORA

I beg yer pardon, ma'am, I'll be fetchin' the tea things. What's the doctor say, ma'am?

GERTRUDE

The thing is purely disease, Dorrie: the gout, dyspepsia, and senility. He's grown daft, that's all. I suppose it's to be expected at his age.

DORA

Well, fancy that, 'an all along I though he was poisonin' himself wi' that green tea.

GERTRUDE

Quite the contrary. In fact, Doctor Hesselius says it's just the thing to cure him. He's to have as many cups as won't drown him.

DORA

Yes, ma'am.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(One week later in the late evening. The JUDGE sits reading in his robe, surrounded by his TWO FERA. There is a tea pot, cup and saucer by his side. GERTRUDE enters.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Gertie, I want you to see that charlatan Harley. Tell him that I've been to Buxton, I've had a change of air, change of scene, change of everything but myself!!

FERA ONE

Everything but your vile, infested self!

FERA TWO

Self, self, self, self! You worm!

FERA ONE

Maggot!

FERA TWO

Louse!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Bugger! (*laughing*) Ha, ha, ha!

GERTRUDE

He was only trying to help you, darling. This light is too dim for reading, Elijah.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hah! All lights are the same to me. I care not if night were perpetual.

FERA TWO

Ha! Perpetual night!

FERA ONE

Perpetual delight!

GERTRUDE

Oh, Elijah, please darling, you must not despair.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Despair! Humph! What do you know of despair? You don't have a hoard of hellions interrupting your every thought with blasphemies!

FERA TWO

Blasphemies? Who us?

FERA ONE

Drown yourself in the Thames, your honor!

FERA TWO

Take a razor to your throat!

FERA ONE

Set fire to your arse!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, stop it, stop it, for God's sake! Oh, Gertie, can't the skills and prayers of a man avail him nothing?

FERA ONE

No, nothing, nothing, nothing!

FERA TWO

Not even a pickle.

FERA ONE

Not even a pea.

GERTRUDE

Elijah, oh, my dear darling husband, what can I do for you?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Nothing, nothing, just leave me in peace. I don't want my misery to infect you. You're too good, Gertie, to be married to an abject slave of the devil.

FERA ONE

Goodie Gertie, Gertie's good.

FERA TWO

Gertie's a filthy whore, a slimy slut from the sewer.

FERA ONE

Satan's sister, that's Gertie!

(The FERA curl up on the judge's feet,)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Get off my feet, get off! Just leave me be, just let me rest...

(The JUDGE weeps as GERTRUDE lifts the tea pot and fills his cup before leaving. The sobbing JUDGE takes a long swallow, closes his eyes, and falls asleep.)

SCENE 5

(The lights dim as a shadowy gallows is revealed. To the side stand several waxen faced JURORS, their clothing worn to tatters. (JANE SULLIVAN, DINGLY CHUFF, MATILDA DUNNIGAN, and JOSEPH JARLCOT.) The OFFICER OF THE COURT, also deathly pale, stands directly over the JUDGE, staring into his face.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

(awakening, shrieking with horror) Ahhhhhhhh!! Oh, my God! God help me!

OFFICER OF THE COURT

Good evening, your honor. Your case stands first for the day.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What?! What is this?! Where am I?!

OFFICER OF THE COURT

The High Court of Appeal sits on its bum all day and night, your honor! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

(The ancient CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD enters in tattered judicial robes.)

OFFICER OF THE COURT

All stand and rise to honor the Chief Justice Two Fold of the High Court of Appeal!

(CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD sits on the bench and farts as the JURORS snicker.)

OFFICER OF THE COURT

The King against Elijah Harbottle.

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

Is the appellant Lewis Pynewick in court?

(LEWIS PYNEWECK stands.)

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

Arraign the prisoner!

(The OFFICER OF THE COURT brings forth the JUDGE who struggles to keep his balance.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

‘Sblood! Leave me alone! I object to this...this pretentious sham of a court! It’s nonexistent in point of law, and even if it were, it could never have jurisdiction to try me for my conduct on the bench! *(to the Officer of the Court)* Get your foul paws off me!!

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

Read the indictment!

OFFICER OF THE COURT

An indictment lieth against the Honorable Lord Justice Elijah Harbottle of Her Majesty's Court of Common Pleas for the murder of Lewis Pyneweck, citizen of Bunclody, wrongfully executed for forgery by reason of his Lordship's willful perversion of the evidence.

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

How do you plead, your honor?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I don't!

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

Swear in the jury!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

But I haven't pleaded!

OFFICER OF THE COURT

Stand and raise your right hand.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Wait! Who are these...these jurors?!

(The JURORS stand and identify themselves.)

DINGLY CHUFF

Dingly Chuff, fifteen years a farmer wrongfully indicted by your lordship for stealin' a pig.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Good God!

JOSEPH JARLCOT

Joseph Jarlcot, hung by your lordship for tradin' a lame horse at Carlow which wasn't lame when I first traded 'im.

MATILDA DUNNIGAN

Matilda Dunnigan, hanged by your lordship for desertin' my husband who would've beat me t'death in 'is cups if I'd stayed.

JANE SULLIVAN

Jane Sullivan, ten years a kitchen maid, indicted for stealin' a moldycheese and died in prison o' jail fever.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Stop, stop! Enough, enough...

(The OFFICER OF THE COURT addresses the JURORS.)

OFFICER OF THE COURT

Do you solemnly swear?

THE JURORS

(swearing with rage) Damn! Blast! Bollocks!! Bloody bitchin' hell! Screw the ole scabby! Curse the ole Bugger! Hell and damnation! A pox on his pecker! Shove it up your arse!

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

How say you ladies and gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What?! Wait! There hasn't been a proper trial! There's no lawyer for my defense! I haven't been permitted to argue my case!

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

(banging his gavel) Silence! How say you ladies and gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?

JURORS

Guilty!!!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

'Sblood! This was a mistrial if there ever was one!

DINGLY CHUFF

You ought to know!

THE JURORS

(laughing loudly) Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!!

(CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD slams down his gavel, and the laughter ceases.)

CHIEF JUSTICE TWO FOLD

The jury finds you guilty! Therefore, in passing sentence of death upon you, I hereby fix the date of execution for the tenth of March, being one calendar month from today.

Remove the prisoner!

(The OFFICER OF THE COURT and several JURORS remove the judge, lifting him bodily from the room. The JURORS laugh as the JUDGE screams and struggles. Blackout.)

SCENE 6

(Hours later. The JUDGE is lying on the floor of the study with his FERA frolicking around him. DORA enters, gasps, and kneels by the judge, making the sign of the cross.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Wh...what?

DORA

O' Lord, yer honor, oh, thank God you're still alive. Wake up, sir, wake up!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hey?! What? What? Oh, Dora... Where am I? 'Sblood! What has happened? It must have been a nightmare.

DORA

There, there, your honor, sir.

(The TWO FERA peek out, waving their paws.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, no...there you are, you foul fiends of hell!

DORA

Oh, Lord.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Not you, Dora. Oh, God, oh, God, what am I to do?

DORA

You're feverish, sir.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Good! Perhaps I'll die.

DORA

Oh, Lord help me, sir, but there's somethin' I got to tell yer lordship. You may dismiss me after, but it ain't Christian t' keep it to meself no longer, your honor. Your wife asked Doctor Hess...

(The FERA emerge and whenever DORA speaks of Doctor Hesselius, they make a racket to keep the judge from hearing. The JUDGE shouts to DORA when he speaks, although she cannot hear the Fera.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hush up! Not you, Dora! Never mind me. What did you say?! Be quick and speak up!

DORA

I can't! Yer wife spoke to Doctor...

(DORA returns to the desk, picks up the book Gertrude had referred to, and points to the author's name.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hesselius?! Doctor Hesselius?

DORA

Yes, yes! And he said it's the green...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

In my ear, Dora! They won't let me hear!

DORA

He said it's the green tea that's been poisonin' yer lordship! It's makin' you see things you oughtn' to, but she's been...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

'Sblood! I can't hear a damn thing! They make a racket every time you speak. Nod your head! So Doctor Hesselius was here? In this house?!

(DORA nods as The FERA increase their racket and attempt to block the judge's view.)

DORA

Yes, m'lord, he was right here in this very room!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And what did he say?! Oh, Lord! Stop your infernal ravings!

(The FERA are furious, jumping up behind DORA.
The JUDGE embraces her, weeping.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, Dora, Dora, I can't hear a bloody word, but you're saving my wretched life. Please, dear God, please find the doctor and bring him here!

DORA

But sir, I don't know where to look.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Go to him and don't, for godssake, spare the expense. My life depends on it. Now wait! Wait! Can you write?

DORA

No, m'lord.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Blast! Alright then, keep nodding your answers. Did my wife ask Doctor Hesselius to come here?

(DORA nods.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Thank God! He's the only man to help me. Shut your vile mouth! Not you, Dora, never you!

DORA

But your lordship, he said it's your tea from India.

(DORA walks to the tea service, picks up the cup, and shakes her finger as if scolding.)

DORA

No tea! And yer wife's been tryin' to poison...

(GERTRUDE enters.)

GERTRUDE

Dora, you may leave now!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Gertrude, Doctor Hesselius was here?! Why didn't you tell -- Yiiiiiiiiiii!!!

(The FERA have begun thrashing the JUDGE who screams with pain and dashes from the room!)

DORA

(shouting) She didn't tell you 'cause she's murderin' you, that's why!

GERTRUDE

Get out of this house! Get out before I throttle you!

DORA

Yes, ma'am, I'll get out alright. I'll get out n' tell every livin' soul who'll listen what yer doin' to that poor man!

GERTRUDE

Doing what?! Brewing an innocent pot of tea?

DORA

Brewin' murder, evil wicked murder!

GERTRUDE

Hah! They'll think you're as daft as the judge! And even if they believed you, they'd be glad to see an end to him. Heaven knows he's forced an end to better souls than he!

DORA

I'll find that doctor! I'll find 'im if it's the last thing I do!

GERTRUDE

Humph! He's gone back to Switzerland. I told him the judge died of heart failure. By the time you find him, he's likely to be in his grave.

DORA

May you rot in hell, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Get out!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 7

(Several weeks later. The JUDGE, deathly pale, sits in his robe with the FERA playing at his feet. GERTRUDE enters with tea and cakes.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, Gertie, I'm afraid I'm not long for this world.

FERA ONE

The world's better off.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hold your vicious tongue!

(FERA one pulls out a long viperish tongue.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

'Sblood!

GERTRUDE

Hush, my dear, please don't speak so.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I can't live much longer. One more week and I'm done for. A pity old Hesselius is gone. He would've helped me bamboozle the filthy little apes.

GERTRUDE

I told you, he claimed to have no miraculous remedies, and looked rather sickly himself.

(The FERA burp and begin making shrill monkey-like shrieks whenever the JUDGE mentions Dora.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I wish Dora hadn't left us -- not that I blame her. She had something to tell me. Ha, ha! Look at you two! You become agitated every time I say Dora. Dora! Dora! Dora! Let me think now -- oh, shush! That was no more than two weeks ago but my mind's such a muddle, I can't finish a coherent sentence -- oh, shut your infernal shrieking!

GERTRUDE

Drink your tea, dear.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I've had enough. Why are you always so insistent I drink my tea?

GERTRUDE

Really, Elijah, I'm not insistent. Don't drink it if you don't wish to.

(JUDGE HARBOTTLE picks up his tea cup, toying with it, as the FERA pull at his legs.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hmmm. The last thing Dora did was pick up a tea cup. Oh, leave me alone, damn you!

FERA ONE

Eat your cake, your lardship.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Ha, ha, very funny! Wretch!

FERA TWO

Blighter!

FERA ONE

Bastard!

FERA TWO

Rotter!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Rogue!

FERA ONE

Finish your tea, your shitship!

FERA TWO

Your prickship!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Don't mind if I do. *(he sips his tea)* Yes, she picked up a tea cup and was shaking her finger like so. Naughty, naughty, no, no...no tea. That's it! Good God, that's it! That's it! Of course! What a fool I've been!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

(hissing viciously) Sssssssssssss....

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Yes, look at you! I'm going to stop drinking tea -- green tea, black tea, blue tea, any tea!

GERTRUDE

Don't be foolish, Elijah. Dora was always fretting about tea, but she's only an ignorant servant. She knows nothing of medicine.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And neither do you! You think tea's the cure for everything under the sun. By God, you've practically got me swimming in it!

GERTRUDE

If tea were the cause of illness, then every man, woman, and child in England would be raving.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And what if they are!? What do you know? What does anyone know?!

FERA ONE

Gertie knows.

FERA TWO

Gertie knows a lot.

FERA ONE

Goodie Gertie, Gertie's good.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

It's the one piece of advice I've never taken. Tell me, Gertie, did Hesselius say anything at all about tea?

GERTRUDE

Yes. He had three full cups and gave me his compliments.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Perhaps he said something to Dora.

GERTRUDE

I was with him the entire time.

FERA ONE

Dora's a devil.

FERA ONE

I hate Dora!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

And Dora hates you too and I hate you and you hate me! Yes, we're all one horrid little family in hate! Ha ha! I don't care what you say, Gertie, I'm taking Dora's advice. In fact, I'm feeling better already! Yes, yes, tea's the thing! Not another swallow, not another drop! Ha, ha! You see, you ugly brutes, it was exactly three months ago that I took to drinking green tea.

FERA ONE

Go drown yourself, your wartship.

FERA TWO

Your fartship.

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

You slime.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

You see, I'd read that it cleared and intensified the power of thought.

FERA ONE

You never had a thought in your putrid life!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I have a thought now, by God, and it's crystal clear, my pets, yes, very clear indeed.

FERA ONE

Your thoughts are damned!

FERA TWO

Your hide is damned!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Damn the judge, damn the judge!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Yes, but I've repented, oh, God, how I've repented. You've made me suffer, you unscrupulous little fiends. 'Sblood, but you're the ugliest beasts.

FERA TWO

You're no prize yourself, your muckship!

FERA ONE

Your duckship!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

You toad!

GERTRUDE

What are you doing now, Elijah?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Oh, nothing, my dear, just admiring my little companions. Ha, ha! Mad as a raving hornet, nothing like the wickedest judge in England for a husband, eh, Gertie?

GERTRUDE

This is a new turn, Elijah. You act as though you're enjoying your affliction.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Hah! I've been stripped of my position and reduced to an invalid! I loathe and despise it.

GERTRUDE

No more than I, Elijah. You certainly don't deserve such suffering.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Don't I? We know damn well I carried cases my own way in spite of counsel and even juries -- by cajolery, violence, and bamboozling. By rights, I should be hanged thrice over!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Hang the judge, hang the judge!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

But I was too cunning for them, ha, ha! Well, they're certainly having a good laugh now!

GERTRUDE

Your associates respect you, Elijah. They're anxious to see you well again.

FERA ONE

Your associates hate you.

FERA TWO

They'd like to see you dead!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Now that's the truth!

(The doorbell rings.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What's that? Who is it?

GERTRUDE

Why, it's probably Thomas with the post. I'll sort it out and bring it to you later, Elijah.

(THOMAS CARWELL, a servant, enters. GERTRUDE approaches him, attempting to escort him from the room.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Wait! One moment there! What is it?

THOMAS

I beg your pardon, sir, there's a gentleman been tryin' to deliver a letter to your lordship for six days now.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Well, why the devil haven't you given it to me?!

GERTRUDE

Because you're in no condition...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Nonsense! I can still read!

GERTRUDE

Really, I insist. If the messenger sees you like this, there's bound to be more gossip.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

I don't give a damn for gossip!

GERTRUDE

Well, at least allow me to sign for it.

THOMAS

I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the gentleman says he's to give the message to the judge directly with a signature of receipt and no one else, ma'am.

GERTRUDE

Yes, yes, I know, but surely...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

It's my message and I'll damn well sign for it and about time too!

(The JUDGE stomps out with the FERA shrieking and clinging to his foot.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Come, come, you two.

(THOMAS and GERTRUDE follow.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

No, no, not you!

(THOMAS follows, but GERTRUDE remains, pacing. The JUDGE returns triumphantly, his message in hand. The FERA are at his heels)

FERA ONE

Don't open it!

FERA TWO

It's your death certificate.

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

(laughing) Ha, ha, ha!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Humph! So what if it is?! It's mine, ain't it? Look here, Mrs. Harbottle! Your invalid husband is actually reading his own correspondence! Whooooooooo!

(The letter is lifted from the judge's hand by FERA ONE who dashes about the room causing GERTRUDE to scream. THOMAS rushes into the study and screams as well.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Give that back to me, you rascal, or I'll squash your head, by God!

GERTRUDE

Elijah! Elijah!

THOMAS

Lord! It's ghosts, ma'am! Save yourself!

(THOMAS dashes off as the letter flies by GERTRUDE causing her to flee as well. The JUDGE finally catches the letter, holding it higher than the FERA can jump. THEY step on the judge's toes and kick him as HE reads.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Ha, ha! I've got it! "My dear Justice Harbottle, I was extremely..." Damn you! "...distressed to learn from your wife that you had perished of heart failure,..." What?! 'Sblood! "...especially since I recently read that you're very much alive and have been discharged of your judicial..." Get down! "...duties. I feel obliged to warn you that a deception is being perpetrated and that the spectral illusions infesting you have an appalling determination to destroy their victims. Please be advised that their access to your senses..." Let go! "...depends upon your physical condition, so confine yourself to cold liquids, and above all, do not drink another drop of -- ouch! -- green tea!" Ha, ha! I knew it! "With patience and confidence in me,..." Blast you! "...I look upon your cure as certain. Your humble servant, Martin Hesselius." 'Sblood! I've been duped! Gertrude! Gertrude, get in here! (*to the Fera*) Go away, you foul idiots! You're not long for this world, by God!

FERA TWO

Neither are you, by Satan!

FERA ONE

By Lucifer!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

By Jove!

(GERTRUDE enters furtively.)

GERTRUDE

Elijah...? Are you alright?

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

No, Gertie, I'm blazing with gout: my wrists and fingers are paralyzed, and I can't finish a thought without interruption. So do be a good girl and take a letter for me. There's fresh paper -- get away! -- at the desk. The truth is they can stop me from writing, Gertie, but they can't stop you, so sit down, there's a good girl.

FERA ONE

Goodie Gertie,...

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

... Gertie's good!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

"My dear Doctor Hesselius" -- did you get that, Gertie? "I have been wild with despair and horror. There is a conspiracy afoot by my own wife to murder me. Not that I blame her, mind you. I haven't been a charitable man. I've wrongfully hung scores of innocents, including her husband. I had brashly assumed no woman in her right mind could love such a scoundrel forgetting that I was one too."

GERTRUDE

Elijah...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Sit down! I'm not finished! "When she deliberately and falsely informed me..." (*to a Fera*) Let go! "...that you had no curatives to recommend, a hopeless resignation supervened, and I've been increasingly agitated by my bestial companions who at this very moment are by my side. They know everything..."

FERA ONE

Everything!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

"...and are frantic and atrocious."

FERA TWO

Who us?

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Tsk, tsk, ha, ha, ha!!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

"They revile." Ha! How do you like that?! You revile! You wretched devils! "They know every word I've written -- I write. I fear this message is very confused as I am so often interrupted and disturbed." Get off me! "By and by, please God, you shall be my salvation, dear Doctor. Ever and sincerely yours, Elijah Harbottle." Now, Gertrude, call Thomas to see that my letter is dispatched post haste. Then I want him to search the whole of London for Dora Trimmer. I suspect she was on to you so you had her sacked. Am I right? Speak up, woman!

GERTRUDE

Well,... yes.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

As for you, Gertie, you shall receive my first act of mercy: I'm giving you a sizable settlement, enough to keep you in beef and pudding since you certainly can't live on sentiment, and your looks are fading by the hour.

GERTRUDE

Elijah...

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Tell me, Gertrude, did you ever have any feeling for me?

GERTRUDE

(pause) Whatever feelings I had were driven out of me long ago.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

You won't miss me then.

GERTRUDE

I will miss the comforts of this house.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Good! Then pack your baggage and don't show your hide here ever again by God, or I'll have you indicted for attempted murder!

(GERTRUDE hesitates, about to speak.)

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Leave me!

(GERTRUDE departs.)

FERA ONE

It's too late, your toadship. You're still going to hang.

FERA TWO

Hang the judge, hang the judge!

FERA ONE

The King against Elijah Harbottle!

FERA TWO

How say you ladies and gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Guilty!! (*hissing*) Sssssssssssssssss.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Guilty, yes! But I've been acquitted! I've been given another chance!

FERA TWO

Hang the judge, hang the judge!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

What did he say? Cold liquids. I'll drown myself in cold liquids. I'll start with milk.
Yes, milk!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Hang the judge, hang the judge!

(The JUDGE starts to leave, but is pushed into his chair
by the FERA.)

FERA ONE

There's a noose poised round your neck, your rakeship.

FERA TWO

Your snakeship.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

You'll lose your hold over me, you'll see! I have a week left before my execution.

FERA ONE

You'll be hung like a sausage.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

No, I'll be preserved like one!

FERA TWO

Preserved for cooking...

FERA TWO

...in the fires of hell.

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

No, I'll ascend to heaven! You'll see: for my wisdom, my compassion.

FERA ONE

Bollocks!

FERA ONE and FERA TWO

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

God is lenient. His Higher Court of Appeal will acquit me...forgive me. Now, let's fix ourselves some milk, shall we? Come, come, you hellish ogres! (*skipping off*) Follow the judge, the judge, the judge!

FERA ONE and TWO

Hang the judge, the judge, the judge!

JUDGE HARBOTTLE

Ha, ha, ha!

(THEY exit, and the JUDGE'S laughter is heard dwindling in the background as lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

Joseph Sheridan LeFanu

Joseph Sheridan LeFanu (1814-1873), a Dubliner and great grandnephew of the dramatist, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was a lifelong melancholic who in later years became a recluse. Although LeFanu was a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin and studied for the bar, he renounced law for journalism and was the editor of several newspapers and periodicals. He married, but when his wife died, withdrew completely from society, refusing to see even his closest friends.

LeFanu was a successful and prolific author, but is most remembered for his supernatural stories. He is considered to be the father of the psychological ghost story, the first to realize that the personality of the beholder of a supernatural manifestation is as relevant as the manifestation itself. LeFanu was interested in fathoming the hidden psyches of his characters, of mapping out the boundaries of their realities, both perceived and imagined.