

# Lurid Tales of the Supernatural

by Fengar Gael  
Adapted from the Ghost Stories  
of Joseph Sheridan LeFanu  
from Dublin, Ireland  
(1814-1873)

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# The Lurid Tales

## I. The Haunted Baronet

Adapted from *The Haunted Baronet*

## II. Green Tea

Adapted from *Green Tea and Mr. Justice Harbottle*

## III. Schalken the Painter

Adapted from *Schalken the Painter*

## IV. Ulton De Lacy

Adapted from *Ulton De Lacy and Carmilla*

### Author's Note

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

# The Haunted Baronet

## CHARACTERS

### THE LIVING

SIR BALE MARDYKES, a middle-aged baronet  
MRS. JULAPER, the housekeeper of Mardykes Hall  
JANET FELTRAM, a young housemaid  
DOCTOR JAMES TORVEY  
TOM MARLIN

### THE DEAD

SIR GUY MARDYKES, Sir Bale's ancestor, age 60 when he died  
MARY FELTRAM: Janet Feltram's mother, age 23 when she died

Note: The play can be performed with a cast of six with doubling:  
Sir Guy Mardykes/Tom Marlin

## TIME

1850

## PLACE

The countryside surrounding the small English town of Golden Friars in Northumberland.  
A single unit set simultaneously depicts the luxurious but careworn parlor  
of Mardykes Hall, and Snakes Island, a mossy, fog-rimmed islet  
with an oaken stump in its center.

**SCENE 1**

(Tempestuous winds howl then fade as lights reveal the gloomy parlor of Mardykes Hall. There hangs a painting of Sir Guy Mardykes (1714) with a powdered periwig. SIR BALE MARDYKES and DOCTOR TORVEY are seated, drinking port. From off-stage a door slams, and MRS. JULAPER'S voice is heard.)

MRS. JULAPER'S VOICE

Agoy, Netty! Where have ye been? Sir Bale is waitin' in the parlor.

(JANET FELTRAM, a frail young housemaid, disheveled from the wind, enters.)

SIR BALE

Good God! Where the devil have you been?! Mrs. Julaper thought you'd drowned and sent for a priest. I even brought the doctor here!

JANET

I was only...

SIR BALE

No matter! I think I begin to see. It's a bore, I know, troubling a girl with a story she knows before, but I'll make mine short.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Excuse me, Sir Bale, but perhaps I'd better be taking my leave.

SIR BALE

No, sir, Doctor Torvey! I'll need a witness to my accusations. I suspect Miss Feltram here of theft and desertion!

JANET

Oh, my Lord, heavens, I don't quite understand, sir. I merely took a stroll and having come upon Cloostead boating house...

SIR BALE

Useless excuses! I took my key last evening, intending to pay the crown and rents, and the money was gone! It's gone and we know where, Miss Feltram. I did not steal my own bank notes, and you have access to my study and it's contents. If you wish to go away, I have no objection to that, but damn me if you'll take my notes with you! Now you may as well produce them here and now as hereafter you'll produce them in a worse place!

JANET

Oh, heavens, I'm feeling very ill...

SIR BALE

So you are! It takes a stiff emetic to get all that money off a guilty stomach and it's like parting with a tooth to give up some bank notes. Of course you're ill, but that's no sign of innocence, and I'm no fool. Now be a good girl and give them up quietly.

JANET

May my maker strike me...

SIR BALE

And so he will -- if there's justice in heaven! Now give it up forthwith, you damned wench, or I'll get a warrant, and have you searched pockets, bag and baggage!

JANET

Oh, Lord, am I awake?

SIR BALE

Wide awake and so am I! You don't happen to have it about you now?

JANET

God forbid, sir! I never dreamed of hurting you. Good heavens, you shouldn't think that! It all comes of my poor impatient temper and complaining as I do, but oh, Sir Bale, you could not think I ever meant to trouble you by law or any other annoyance. I'd like to see the stain removed from my family, but to touch your property, oh, no! That never entered my mind, by heaven! That never entered my mind! I'm not cruel, I'm not rapacious, I don't care for money...

SIR BALE

You care for mendacity, you witless, snivelling liar!

DOCTOR TORVEY

Really, Sir Bale, you're driving the girl to distraction.

SIR BALE

Then she should stop blubbering and give up the money! *(to Janet)* You know devilish well I can't spare it, and I won't spare you if you put me to it. I've said my say!

JANET

Oh, sir, oh, Sir Bale, it's impossible! You can't believe it! When did I ever wrong you?! You've known me since I was no higher than the table, and...

(JANET bursts into tears and dashes off.)

SIR BALE

I'm convinced she stole those notes! Perhaps I became more excited than I would normally allow, if you'll pardon me, Doctor, but my financial condition is sorely vexed by debts at present. *(pause)* Well, sir, how do you like Mardykes Hall?

DOCTOR TORVEY

It's been a long time, Sir Bale, since I've had the pleasure of seeing it.

SIR BALE

Places change imperceptibly -- in detail at least -- a good deal.

DOCTOR TORVEY

And people too-- populations shift. There's an old fellow they call "death".

SIR BALE

And an old fellow they call "doctor" who helps him.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Ha, ha! Well, you certainly have a fine view here, Sir Bale. Cloostead Wood is a pretty object from the water, and a very pleasant place despite the snakes, I daresay.

SIR BALE

Exactly opposite. Cloostead Wood is a very homely object, and there aren't any snakes. In fact, Snakes Island should really be called Sen-Aiks from the seven oaks that grew there.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Eh? That's very curious.

SIR BALE

And very true. One of the stumps is still there.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Ah, yes, the one they say is haunted.

SIR BALE

Ghosts, of course, are nonexistent entities. Only bored fools and Irishmen acknowledge their existence.

DOCTOR TORVEY

That may be, Sir Bale, but most everyone in these parts believes it.

SIR BALE

It's nothing but malicious gossip based on an outrageous lie.

DOCTOR TORVEY

And what lie is that, Sir Bale?

SIR BALE

The claim that my father had illicit relations with that deceitful girl's mother and drowned her. It's preposterous and unjustified slander!

DOCTOR TORVEY

Well, sir, I don't make any judgments about that. But Mr. Healey and the Vicar claim to have seen a woman's spirit swimming in the lake. It makes for an interesting tale if you'd care to hear it.

SIR BALE

Spare me, Doctor.

DOCTOR TORVEY

*(pause)* Well, your view is certainly the very best anywhere. It's a magnificent lake, and what splendid mountains.

SIR BALE

Pon my soul, I wish I could blow them asunder with a charge of buckshot. But I suppose since we can't get rid of them, the next best thing is to admire them.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Ha, ha, ha! I know you couldn't mean that, Sir Bale!

SIR BALE

Most certainly, Doctor. You can't get a mouthful of air or see the sun at morning for those frightful mountains!

DOCTOR TORVEY

Then the lake at all events -- that you must admire, Sir Bale.

SIR BALE

No, sir, I don't admire the lake. I'd drain it if I could. I hate the lake. There's nothing so gloomy as a lake pent up among barren mountains. *(indicating the portrait)* I can't perceive what possessed old Guy Mardykes to build down here, unless it was the fish, and precious fish it is-- pike! I don't know how people digest it. I certainly can't.

## DOCTOR TORVEY

I thought that having travelled abroad, you would have acquired a great liking for that kind of scenery, Sir Bale, and for boating.

## SIR BALE

Boating, my dear Doctor is he dullest of all sports. Because a boat looks very pretty from the shore, we fancy the shore must look pretty from the boat, and when we try it, we find we have been trapped in a rolling pit and can see nothing right. For my part, I hate boating, I hate the water, and I'd rather have my house at the edge of the moss with an open horizon than be suffocated among impassable mountains. Enough then. There's supper waiting in the next room. Won't you take some?

(Blackout.)

**SCENE 2**

(Shimmering lights reveal Snakes Island. Upon a lone oaken stump sits the spirit of SIR GUY MARDYKES dressed in the style of the painting, his clothing worn to tatters. Sitting beside him is MARY FELTRAM'S spirit, luminous with lake slime and partially clad in the torn remnants of a night dress. SHE makes low droning sounds and stares as if in a trance.)

## GUY MARDYKES

Oh, stop your wailing, you slimy wench, and tell me the winning horse at Windemere! Come on now, whisper in me ear.

## MARY FELTRAM

Hush, hush, I'm searching for my Netty...

(Crossfade to Mary Feltram's vision of JANET, dusting in the dimly lit parlor of Mardykes Hall.)

## MARY FELTRAM

Ah, there's the little fool-- dusting the cobwebs in Sir Bale's parlor.

## GUY MARDYKES

The miserable twit!

## MARY FELTRAM

A gentler, kindlier soul ne'er walked this earth.



GUY MARDYKES

Aye, but she hasn't much to thank nature for, does she?

MARY FELTRAM

How does she endure her wretched excuse for a life?

GUY MARDYKES

What can she do but endure it? What is the power that induces strong soldiers to strip and present their backs to be whipped? Or for that matter, my dear lady, what induced a fair maid like yourself to be tortured and drowned by a man not worth the clods 'neath my shoe?

MARY FELTRAM

The coercion of despair...

GUY MARDYKES

Nay, 'tis more like madness -- some daft calculation that claims it's better to put up with all that is evil than try the alternative.

MARY FELTRAM

My sweet Netty will have her dream soon enough.

GUY MARDYKES

Eh? And what dream is that, Mary m' love?

MARY FELTRAM

There are dreams and there are dreams, my dear. There's some that signify no more than the babble of the lake, and then there's some that get into you -- like possessions.

(As MARY smiles, JANET ceases dusting and stares, as if a dark thought has obtruded.)

GUY MARDYKES

Ho, ho! I pity that poor soul and you'll pity her too, and the world will pity you both if you don't give me the name of that damnable horse!

(Blackout.)

### **SCENE 3**

(Lights brighten in the parlor as MRS. JULAPER enters with a tea tray and JANET sinks wearily into a chair.)

MRS. JULAPER

Sir Bale's gone to Golden Friars so we'll have our tea in the parlor like two respectable ladies.

JANET

Oh, ma'am, I'm so tired of my life. What's the good of living if you're never let alone and called worse names than a dog. Wouldn't it be better, Mrs. Julaper, to be dead? I think so; I think it night and day. I don't care, I'm just going to tell him what I think and have it off my mind. I'll tell him I can't bear it any longer, and I'm leaving Mardykes Hall.

MRS. JULAPER

There now, Netty, don't you be frettin'-- though it's a burnin' shame to worrit any poor soul into this state. Sir Bale is always down on someone or something. Ye like two lumps o' sugar, I think, and look a bit more cheerful, ye must! A good deal o' cream?

JANET

You're so kind, Mrs. Julaper, you're so cheery. I feel quite comfortable after awhile when I'm with you, I feel quite better.

MRS. JULAPER

There, there, child, now drink up.

JANET

I should leave today but I...I'm not well.

MRS. JULAPER

Tell me what's wrong, and I might have a recipe atop the shelf there that will do ye good.

JANET

It is not a matter of that sort that I mean. No, my body's well enough; It is only my spirits are so depressed, and I have such dreams-- you have no idea.

MRS. JULAPER

Dear me, how very odd. Your mother -- heaven be her bed this day -- was very keen for readin' dreams. And what do you dream about? Tell me your dream and I may show you it's a good one.

JANET

Well, Mrs. Julaper, dreams I've dreamed like other people, but this, ma'am, has taken a fast hold. I think it's getting into me; I think there's something trying to influence me.

MRS. JULAPER

Influence ye?! Child! What do ye mean?

JANET

Do you remember that picture of my mother, full length with the silver frame?

MRS. JULAPER

Aye, 'twas the prettiest picture in the house, wi' the gentlest, rosiest face.

JANET

Well, it ain't so gentle now, I can tell you. It's as fixed as marble, with thin lips and a curve at the nostril.

MRS. JULAPER

Agoy! Netty, m' dear! Ye would not name that terrible lookin' creature your own mother.

JANET

Faces change, you see, but it's her talk that frightens me. She has this one idea, and she's telling me I'm not Janet Feltram; I'm Janet Mardykes, and I'm entitled to my share of the fortunes of Sir Bale.

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, Lord! The fancies that come into your head!

JANET

If my mother was really married to Sir Philip Mardykes, then I am Janet Mardykes, sister to Sir Bale. Another girl would make a row and claim her rights, as she's always croakin' in my ear I ought. Oh, think what it was to be a woman turned out of doors and drowned, and her only child robbed of her rightful name! Oh, ma'am, you can't think of it, you couldn't, you couldn't.

MRS. JULAPER

Come, come, Netty, ye mustn't be talkin' like that. I'm sure your mother was an honorable lady and married with a priest's blessin', but it's an old story now and there's naught that can be proved concernin' it, so where's the use of stirrin' that old sorrow? When ye let yer spirits go down, don't ye see, all sorts o' fancies come into yer head.

JANET

There's no fancies in my head, only you asked me what I dreamed. Oh, I'm out of spirits as you say, and...and, oh, I wish, Mrs. Julaper, I wish I was in my coffin and quiet.

MRS. JULAPER

Now that's very wrong of ye, Netty. We must bear and forebear, and take what we're given and be cheerful. Try to think of all the blessin's ye have.

JANET

I have no more blessings than you, Mrs. Julaper, but feeble as I am of will, I'm resolved to leave Mardykes Hall.

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, Lord o' mercy, Netty, were ye not so vexed, I'd beg ye to stay. But, Lord, what's to become of ye?

JANET

I'll take any calling, however humble. All I ask is my bread and board. I heard they need a kitchen maid at Trebeck's farmstead, so I was thinking of crossing the lake. I'll walk along the margins till I reach the bridge to Snakes Island.

MRS. JULAPER

Well, ye'll do no such thing tonight!

JANET

Then there's another bridge that will get me to the other side, to the fells near Trebecks.

MRS. JULAPER

Why, lass, t'would take an hour and more to circle the lake then a long walk uphill. It ain't right for a woman alone, and if the rains keep up and the night falls while you're still on the fells, ye might fall among the rocks.

JANET

I feel the sooner I get away from Sir Bale's wrath, the better, but I might take your advice, Mrs. Julaper. You've always been weather-wise.

MRS. JULAPER

Have a bit more tea, Netty, and chirp up! Didn't I often sing the old rhyme in your ear long ago:

*Always be merry 'neath the sun and the shade,  
For no one delights in a sorrowful maid.*

(Blackout.)

#### SCENE 4

(Howling winds and claps of thunder resound while the spirits of GUY MARDYKES and MARY FELTRAM laugh uproariously.)

GUY MARDYKES

Ha, ha! Satan's excrement on ye, ye thunderin' bubble! This is a horrid storm you're brewin', and the vibrations sound like an invading army! Keep your wild and fitful farts to yourself, you foul whore! What?! Speak up! I can't hear a bloody word for your wind!

MARY FELTRAM

Sir Bale has found his putrid damnable money! In his desk drawer where he'd placed it with his own hand!

GUY MARDYKES

Ha, ha, ha! And I'll wager he isn't feeling a pittance of remorse, the treacherous knave!

(MARY whispers in MARDYKES' ear and points towards the lake.)

GUY MARDYKES

Then why the devil don't you do it? Don't be such a coward! We've got nothing to lose and everything to gain, and we'll have a jolly good time plaguing the bastard!

MARY FELTRAM

Shhhh, here she comes. Oh, Netty, my poor, sweet Netty.

GUY MARDYKES

Be quick then! Come now, Mary! Go, go!

(MARDYKES slaps Mary's backside as she slips into the foggy mist.)

GUY MARDYKES

That's my lassie! That's my beauty!

(MARDYKES scurries to the side to watch as JANET approaches, wearing a cloak and shivering in the cold. MARY FELTRAM leaps up, emitting a long, mournful howl as SHE grasps JANET from behind and pulls her down, shrieking with terror.)

GUY MARDYKES

Ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho, ho! I'm enjoying myself immensely. I might as well be alive! Thank God I'm dead!

(Blackout.)

**SCENE 5**

(The parlor in the late evening. A clap of thundet is followed by a loud rapping at the door. MRS. JULAPER answers in her nightcap and robe. TOM MARLIN and DOCTOR TORVEY enter, carring JANET wrapped in a woolen blanket.)

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, oh, La', sir! Oh, La'! Here's poor dear Netty Feltram come home dead! Sir Bale! Sir Bale!

SIR BALE'S VOICE

*(shouting from his bed chamber)* What?! What's all this bellowing?! Come now, do be distinct!

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, Doctor, Torvey, put 'er here on the couch. I never saw -- good God. Oh, sir, the poor, dear lass.

*(SIR BALE enters, wearing his robe.)*

SIR BALE

Really, Mrs. Julaper! Can't you cry by and by and tell me what's the matter?!

MRS. JULAPER

La', sir, they've done what they can. She's drowned, sir.

SIR BALE

Whose drowned? *(noticing Janet's body)* Ah, is she drowned or is it only a ducking?

DOCTOR TORVEY

I'm afraid she's gone, poor lass.

*(DOCTOR TORVEY covers Janet's head with the blanket.)*

SIR BALE

Well, bear this in mind, all of you: Miss Feltram knew it was in no compliance with my wish that she leave the house. It was her own absolute perversity and perhaps -- I forgive her for it-- a wish in her unreasonable resentment to throw blame upon this house. Mrs. Julaper here knows how welcome she was to stay; we both advised it. No woman in her right mind would go out alone on such a night, but she refused to listen. Isn't that the truth, Mrs. Julaper?

MRS. JULAPER

Aye, sir, that it is.

SIR BALE

Not a healthy human being, an angry whim of her own, poor girl -- and here's the result. Does anyone know what happened?

TOM MARLIN

I was fishin' in the lake in my boat when it came on to thunderin' and lightnin' and blowin' so ye can guess I was headed for home, keepin' Snakes Island betwixt me and the wind. Then all o' a sudden, I seen somethin' come out o' the water by the gunwale, like a hand. By Jen! I leans o'er and took it, and she sagged like and near drew me in. She must o' fell off the bridge and drifted in the current. Then, when I finally hauled 'er on the boat, I headed to shore and got Richard Turnbull to help me get 'er to Golden Friars to Doctor Torvey here, but 'twas too late.

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, La'.

DOCTOR TORVEY

She's been dead for hours. You can be sure she was quite dead by the time Mr. Marlin found her, so nothing was lost by the delay. (*lifting the blanket, revealing an arm*) Here you see, there's the cadaveric stiffness. It's very melancholy, but it's over.

SIR BALE

Thank you, Doctor. Now you must come to the study with me and have some brandy. And Mrs. Julaper, you'll be good enough to see that everything that should be done is looked after. And let Mr. Marlin have some supper and something to drink.

DOCTOR TORVEY

You've been too long in your wet clothes, Tom.

SIR BALE

Come, sir.

(SIR BALE and the DOCTOR depart while MRS. JULAPER helps TOM remove his coat.)

MRS. JULAPER

I suppose I'll be makin' poor Netty's last toilet. I've had to dress many a poor lass for her last journey.

TOM MARLIN

I think I'll take that nip, Mrs. Julaper, if you wouldn't mind makin' me a thimble full o' whiskey.

(JANET sits straight up! But TOM MARLIN and MRS. JULAPER have not yet noticed.)

MRS. JULAPER

I think I'll take a nip myself, Mr. Marlin, but first ye must warm yourself by the --  
 ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

(MRS. JULAPER shrieks, clutching TOM who screams as well. THEY reel, wrestle, and struggle to leave the room as SIR BALE and DR. TORVEY rush in.)

DOCTOR TORVEY

Upon my soul!

SIR BALE

Good God! Mrs. Julaper! Stop your incessant shrieking! Good God in heaven!

(DOCTOR TORVEY feels Janet's pulse.)

DOCTOR TORVEY

Miss Feltram! I...I can't believe this, but I'm seeing it with my own eyes. Lie back. By Jove, Janet, we'd given up hope.

SIR BALE

Hah! We thought you were dead!

DOCTOR TORVEY

I don't think there's a similar case on record.

(MRS. JULAPER and TOM return, creeping cautiously.)

DOCTOR TORVEY

No pulse, no respiration, cold as lead -- all that may be fallacious, but what will they say to cadaveric stiffness? Upon my honor, Sir Bale, I'll send the whole case to my chief, Sir Hansard, in London. I've never seen anything like it.

TOM MARLIN

Ye can say that for certain, sir!



MRS. JULAPER

Oh, thank God, Netty, you're alive. But I've lost a good ten years for the scare ye gave me.

SIR BALE

You physicians are unquestionably a very learned profession, but there's just one thing you know nothing about.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Eh? What's that?

SIR BALE

Medicine! I was aware that you never knew what was the matter with a sick person, but I didn't know until now that you couldn't tell when one was dead.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Hah! Well,...ha, ha, ha! Yes, well, you see...ha! You certainly have me there! But it's a case without parallel, it is, Sir Bale, upon my honor.

SIR BALE

I shall take it for granted that Miss Feltram will do very well, and should anything go wrong, I can send for you -- unless she should die again, and in that case I think I shall take my own opinion!

(Blackout.)

## **SCENE 6**

(A week later on Snakes Island. GUY MARDYKES sits drinking from a tankard, then gazes up, squinting as lights reveal SIR BALE reading in his parlor.)

GUY MARDYKES

Look at him, the filthy scoundrel! A whole hoard of blue devils over him. He's dyspeptic, has the gout, and is in debt to his eye sockets. Ha, ha, ha! And look who's coming to visit. Ho, ho, ho!

(The lights fade on MARDYKES as JANET enters the parlor. Her voice and mannerisms are altered to resemble those of Mary Feltram-- for Janet's body is now infused with the spirit of her dead mother.)

SIR BALE

Ah, Miss Feltram. I fancied you were in your bed. I little expected to find you up and about. I think the doctor gave very particular instructions that you were to remain perfectly quiet.

JANET

*(smiling coyly)* But I know more than the doctor.

SIR BALE

I think, Miss, you would be better in your bed.

JANET

Oh, come, come, come!

SIR BALE

It seems to me you rather forget yourself!

JANET

Easier to forget oneself, Sir Bale, than to forgive others at times.

SIR BALE

That's the way fools knock themselves up. What's brought you in here?

JANET

To observe you.

SIR BALE

I had intended speaking to you in a conciliatory way. You seem to make that impossible, and in fact, I don't know what to make of you -- unless you are ill and ill you might be walking about in your condition.

JANET

Wonderful effort for me.

SIR BALE

Rather surprising in a girl so nearly drowned.

JANET

I know you don't like the lake, sir, but I do. And so it is: as Antaeus touched the earth, so I the water, and rise refreshed.

SIR BALE

Well, I think you had better go to bed and refresh there. By the way, I meant to tell you that all that unpleasantness about the bank notes is over.

JANET

Is it?

SIR BALE

Yes, I recovered the money and you are not to blame.

JANET

But someone is to blame?

SIR BALE

Well, you are not, and that ends it.

JANET

Ends it? Really, how good! How very very good!

SIR BALE

As far as I can see, everything is settled between us. There is nothing to prevent your leaving Mardykes Hall now.

JANET

But before I go, I want to extend my gratitude by paying off your debts, and seeing you prosperous once again.

SIR BALE

A very good song and well sung, but I believe you've become quite eccentric. Your adventure in the lake has upset you a good deal, and you really should rest till you return to your old ways.

JANET

What's the matter, Sir Bale, are you afraid of my new ways?

SIR BALE

I'm not accustomed to this sort of arrogance.

JANET

But you could grow accustomed to the idea of my paying your mortgages?

SIR BALE

That's preposterous. You're only a maid and poor as a beggar. However, it's very kind of you. The idea shows a kindly disposition.

JANET

I've found an old man, a gypsy, here in Cloosted Woods who sits upon an old oak stump. *(drawing forth a leather pouch)* Look here.

SIR BALE

A gypsy! You mean to say he gave you that?

*(JANET nods.)*

SIR BALE

It was the custom to give the gypsy a trifle. It's a great improvement making him fee you.

JANET

He put that in my hand with a message. What would you give to know the winner of the Heckleston races?

SIR BALE

Ah, so your gypsy's a fortune teller?

JANET

I could lend you this money to make your game.

SIR BALE

Do you mean that really?

JANET

This is quite a purseful of guineas.

SIR BALE

You mean to say you got all that from a gypsy here in Cloosted Wood?

JANET

Yes, and from a friend who is...myself.

SIR BALE

Yourself?! Then it's your's? You lend it?

JANET

Myself and not myself, as like as voice and echo, woman and her shadow.

SIR BALE

Humph! Perhaps this gypsy you speak of found the money where you found him, and in that case, as Cloosted Wood and everything in it is my property, then his lending it to me is like my servant handing me my hat and calling it a present.

JANET

You would not be wise to rely upon the law, Sir Bale, and to refuse help that comes unasked. But if you like your debts and mortgages as they are, then keep them, and if you like my terms as they are, then take them, and when you have made up your mind, let me know.

(JANET starts to leave.)

SIR BALE

Wait! Come back, Miss Feltram! Come back, Janet. There, my dear, sit down and let us talk this odd business over. You must have mistaken what I meant. I should like to hear all about it.

JANET

All is not much, sir. In the forest I met a gypsy who has a friend who can foretell events. He told me the names of the winners of the first three races at Heckleston, and gave me this purse with leave to lend as much money as you care to stake upon the races. I take no security. You shan't be troubled, except that you must promise to pay a visit to the lender on his terms if he seeks you out.

SIR BALE

Hmmm. Well, those are not bad terms.

JANET

No, not bad.

SIR BALE

I should like to hear the names of the winners.

JANET

You shall if you swear to the lender's terms and promise to keep all secrets respecting the lender's prophecies.

SIR BALE

Yes, yes, I promise.

JANET

Now do as I do.

(JANET wets her index and middle fingers on her tongue and touches her forehead twice and her heart once. SIR BALE mimics her and THEY clasp hands.)

SIR BALE

What's this foolishness? Some gypsy game?

JANET

It means nothing except that someday it will serve you to remember our covenant. And now the names: *(pause as she closes her eyes for an instant)* The winner of the first is Beeswing, of the second, Falcon, and of the third, Lightning.

SIR BALE

Humph! I wish for the sake of my believing that your list was a little less incredible. Not one of those horses you mention is the least likely -- only Beeswing has half a chance.

JANET

So much the better for you. You'll get what odds you please. You had better seize your luck, Sir Bale. On Tuesday, Falcon runs. When you want your money for the purpose, I'm your banker; Cloosted is your bank. Shall you want the purse?

SIR BALE

Certainly, I always want a purse.

(JANET tosses the purse to Sir Bale.)

SIR BALE

Perhaps my luck is turning. *(pause)* Well, I have several appointments, and you ought to return to your bed.

JANET

No, thank you. I believe I'll stay here-- to admire the view.

SIR BALE

Very well, but remember your condition, Janet.

(SIR BALE leaves as GUY MARDYKES leaps out from behind a chair, roaring with laughter.)

GUY MARDYKES

Ha, ha, ha, ha! A penny in a pocket's a merry companion, eh, Mary m' love?

JANET

Yes, Sir Bale's luck is turning indeed -- and so is poor Miss Feltram's. Sir Bale will be the meek little mouse and Janet the bully now.

GUY MARDYKES

You're a frozen hearted woman, Mary Feltram, and a damn sight uglier in your daughter's flesh than your own, you water-bellied wench! Ha, ha!

JANET

He'll put several thousand pounds in his purse from Heckleston.

GUY MARDYKES

Good! Good!

JANET

Thousands more at Langston Lea with Silver Bell and Misty Autumn.

GUY MARDYKES

Eh?! Go on, go on!

JANET

And even more at Beyermore with Karps Kapers.

GUY MARDYKES

Old Hell's Heel's! Ha, ha, ha!

JANET

Then comes Rindemere.

GUY MARDYKES

Yes, yes? Go on!

JANET

Every hay-penny he has and every hay-penny borrowed will go down on Rainbow, and Rainbow will go down on the track!

GUY MARDYKES

Ace duce! You rascal! Now you're talking, Mary m' love!

JANET

Serves the old boy right. We'll suck his blood yet!

GUY MARDYKES

How Mary? A fall? Poison? Possession?

(JANET smiles mysteriously.)

GUY MARDYKES

Damn you! What then?!

JANET

How did you die?

GUY MARDYKES

In disgrace, heh heh.

JANET

How did I de?

GUY MARDYKES

Likewise.

JANET

But with a difference. You took your own life while mine was taken from me. I was drowned by Sir Bale's father; you threw yourself in. The crimes of the father will be visited upon the son.

GUY MARDYKES

You'll be neat and tidy about, it won't you Mary, m' dear?

JANET

You're the one to be neat and tidy -- for you're the one to do it.

GUY MARDYKES

What? How so?

JANET

*(walking off, smiling)* You'll see soon enough.

GUY MARDYKES

You can't leave me like this, Mary! Damn you, you insolent witch! I'll set my black dogs after you! Wretch!!!

(Blackout.)



**SCENE 7**

(Six months later. SIR BALE is lying ill on the sofa, attended by DOCTOR TORVEY who is packing his medicine bag, preparing to leave.)

DOCTOR TORVEY

Well, you ought to be in your bed, that's all I can say. Your pulse is at a hundred and ten, and if you cross the lake and walk about Cloosted, you'll be raving before you come back.

SIR BALE

I will take care not to fatigue myself, and the air will do me good. In any case, I cannot avoid going.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Well, sir, I can't think of any business more important than a body's health.

SIR BALE

What about a body's debts and honor, sir?

DOCTOR TORVEY

What good's a body at all if it's dead?!

SIR BALE

Hah! I understand you have trouble diagnosing the dead!

DOCTOR TORVEY

And I understand you have trouble remembering where you put your bank notes! Good day, sir!

(DOCTOR TORVEY starts to leave.)

SIR BALE

Wait! Wait, Doctor Torvey, come back. I...I feel so faint; I'm not quite myself. I don't mean to be disagreeable; I must talk to someone.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Sir Bale, if it will make you less melancholy, unburden yourself by all means.

SIR BALE

I have such a load upon my spirits, sir. For some inexplicable reason, I'm...well, I'm afraid of Miss Feltram, and so is everyone else in this damnable household.

DOCTOR TORVEY

She has grown a bit daft and sullen to be sure, but that's no reason to fear her. She's only a maid and a poor little slip of a lass at that.

SIR BALE

Why the devil does she make me so uncomfortable? Why can't she be like...like she was?

DOCTOR TORVEY

Can't you ask her to leave, to find a position elsewhere?

SIR BALE

No, no, I can't. You see,... well, to be honest, I...I'm dependent on her for her...her services, but that's only half my vexation. There's my dreams, Doctor. I keep seeing this wretched woman with a dripping hand beckoning me and repeating the same phrase over and over. Good God, it's driving me mad!

DOCTOR TORVEY

What does she say?

SIR BALE

She says the estate of Mardykes will belong to a Feltram.

DOCTOR TORVEY

Come, come, my dear sir, this will never do. These dreams accompanying fever frequently precede an attack, and a poor's soul's raving before he knows he's ill. Once you've gained your strength, you'll shake off these illusions.

SIR BALE

Well, if it's an illusion, it's certainly impressed itself on my mind. Miss Feltram claims the wet hand is the same one that drew her into the lake. She insists my dream is a prophecy. Humph! She might have said something more likely. If there were any Feltrams rich enough, they might have the estate, but there ain't. They're all paupers! Of course anyone can see what it was.

DOCTOR TORVEY

What was?

SIR BALE

The hand. It was simply the reflection of her own hand in the water, in that lightning.

DOCTOR TORVEY

There's many tales about the lake, sir, and many respectable souls claim to have seen the same. Of course, only God knows for certain.

SIR BALE

God and the devil! I hate the lake. Oh, bother. I'm sounding as daft as Miss Feltram. Thank you for your trouble. I feel a good deal better for having spoken my thoughts.

DOCTOR TORVEY

No trouble at all, Sir Bale, and don't fret yourself so. If you follow my advice, by God, you'll be your old self in a week's time. Good day, sir.

(DOCTOR TORVEY departs.)

SIR BALE

Good day. Humph! Miss Feltram! Janet!!! Get in here!! Oh, God, I'm at my wits end!

(JANET enters.)

SIR BALE

Oh, thank heaven. Well, what's happened?! What did he say?!

JANET

You should not talk to Doctor Torvey so; he's the greatest tattler in town.

SIR BALE

I'll talk to anyone I damn well please!

JANET

The old gentleman's in a wax. He was miffed because you wouldn't take the trouble to cross the lake to speak to him yourself. That's why you haven't been winning. It was part of the agreement that you come when he asked.

SIR BALE

Damn! Did you tell him I'm half dead? Besides which I would have backed that damn horse in any case! Oh, what a fiend you've discovered!

JANET

He called you hard names enough and to spare, but I brought him round.

SIR BALE

Well, what did he say?

JANET

He said the estate of Mardykes will belong to a Feltram.

SIR BALE

Humph! We both know that's preposterous. You're echoing my dreams to make me think I'm daft. So much for your conjurer!

JANET

So much for you if you don't make amends.

SIR BALE

What the devil does that mean?

JANET

He may make amends to you if you make amends to him.

SIR BALE

Ha! What can that wretched impostor do? Damn, I'm past helping now.

JANET

You shouldn't talk so, Sir Bale. Be civil. You must please the old gentleman. We both know you're nearly ruined. You must go and make it up.

SIR BALE

Make it up?! With a fool of a gypsy who can't even guess at what's coming! Why trouble my head about a fellow who wishes to see me disgraced simply because I've no desire to meet him? You know how I feel about the lake. It may be superstitious, but I absolutely refuse to cross the water. Around and about by horseback and over the bridge on foot, I'll consent to, but by boat, never!

JANET

No man, young or old, likes to be frumped by someone he's helped. Why cross his fancy for a childish fear? Go to him as he chooses and your problems will be solved.

SIR BALE

If he waits for that he'll wait till doomsday. I won't go and Doctor Torvey says it will kill me. And I can't understand what difference it can possibly make to him if I come by horse or by boat. Or for that matter, why can't he come to me?!

JANET

I can't say, can you?

SIR BALE

Of course I can't! What audacity for a fellow like that to presume to prescribe to me! Besides, he's ruined me and I no longer believe in him.

JANET

He misled you on purpose, and there's reason in it -- often clear and not ill natured.

SIR BALE

Why can't you fetch him yourself? Bring him here and let him remember I want a banker more than a seer. Let him give me a lift as he did before, and lend me money!

JANET

He'll not stick at that. When he takes up with someone, he carries them through.

SIR BALE

The races at Beyermore -- I might retrieve at them. Oh, leave me a minute. I must think! (*shouting*) Mrs. Julaper! Mrs. Julaper, bring me some sherry!

JANET

Good day, Sir Bale. This afternoon would be a fine time for a sail.

(Before leaving JANET wets her fingers and touches her forehead and heart, reminding Sir Bale of their pact.)

SIR BALE

Never! I'd sooner die!

JANET

Better to die rich than destitute.

(JANET leaves as MRS. JULAPER enters.)

MRS. JULAPER

We've no sherry left, sir, but there's a jug o' mulled claret.

SIR BALE

Humph! I ought to take a mug of stale beer. That homely solace better befits a ruined gentleman.

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, you're not that, Sir Bale. You're no worse off than half the lords and ladies that are goin'.

SIR BALE

That's very kind of you, Mrs. Julaper, but look at me. There never was a Mardykes here before that couldn't lay a thousand pounds on the winner of the Beyermore Cup, and what could I bet? Little more than the buttons on my shirt!

MRS. JULAPER

Well, times change, and many things have changed about here. I've been meaning to speak to ye, sir, of Netty -- Miss Feltram.

SIR BALE

Yes, go on.

MRS. JULAPER

It doesn't seem to me she's much improved. Her temper's queer, and every time I catch sight o' her, I feel a horror. 'Twas a time I'd be urg'in' her to stay, but now I may be leavin' myself -- for Dublin, sir, to live wi' my sister. The agitation's gettin' to me, sir, and my nerves ain't the same.

SIR BALE

Please bear with me, Mrs. Julaper. We've all noticed something amiss. The accident's obviously addled her brain. I'll ask for her dismissal soon enough. Just give me more time.

MRS. JULAPER

I'll oblige ye, sir, but I hope you'll be askin' soon. 'Twas a freak accident to be sure, but I ne'er thought it could change a lass so.

SIR BALE

Oh, God, how things can change, Mrs. Julaper. Now, please, will you do me a kindness? (*pointing to the painting of Guy Mardykes*) I want you to destroy that wretched portrait.

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, La', I can't do that, sir. It's been with the Mardykes family for years! Are ye feelin' alright in the head?

SIR BALE

Yes, damn it! It vexes me.

MRS. JULAPER

I'll take it off the wall, Sir Bale, but I won't be destroyin' it.

SIR BALE

Alright then, just get it out of here! I'm going out, but But I want it gone by the time I've returned! And tell Miss Feltram I'll visit her friend this very afternoon. Tell her she's to accompany me!

MRS. JULAPER

Beggin' your pardon, Sir Bale, but Doctor Torvey says yer not to be leavin' the...

SIR BALE

Never mind the doctor! We'll be riding by horseback to the bridge, then going by foot.

MRS. JULAPER

Aye.

SIR BALE

And she's not to be carping about taking the damn boat! Or God help me, I'll take out my whip!

MRS. JULAPER

Oh, La'!

(Blackout.)

### **SCENE 8**

(Snakes Island were GUY MARDYKES is pouring two glasses of green wine from a leather pouch.)

GUY MARDYKES

Ahhh, I can smell ye comin', Mary me love. 'Tis a fine day for settlin' old scores.

(JANET enters, followed by SIR BALE who is startled at the sight of GUY MARDYKES who thrusts a glass in his hand.)

GUY MARDYKES

Well, well, Sir Bale! Sit down, sir!

SIR BALE

My God...

GUY MARDYKES

What's wrong, Sir Bale? Do we gypsies fill you with disgust? Ha, ha!

SIR BALE

No, sir, it...it's just that you bear an uncanny resemblance to an ancestor of mine.

GUY MARDYKES

A handsome devil, eh? Ha, ha! Don't be so vexed, Sir Bale. I've not come to take out my sword and prick ye. Drink! Drink to your better luck next time! And you know what I mean, ha, ha!

(THEY lift their glasses, drink, and sit in silence for a moment, observing each other.)

GUY MARDYKES

Well, sir, you've played with me and won and lost; you drank your glass like a genial companion, and you've humored your sister's mother. But ye haven't crossed the lake, sir! Ye haven't crossed the lake!

SIR BALE

And I haven't any sister, sir!

GUY MARDYKES

Why, Netty here's your sister, and you just drank a glass with her mother.

SIR BALE

What utter nonsense! I see only you and Miss Feltram here.

JANET

*(glaring at Sir Bale)* And I see a scoundrel -- just like his father.

GUY MARDYKES

We know a generous share of your father's estate was intended for Netty, and she shall have her due.

JANET

Our father has a copy of his will hidden in the house. Did you know that, Sir Bale? Would you like to know where it's is?

GUY MARDYKES

Tut, tut, don't protest, sir, and no need to fret. It shan't inconvenience your lordship. Everything will be settled soon after you die.

JANET

That shouldn't bother a villain like yourself, eh, Sir Bale?

SIR BALE

*(standing to leave)* I won't participate in this folly! I'm an ill man.



GUY MARDYKES

If you don't participate, my friend won't tell us which horses will win at Beyermore, will she, Netty?

JANET

Certainly not, but it won't make much difference to Sir Bale.

SIR BALE

My God, I...I feel wretched.

GUY MARDYKES

Sit down, Sir Bale. Sit down or I'll set my black dogs after ye!

(MARDYKES throws a l leather purse at Sir Bale's feet.)

GUY MARDYKES

Pick it up!

(SIR BALE picks up the purse and sits.)

GUY MARDYKES

There now, that gold wagered on the right nag will make you a very rich man, Sir Bale. Now, lassie, tell Sir Bale here the names of the winners.

JANET

I'll tell him soon enough, but first, wouldn't you like to know where the will is hidden?

(A dim light focuses on MRS. JULAPER standing on a chair, removing the portrait.)

JANET

Go ahead, you're bursting to tell him.

GUY MARDYKES

It's behind Guy Mardykes' portrait, ha, ha!

JANET

You shouldn't have had it removed, Sir Bale.

(SIR BALE gapes aghast as MRS. JULAPER retrieves the will, cautiously unfurling it.)

JANET

Mrs. Julaper can't read nor write, but when Doctor Torvey comes to call tomorrow, she's bound to show it to him, and Doctor Torvey's the greatest tattler in town!

SIR BALE

And you? Why haven't you exposed me and taken Mardykes for yourself?

JANET

Pooh, pooh, I'm not a greedy woman, Sir Bale.

SIR BALE

In that case, I'll go back and destroy the damn thing myself -- for whatever it's worth.

GUY MARDYKES

Oh, it's worth very little, Sir Bale -- just enough to restore the good name of Feltram. 'Course the only names you'll be wantin' are the names of the winning horses.

SIR BALE

Of course I want them, but I'm not going through hell to get them!

GUY MARDYKES

Did y'know, Sir Bale, that the names come from the lake.

SIR BALE

What...?

GUY MARDYKES

Aye, 'tis the merest poetry, but only milady hears them and then she whispers in me ear. But the slimy bitch ain't speakin' to me today. She'll only speak to you, Sir Bale, so just wade out a length or two and press your ear to the water.

JANET

If you listen to the ripple, the lips of the lake will whisper the winner's names.

SIR BALE

Don't be daft!

GUY MARDYKES

Tut, tut, a pity to lose your fortune for a childish fear of water.

SIR BALE

It's not fear; it's common sense! There can't possibly be anything human living in a lake!

GUY MARDYKES

'Tain't far, Sir Bale, just a few steps and a slight tilt of your head.

SIR BALE

I'm vexed, I'm half dead, and you know I need money. I'm ruined without it.

(GUY MARDYKES snatches the pouch of money.)

GUY MARDYKES

The sound o' gold's a pretty tune, eh, Sir Bale? Take it with you and tell milady you'll be bettin' at Beyermore.

SIR BALE

I feel like a damn fool, but I'll humor you on one condition: if Miss Feltram here goes with me.

GUY MARDYKES

I'm afraid that's impossible, Sir Bale.

SIR BALE

What do you mean it's impossible?! I'm ill, I'm liable to get vertigo and lose my balance.

GUY MARDYKES

But Miss Feltram can't accompany you because Miss Feltram is dead, ha, ha, ha, ha!

SIR BALE

Hah! I know your tricks! You're plotting to make me daft.

GUY MARDYKES

Poor Netty's a corpse, but her mother -- Satan rest her soul-- is my own dear companion, eh, Mary m' pet?

JANET

You see, Sir Bale, the Mardykes curse had flowers that came back to root.

SIR BALE

Stop provoking me, or I'll dismiss you bag and baggage!

GUY MARDYKES

Get on with it, Mary! He's getting so uppity, I'm inclined to spew up me supper.

(JANET goes limp, her body collapsing.)

SIR BALE

Good God! She's fainted. No, no, by God, she...she's gone! Shhhh, listen. No pulse.  
(*bending his ear to her breast*) Her heart's stopped beating! No respiration. She...she's cold as a dead mackerel. I...I can't believe it! She seemed healthy enough.

GUY MARDYKES

Netty's in heaven, ye can be sure of that, Sir Bale, but you'll be joining milady and me here by the lake. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

(The ghostly MARY FELTRAM suddenly appears behind SIR BALE who turns and stares, horrified.)

MARY FELTRAM

Come now, your lordship, you remember me? Yes, I'm Mary Feltram, Janet's dear departed mother.

(SIR BALE attempts to scream but can only gasp and sputter, clasp his chest. MARY takes one arm and MARDYKES takes the other.)

MARY FELTRAM

You won't mind a nice little dip now, will you, Sir Bale?

GUY MARDYKES

Trust me, it's paradise for a gambling man!

(Now MARDYKES relinquishes SIR BALE to MARY who leads him into the misty lake.)

MARY FELTRAM

Come, Sir Bale, you'll learn to love the lake.

(MARY descends, pulling Sir Bale's arm. THEY disappear into the water as a mournful howl is heard, followed by a splash.)

GUY MARDYKES

By Jupiter! By Jove!! Ha, ha, ha!!

(Blackout.)

END OF PLAY

# Green Tea

## 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?

\

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

# Schalken the Painter

## CHARACTERS

### THE LIVING

GODFREY SCHALKEN, an art student, age 22  
 MASTER GERARD DOUW, a painting teacher, age 50  
 ROSE VELDERKAUST, his niece age 19  
 WILLIAM HORTON, an art student  
 JASON WELLER, an art student  
 NICHOLAS SPAIGHT, an art student

### THE DEAD

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN, a grotesque elderly Dutch woman  
 DIETER VANDERHEUSEN, her son, equally grotesque, age 35

Note: The role of Dieter Vanderheusen can be played by one of the art students, thereby reducing the cast to seven

## TIME

1820

## PLACE

London, England. An artist's studio with several easels and stools for the students, a chair for the model, and a functional door.

**SCENE 1**

(GODFREY SCHALKEN, an unkempt but handsome student, is earnestly painting the beautiful ROSE VELDERKAUST.)

ROSE

Enough, Godfrey! I've been sitting patiently for two full hours, and you haven't spoken a single word. Are you always so serious or am I a challenging subject?

GODFREY

For me, even a platter of fish is a challenge.

ROSE

Oh, don't be so discouraged. All artists with discernment are dissatisfied with their work.

GODFREY

Your nose is hooked, your mouth pinched, and you have the blind unfocused stare of a lunatic!

ROSE

Oh, please, Godfrey, may I look?

GODFREY

No! Absolutely not! Not until I've finished.

ROSE

Well, then, I'm going home. It's getting dark, and Uncle Gerard will be wondering where I've been. I do wish you weren't so secretive with him. He's mentioned you often. I'm certain he's fond of you.

GODFREY

Not fond enough to let me marry his niece.

ROSE

Nonsense, you don't know that.

GODFREY

He has no respect for me as a painter, a fellow artist.

ROSE

But Uncle Gerard rarely praises anyone. Really, Godfrey, you can't expect to win his acclaim overnight. He spent years painting before he became a master.



GODFREY

Yes, but we mustn't tell him till the time is right. I'll wait until the portrait's completed and I'm satisfied he has a high opinion of it. At the rate I'm progressing, that should be in no less than twenty years.

ROSE

Well, you've certainly taken extraordinary pains. It ought to be a masterpiece.

GODFREY

It's not even a fair likeness. I could never do you justice; I shall never do anyone justice!

(GODFREY covers the canvas with a cloth.)

ROSE

Godfrey, you may be undistinguished now, but your industry will be rewarded. Trust me, be patient.

GODFREY

My patience is exhausted. I sometime wonder if I'm really destined to be a painter. It doesn't come naturally to me the way it would if I were truly gifted. I'd give anything on earth to be an artist, a real artist like you uncle.

ROSE

To me you're the greatest artist in the world. Now that should raise your spirits! Don't be so morbid!

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN enters silently, wearing a black cloak and broad-brimmed hat which shadows her features. SHE utters a short, sudden sniff, causing ROSE and GODFREY to turn abruptly. SHE speaks with a Dutch accent.)

ROSE

*(gasps!)*

GODFREY

Good God!

ROSE

Excuse me, madam, you quite startled us.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

I beg your pardon. I am Frau Vanderheusen of Rotterdam. I must speak with Godfrey Schalken upon matter of importance.

GODFREY

I am he, madam.

ROSE

Excuse me, but I was just taking my leave.

(GODFREY escorts ROSE to the door.)

ROSE

Good day, madam.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Good day, miss.

GODFREY

Won't you please be seated?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

I prefer to stand, thank you. I see you are a painter, sir.

GODFREY

Yes, madam, a pupil of Master Douw's.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Indeed, I met him when he lived in Rotterdam as a boy. Were you ever there yourself?

GODFREY

No, but my father was born in Leyden.

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN moves to lift the cloth covering Godfrey's canvas.)

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Might I have a look?

GODFREY

Well, I...I suppose.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Who is she?

GODFREY

The lady who just left. I dare say the likeness isn't worthy enough to discern that.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

The artist has not yet been born who can depict Rose Velderkaust with any accuracy.

GODFREY

I...I was hoping to be that artist.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

A pity, sir, you are not. It is mediocre by any standards.

GODFREY

Well, Frau Vanderheusen, I would not be justified in defending my merits; however, I would like to inquire how you are acquainted with Miss Velderkaust when she apparently did not recognize you?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You may inquire, sir, but I feel no obligation to answer.

GODFREY

Then what business brings you here to see me?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Why do you think I am here?

GODFREY

Obviously not to commission a portrait. If you're having a collection valued, you should inquire after Master Douw.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

No, no, I am here to discuss my son's future.

GODFREY

Then you should still speak to Master Douw.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Nonsense, I should speak with you.

GODFREY

I'm afraid I don't understand. Is your son a painter, madam?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

My son is an artist; *you* are a painter. You would serve the world better to paint landscapes or the sea, and leave the portraits for those with the vision to penetrate the flesh. Your painting has no soul.

GODFREY

And you, madam, have no heart.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush, is our tempestuous painter in a pet?

GODFREY

Please, madam, I beg of you, tell me your business so I may continue my work.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Your work is my business. I desire to place in your hands a gift in value a thousand times that which you have the right to expect. It shall be yours exclusively while you live. Is that liberal?

GODFREY

Madam, I'm sure your offer is extremely liberal, and whatever hesitation I may feel arises solely from my not having the foggiest notion of what you're talking about!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

If I satisfy you that my gift is what you wish, then I expect you will forward my suit with authority. If you approve my proposal, you must close with it here and now, for I cannot wait for calculations and delays.

GODFREY

How can I approve of your proposal when I don't know what it is?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

It is an alliance which will prove alike advantageous and honorable to my son.

GODFREY

But I've never met your son.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

As to him and my own respectability, you must take that for granted at present -- for you can discover nothing more about us than I choose to make known. If the gift I mean to leave in your hands satisfies you, and if you don't wish my proposal to be at once withdrawn, you must write your name to this covenant.

(Pause as FRAU VANDERHEUSEN hands a contract to GODFREY who reads it.)

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Are you content?

GODFREY

This is impossible! Who are you?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You shall have sufficient security for my respectability: if you are honorable, my word; if you are sordid, my gold, and of that you will have more than you can possibly imagine.

GODFREY

But how...? How can you even suggest such a thing?!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush, sir painter, I have seen your work and am merely offering you a gift. You are a poor painter who wishes to become an artist; my son is an artist who wishes to become a collector.

GODFREY

But talent is acquired by ardent labors, not given by one person to another by means of a...a contract.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Nonsense. I've bargained with scores of artists, many whose names would astonish you. Really, Mr. Schalken, you are not justified in declining my offer.

GODFREY

Madam, I will not pledge myself unnecessarily.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You need not, but I will show you that I consider it indispensable -- for if you do not sign immediately, I shall leave.

GODFREY

Frau Vanderheusen, I...I must have another day to decide.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Not an hour.

GODFREY

Well, then, I...I must think.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Please sign at once for I am weary.

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN produces the writing materials. GODFREY accepts them reluctantly.)

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Hereafter, you will see the object of our contract come to light, "Master Schalken."

GODFREY

I cannot. Take back your pen!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush, you still have doubts?

GODFREY

It's against nature, against God. I...I cannot sign.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Then go back to your portrait, sir painter.

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN moves to depart, but lingers by the door. GODFREY, thinking she has left, returns to his painting. After a few moments, HE despairs, thrashing the canvas with violent stokes of his brush.)

GODFREY

Damnation! All right, all right! Yes, Frau Vanderheusen! Frau Vanderheusen!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Yes...?

GODFREY

If it's not too late, then we have a bargain!!

(Blackout.)

## **SCENE 2**

(Six months later in the studio where GODFREY and three fellow students: JASON WELLER, NICHOLAS SPAIGHT, and WILLIAM HORTON, are gathered around his easel.)

WILLIAM

Fancy that: Lady Heydukes in a crimson shawl. And she's commissioning two more.

JASON

Not of herself, I hope. I'll wager ten guineas that someday Godfrey will be a richer man than Douw!

(MASTER GERARD DOUW, age fifty, enters. He has a slight Dutch accent.)

MASTER DOUW

And I'll wager the same!

JASON

I beg your pardon, sir, I only meant...

MASTER DOUW

So, so, never mind what you meant. Get back to your painting!

(MASTER DOUW strolls about the studio, stopping at Godfrey's easel.)

MASTER DOUW

Ah, a curious management of light there, Godfrey. I must say the chief apparent merit of the picture is in its handling and not in its subject, eh? Ha, ha! Remember, gentlemen: a great painting must have more than charm of subject. It must have aesthetic values as well: wholeness, harmony, and the radiance of light. A very cunning work, Godfrey, very cunning indeed.

(MASTER DOUW surveys the other student's paintings.)

MASTER DOUW

Good heavens, Jason, Saint Anthony was portly, but not obese! And Nicholas, those apples are the color, texture, and weight of bricks. For heaven's sake, eat the damn things or start again.

NICHOLAS

Ah, yes,...yes, sir, Master Douw.

(MASTER DOUW notices a covered canvas on an easel near Godfrey.)

MASTER DOUW

Ah, what have we here?

GODFREY

Oh, nothing, sir. I'd meant to put it away. Please, keep the canvas covered, sir.

MASTER DOUW

Oh, come now.

GODFREY

Please! I had not intended to show it to you yet, but I will be happy to do so when it's completed.

MASTER DOUW

Good heavens, Godfrey, I merely thought my opinion could be of use to you. After all, you're still my pupil.

GODFREY

Of course, sir, no offense was intended, but this painting is rather special. I...I had hoped to present it as a gift.

MASTER DOUW

A gift?

GODFREY

Yes, sir, to you sir.

MASTER DOUW

Ah, very well then.

(MASTER DOUW moves to WILLIAM'S easel.)

MASTER DOUW

So, so, William, I rather like the asymmetrical placing of the bowls. Very skillful, but much too restrained. Fill up the canvas! Yes, that's it, very good, very good. Well, gentlemen, I'm afraid I must leave you to your labors, but I should return in an hour or so. Good day until then.

NICHOLAS  
Good day, sir.

WILLIAM  
Good day, Master Douw.

JASON  
Good day, sir.

(MASTER DOUW exits.)



JASON

See here, Schalken, that painting of yours is becoming a damnable nuisance. Let's have a look at it.

NICHOLAS

Yes, let's!

WILLIAM

Please!

GODFREY

No!

JASON

We know damn well it's Rose. We're just curious to see how magnificent she is.

NICHOLAS

Come now, don't hoard your masterpiece.

GODFREY

Leave me alone!

(JASON winks at WILLIAM and whispers to NICHOLAS to distract GODFREY.)

NICHOLAS

Blast! I can't seem to get these damnable shadows. Schalken, come here, will you? I need a fresh eye. Look here...

(JASON whips the cover off Godfrey's canvas!)

JASON

Ah, hah!

(Suddenly, JASON realizes the portrait is primitive, covered by violent streaks of color. GODFREY rushes to the canvas, but is pinned back by NICHOLAS.)

NICHOLAS

William! Help me!

WILLIAM

I will not.

GODFREY

Let me go, damn you to hell!

JASON

Let him go.

GODFREY

How dare you!?

JASON

Sorry, old chum, I thought we'd get a preview of another Galatea.

(GODFREY throws the cloth back on the portrait.)

NICHOLAS

It's certainly not up to your usual standards.

JASON

Well, you know what they say about painting your loved ones: the objective eyes is clouded by the heart so to speak.

GODFREY

Yes, it's a very poor piece and I'm very well aware of it, but you've no right to judge it!

JASON

Oh, dash it all, Schalken, don't get so wrought up! But why in heaven's name did you paint those horrid slashes across her eyes?

NICHOLAS

They must have had a lover quarrel.

(JASON and NICHOLAS laugh.)

GODFREY

I know you think you're damned clever, but you're nothing but a pathetic pack of incompetent imitators, and I'd pity you if I thought it was worth the effort. In any case, I'm off to my afternoon sittings: first Cornelius Coombes and ater Henrietta Holst. But don't let me discourage you. Do keep painting, and perhaps someday you'll win some commissions of your own -- if anyone's in the market for tawdry baubles. Tsk, tsk, how very sad really, such wasted aspirations, such misguided ambitions. Good heavens, Nicholas? Did I give you a start? Has the truth struck you dumb? And Jason, you look positively verdant! Do I detect a shade of envy? How very unbecoming.

(JASON is ready to spring, but WILLIAM restrains him. GODFREY, snatching his paint box, leaves with a malicious smile.)

NICHOLAS

He's a brute, an arrogant brute!

JASON

A ruthless slime.

WILLIAM

Well, he's right, you know. Compared to him we are incompetent amateurs. He does win commissions, and he seems to be improving every day. You can't deny the obvious.

JASON

Then there's some insidious law that claims the more accomplished a man's talent, the more degenerate his character.

NICHOLAS

I can't believe our little deception set off such a...a monster, a fiendish monster. Did you see his eyes? He was lit up like the devil himself!

WILLIAM

Your arrogant foolery has brought out the dark side of his nature, and I for one, would like to have been spared the view.

JASON

Damn him!

NICHOLAS

I'm going out for a glass of port. I feel quite ill.

JASON

Damn him, damn him to hell!

NICHOLAS

He's actually given me indigestion.

WILLIAM

Perhaps you deserve it.

JASON

Oh, don't be so smug, you old prig. Come, Nicholas, let's get drunk--- you too William!

(THEY leave together. Blackout.)

**SCENE 3**

(A week later. WILLIAM is alone in the studio, painting. There is a rapping at the door, then ROSE enters.)

WILLIAM

Ah, Rose, what a pleasure. Please, do come in.

ROSE

I didn't mean to disturb you, William. I thought Godfrey was here.

WILLIAM

Well, he isn't, so you'll have to put up with me instead. Besides, I'm in the mood to be disturbed. You're always welcome, Rose, you know that. Here, please sit down.

ROSE

I was visiting Lady Pearmeyer, and left early. Oh, William, she looks simply dreadful, and Doctor Glendower says she hasn't long to live. She's so thin, her bones are protruding.

WILLIAM

She was a nice old prune at heart, wasn't she?

ROSE

Yes, yes, she was, I mean she is. She isn't dead yet! Oh, dear, it's so morbid and depressing.

WILLIAM

Perhaps we shouldn't talk about it -- if it upsets you.

ROSE

*(pause, gesturing to a painting)* Who's this handsome fellow?

WILLIAM

Captain Bellemount. Godfrey's painting, of course.

ROSE

Did he finish Sir Gregory?

WILLIAM

Oh, yes, weeks ago.

ROSE

I had hoped to see the finished work.

WILLIAM

Then you haven't seen Godfrey for quite some time?

ROSE

No.

WILLIAM

Well, he so occupied, rushing hither and tither with all his sittings. Good heavens, he must have ten portraits going at once. Frankly, I don't see how he does it. Really, I doubt if he has time to eat. The fact is, he's rarely even here. Except for twice a week when your uncle lectures, I don't see him myself.

ROSE

I believe you. It's just that...well, we were such close friends, and I...I haven't even received a note. Has he...? Has he said anything?

WILLIAM

Not to me, but then I'm not his confidant. No one is, really. In fact, I don't know anyone he has any personal regard for-- except for your uncle and you, of course.

ROSE

And he no longer even speaks to me.

WILLIAM

Well, he's a damn fool if he doesn't. All his pompous flippery won't be worth a fig to him or anyone else when he comes home to an empty house. He's totally preoccupied with his own selfish ambitions!

ROSE

William!

WILLIAM

Forgive me, Rose, but he's bloody insufferable, ignoring everyone like he's great God Almighty. He'll be a bitter old man.

ROSE

Please, let's not speak unkindly of him. He's a fine artist. Someday history may judge him a great one, and we should forgive his...his temperament.

WILLIAM

Alright then, the subject is closed.

ROSE

Well, I ought to be going. I only stopped by to tell Godfrey I saw an old friend of his.

WILLIAM

Anyone I know?

ROSE

I doubt it. She's not really his friend, just a gloomy old woman who visited him some time ago. She's from Rotterdam, that's all I know. I saw her this morning with a tall gentleman, probably her son. They were at Lord Harmony's funeral. It was a frightfully crowded. Poor Lady Harmony was quite undone. She wept uncontrollably, and at one point howled. They say she can't bear to have Godfrey's portrait about the house so she's given it to his sister.

(JASON enters.)

WILLIAM

Hello, Jason, have you seen Godfrey?

JASON

Of course not. He's probably in bed. He comes here mostly at night now -- since he can't abide the company of us Philistines.

ROSE

Whatever do you mean?

JASON

You mean he hasn't told you what misguided dilettantes we are?

ROSE

Godfrey would never say anything so unkind!

JASON

I wish you had said "untrue."

WILLIAM

Jason doesn't mean a word he says, Rose. Don't pay him any mind.

JASON

Yes, so sorry. The whole thing's a malicious fabrication.

ROSE

Well, I...I must be going. Uncle Gerard will be waiting supper.

WILLIAM

Please, madam, permit me the honor of escorting you home.

ROSE

Why thank you, sir.

JASON

And leave me here alone with this drudgery?

WILLIAM

Gladly, old fellow.

(ROSE and WILLIAM leave while JASON stares at Godfrey's portrait of Captain Bellemount.)

JASON

You're not a bad looking chap, captain, but you're awfully dull company. So what do you think of my cornucopia of fruit? Rather unappetizing, isn't it?

(Fade out.)

#### **SCENE 4**

(Two weeks later. MASTER DOUW is lecturing his students: JASON, WILLIAM, NICHOLAS and GODFREY. ROSE is sitting quietly to the side.)

MASTER DOUW

Art, gentlemen, whatever it is, does contain certain indisputable elements. What elements, William?

WILLIAM

Well, color for one, form for another.

MASTER DOUW

So, so, color and form. All of life, all of nature, contains these elements. But the artist is born to choose and arrange these elements so that the result might be... enchantment! In other words, gentlemen, the artist takes the elements of nature and reorders her in a sublimer way, thereby rising above the petty cares of the rest of humanity. Do you believe that, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

I...I beg your pardon, sir?

MASTER DOUW

Pat attention! Jason, what do you think?

JASON

Yes, sir, I agree with that statement, sir.

MASTER DOUW

Godfrey?

GODFREY

Yes, on some occasions -- depending on the execution. If the artist achieves perfection in his work, then he has created something extraordinary and beautiful, something above the rest of humanity.

MASTER DOUW

What do you think of that, William?

WILLIAM

I think it's blasphemous. If the artist creates something beautiful, it doesn't mean it's virtuous. It's still an object, perhaps even a perfect object, but creating something beautiful does not render the creator a god. In fact, he may be a cad.

(NICHOLAS and JASON laugh.)

GODFREY

I didn't say he was a god, but *like* one, superior to most people because he has the gift to improve on nature, or at least alter nature, and this gift makes a man immortal.

WILLIAM

Immortal perhaps, as all men are immortal, but not necessarily better or good.

GODFREY

Perhaps not, but nature isn't all good either. Sometimes she's indifferent or...evil.

MASTER DOUW

So, nature is not always good or bad, but if nature is necessary and useful, and everything proceeds from her. But what about art? Is art useful? Well, is it? Come now, who has a tongue?



WILLIAM

I don't think so, sir, I believe people think it should be useful in that they will be better off for having seen it. They attempt to look past the surface of a painting, striving to elevate themselves to a better mental or moral state, but I don't think it performs that function.

MASTER DOUW

So you don't think art is useful? Well, perhaps that's your curse, William -- and it's reflected in some of your less inspired work. You see, even if art isn't useful, you must try to believe you can capture unique harmonies not yet imagined by Nature, assuming Nature is a power that imagines. If you don't dream you're a god, or a least a creator capable of elevating mankind, then your paintings will be mere paintings. Godfrey, let me see that portrait of Captain -- what's his name?

GODFREY

Bellemount. I'm sorry, sir, I completed it last week.

MASTER DOUW

So, so, we've all seen it and remarked how handsome he is. Well, just yesterday I actually saw the man, and by God, I recognized him-- from the back of his head! Now I ask you, gentlemen, isn't it incredible that Godfrey here captured enough of the man's spirit, or whatever you choose to call it, for me to recognize a chap I'd never seen before -- from the back of his head!

JASON

Excuse me, sir, was he wearing his cap and uniform?

(NICHOLAS and WILLIAM laugh.)

MASTER DOUW

Ha, ha! A good question, Jason, but as a matter of fact he was not! Enough! I now propose that we end this lecture and begin a fresh project, together, as a class. Now, as you know, we usually go our separate ways, painting subjects of our own choosing. Today, however, I have deigned to choose our subject. My niece, Rose, whom you all know, has graciously agreed to pose for us.

(WILLIAM looks pleased while NICHOLAS and JASON stare boldly at Godfrey.)

MASTER DOUW

Now, gentlemen, let's attempt to remember that your function as artists is not merely to copy nature but to reorganize and capture that particular quality which makes our subject recognizable -- from the back of the head!

JASON

Her auburn curls?

(NICHOLAS and JASON laugh, preparing their palettes as GODFREY approaches MASTER DOUW.)

GODFREY

I beg your pardon, sir? I'm afraid I'm feeling rather ill, sir. If you don't mind, I'd prefer to go home.

MASTER DOUW

You must stop painting by lamp light. It's ruinous to your health!

GODFREY

Yes, sir.

MASTER DOUW

And for godssake, see a doctor. We don't want to lose our star pupil, eh, gentlemen?

JASON

No, sir, Master Douw.

NICHOLAS

Certainly not, sir.

MASTER DOUW

Nothing is more important than a man's health! Now Rose, sit here, and don't look so gloomy. Give us your most radiant smile. Ah, my dear, that face of yours will make your fortune. Such faces and tempers seldom go together, and when they do, the compound is a love charm few heads and hearts can resist, eh, gentlemen?

ROSE

Please, uncle.

(GODFREY exits and ROSE stares longingly after him.)

MASTER DOUW

Rose, my dear, won't you please smile?

(ROSE smiles sadly. Fade out.)

## **SCENE 5**

(Later that night. The studio is lit by several lamps casting long eerie shadows. GODFREY is painting, then footsteps are heard, and a tap at the door.)

WILLIAM

Psssst, Godfrey, are you in there? It's William! (*opening the door, entering*) Good God, man, how can you paint in this dismal light? You'll be blind before you're thirty.

GODFREY

I can't sleep, and I seem to paint better at night.

WILLIAM

(*approaching Godfrey's painting*) She's quite lovely. Who is she?

GODFREY

Charlotte Fannon's daughter, Felicity. Come now, William, we both know you didn't come here to admire my portrait, so please get on with it so I may continue.

WILLIAM

There is something I think you ought to know. (*pause*) Rose Velderkaust is an extremely sensitive woman who cares deeply for you -- God knows why, I certainly can't fathom it. I don't even know why I feel compelled to tell you this, but she happens to be a very dear friend of mine and you're causing her considerable anguish by ignoring her. Well, that's all I have to say. Not that it matters one way or the other to you. After all, nothing is more precious to Godfrey Schalken than the beloved Godfrey Schalken.

GODFREY

Please leave.

WILLIAM

Oh, I'll leave, Godfrey, gladly. Maybe you don't care that you're breaking Rose's heart, but I do, and believe me, henceforth, I will do everything possible to make her see you for the selfish, uncouth ingrate that you are!

GODFREY

Get the hell out of here!

WILLIAM

What astounds me is how you can paint with such incredible sensitivity while in life you haven't the soul of a sewer rat. All your talent isn't worth a whit compared to the tenderness of Rose Velderkaust. You're not fit to shine her boots!

GODFREY

Stop it! Don't you think I know that?! Do you really think I'm such a foul, insensitive cad? (*starting to weep*) God help me, help me, I don't know what's happening to me. I don't feel anything anymore.

WILLIAM

*(pause, gently)* Godfrey Schalken, a man who can weep feels something. Thank heaven for it. Don't be afraid, and don't throw it all into your paintings. Save some of yourself for Rose. She loves you, Godfrey. Believe me, I know.

GODFREY

You're a fool, William if you think I don't know that. Of course I know, and it causes me great...anguish.

WILLIAM

But why? Why are you suffering?

GODFREY

Is it wrong to suffer, to feel such...passion.

WILLIAM

No, of course it's not wrong. It's the one thing that separates one man from another more than anything else -- even more than talent. At least I think so. But Godfrey, you don't need to suffer. Rose loves you. Good heavens, man, you should be the happiest fellow in all Christendom!

GODFREY

No, it's not possible.

WILLIAM

For godssake, why not? Are you one of those boorish aesthetes who think they have to endure unspeakable misery to create? Why, that's ridiculous!

GODFREY

How dare you call my suffering ridiculous! You don't know a damn thing about it! You couldn't touch my pain, you couldn't live a single moment with it much less endure it hour after hour, day after day, night after night. My God, it's unspeakable!

WILLIAM

Why? What is it? Are you ill? Please, Godfrey, confide in me.

GODFREY

No, I...I can't. Just believe me. And William, will you do me a great kindness, a favor as a friend, though I know I haven't the right to call you that -- or anyone for that matter.

WILLIAM

Nonsense, we are friends, and I thank God for it.

GODFREY

Then do this for me: tell Rose I no longer love her. Tell her! And don't badger me with questions. Believe me, William, if you knew my reason, you would gladly comply.

WILLIAM

You can't ask me to do such a vile thing without explanation and expect me to do it willingly! It's against all reason!

GODFREY

That is precisely why: it's against all reason, all conscience, and all that is good in men and women in heaven and on earth.

WILLIAM

I don't understand.

GODFREY

Please, just promise me, and leave.

WILLIAM

No, Godfrey, I can't promise anything so cruel and untrue.

GODFREY

Then get out!

WILLIAM

Before I go, at the risk of sounding like Master Douw, I'd like to make a suggestion: seek a doctor. You're not a well man. Good night.

(WILLIAM departs.)

GODFREY

I don't need a doctor, do I? I need a priest.

(From the shadows step FRAU VANDERHEUSEN and her son, DIETER, who also speaks with a Dutch accent, is elegantly dressed, and his pallor is ashen.)

DIETER

I'm afraid it would not do you much good, Master Schalken.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush, we've certainly heard an earful tonight, haven't we, Dieter? Really, such a temperamental display, such theatrics!

GODFREY

You wretched witch! You didn't tell me it would be like this! I can't sleep, I can't eat, all I'm compelled to do is paint, paint, paint!

FRAUD VANDERHEUSEN

Well, you do it very well at any rate. That's little Felicity Fannon, isn't it? She will be an exquisite addition to our assemblage, don't you agree, Dieter?

DIETER

You do choose some charming quarry, Master Schalken. And you have such perceptive instincts. I quite concur with Poussin that the grand manner of painting requires that the subject be divine. In time we may form a collection rivaling the best in all of Europe.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

I do like that touch of carmine in the nostrils and the corner of her eye.

DIETER

Yes, and the skin tones are so delicately combined, as if she were flushed by the flow of blood beneath the flesh.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

What about Rose? Are we going to add an enchanting Flemish maiden to our acquisitions?

GODFREY

Never!

DIETER

He is not prepared to relinquish her yet, but when he does, I'm certain it will be virtuoso performance.

GODFREY

I shall never paint her -- ever!

DIETER

Just think, Master Schalken, how many families, decades from now, will owe their fortunes to the wisdom with which their ancestors selected you as their portraitist.

GODFREY

As their murderer!

DIETER

We Dutch have always had a taste for connoisseurship, coupled with a instinct for possession. My own cultivated tastes tend towards the works of Van Dyke and Vermeer.

GODFREY

Then why have you come to plague me?! Oh, God, what I'd give to never lay eyes on a canvas again!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

My dear, Master Schalken, we made a covenant and a bargain is a bargain, as they say.

DIETER

And you can't break a covenant with mother.

GODFREY

God, how you disgust me.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush, how ungrateful you are, Master Schalken, What a pity you don't have a more philosophical attitude. Perhaps, if you had more imagination, you might even learn to enjoy your situation. Many do, you know.

DIETER

Tell me, mother, will anyone be joining us tonight?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Louisa Ashton. Godfrey painter her last May.

DIETER

Ah, yes, a rather repulsive woman, corpulent and bovine by any standards.

GODFREY

Tell me, Frau Vanderheusen, do I have anything of myself left?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Only some of that mawkish sentimentality you so rudely displayed tonight.

GODFREY

Well, it seems that there's not much worth preserving -- in which case, I'd be better off dead than alive. Certainly my subjects would be better off.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You haven't the constitution or courage for suicide. Massage my neck, will you, Dieter?

GODFREY

Yes, I'm weak, and it's true I haven't the courage, but I do have the talent. What would you think if I painted a self-portrait? Then you could add me to your collection.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Shush, dear boy, and do continue painting. Dieter and I take great pride and pleasure in observing you.

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN speaks with a hypnotic cadence as she puts GODFREY into a trance.)

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Paint, paint, Godfrey Schalken, that's a good boy, keep painting until you've captured Felicity's likeness. Then Dieter and I will capture her soul. (*touching Godfrey's cheek*) There, that should silence him for a while.

DIETER

Now about the fate of our voluptuous Louisa -- should she fall down a flight of stairs? It's rather undignified, but quite effective.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

No, dear, poison would be better. It's more depressing, prolongs the pain.

DIETER

What about drowning? She does bathe, doesn't she?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Yes, but we just drowned Sir Victor Rhodes.

DIETER

Ah, yes. Rat-bite then?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Really, Dieter, you are disgusting.

(THEY laugh hideously as a sickly fog envelopes them and lights fade to black.)

## **SCENE 6**

(A week later. The studio where ROSE is seated, posing. JASON and NICHOLAS are putting away their brushes, but WILLIAM is still painting.)

JASON

Dash it all, Rose, it's a difficult task to do you justice -- so impossible, in fact, that I'm giving it up!



NICHOLAS

It's true, you, know, even if we were to capture a likeness, nothing would compare to the real object.

WILLIAM

Hah! They're using your beauty as an excuse for their laziness.

JASON

Nonsense, I'm using her beauty as an excuse for a drink! Come, Nicholas, you too, William!

WILLIAM

No, thanks. I'd like to paint a bit longer. Do you mind, Rose?

ROSE

Not at all.

((JASON and NICHOLAS exit, and WILLIAM paints in silence for a moment, then puts down his brush.))

WILLIAM

Rose, I've spoken with Godfrey.

ROSE

Oh, William, where is he?! How did he look?! What did he say?!

WILLIAM

He was unkempt and thinner; I don't think he's well at all. He didn't say much really, except that he wanted to be left alone -- by everyone.

ROSE

Where is he?

WILLIAM

He was here. He comes in late at night. In fact I've been observing his progress. His new portraits are quite splendid. He stores them against the wall over there.

ROSE

You know, he...he started a portrait of me once, quite some time ago.

WILLIAM

Yes, I know, I've seen it.

ROSE

Has he...has he worked on it?

(WILLIAM retrieves the portrait from against the wall.)

WILLIAM

Here it is. He's painting another portrait over it, one of his pie-faced aristocrats.

ROSE

Well, there will be three fine portraits of me from your class.

WILLIAM

Hardly. You know, it struck me as very odd that he absolutely refused to paint you.

ROSE

Oh, William, I'm so worried about him. When I last saw him, he looked so pale, even his eyes had lost their shine.

WILLIAM

I'm worried too. He claims he wants me to be his friend, and yet he pretends I don't exist. And he says he doesn't care for you knowing full well he does.

ROSE

He said that.. ? He actually said he doesn't care.

WILLIAM

Yes, but it's a lie, you know it is. Damn, but he confounds me, he really does! Still, I'm glad we spoke for I do have a higher regard for him. I was wrong, you know. He's very sensitive. In fact,...well, I wasn't going to tell you this, but he actually wept.

ROSE

Really? But why?

WILLIAM

I'm not sure. He wouldn't say.

ROSE

Oh, my poor, dear Godfrey.

(Pause as ROSE walks to one of the covered canvases, and lifts the cloth.)

ROSE

Isn't this one of his?

WILLIAM

Yes, it's one of the Carrington sisters, the spinster, I think.

ROSE

I thought I recognized her, but isn't she dead? She died last week. Uncle Gerard went to her funeral. Yes, I'm certain it was she.

WILLIAM

Then I suppose the old girl didn't live to enjoy it. What a pity.

ROSE

You know, William, I...I had an odd notion once. It's foolish, really. I suppose I shouldn't even say. It's cruel and unchristian, one of those dreadful little thoughts that flies into the mind and out again but still manages to...to leave an impression.

WILLIAM

I know what you mean. Godfrey told me something that seems to have had the same effect.

ROSE

What? What did he say?

WILLIAM

Something very cryptic. I can't make heads or tails out of it myself.

ROSE

What?!

WILLIAM

Let's make a bargain: you tell me your odd notion and I'll tell you what Godfrey said.

ROSE

Alright, but you tell first.

WILLIAM

Well, he asked me to tell you that he didn't love you, but I told him I wouldn't because it's a damn lie. I even told him I thought he was ill and should see a doctor. Then I said something to the effect that his request was beyond all reason, and he said that's precisely why he requested it.

ROSE

I don't understand.

WILLIAM

He said it was beyond all reason, all conscience, and all that was good in heaven and on earth, but he refused to explain any further. In fact, he told me to leave.

ROSE

What does it mean?

WILLIAM

I haven't the foggiest, but he's become compulsive about his painting. The man never sleeps -- so no wonder he's daft.

ROSE

He needs a long rest. We must devise a way of getting him away from this dreary studio, from everything.

WILLIAM

How? He won't even acknowledge our existence much less listen to our advice. Now then, it's your turn. Tell me that notion of yours.

ROSE

All right, but you must swear never to tell a living soul, and to drive it out of your mind as soon as I speak it.

WILLIAM

I swear.

ROSE

Have you noticed that -- of course, it's perfectly natural that once people reach a certain age they should die, and yet it's odd, you know, but...

WILLIAM

What...?

ROSE

Well, I've noticed, and even Uncle Gerard mentioned it in an off hand sort of manner -- of course, it is nonsense. This is difficult...

WILLIAM

Come on now, out with it!

ROSE

Oh, it's really so foolish, William, but it seems that many of Godfrey's subjects are... deceased. That's all. It's absurd. You can't cause someone's death by painting them.

WILLIAM

*(pause)* You're right, of course, but I had a similar notion once, when you said something about Lady Harmony giving her husband's portrait to his sister -- as if it were too alive with his spirit to endure, as if it had a soul. But that's not what you're saying, is it? You're implying that there's some sort of connection between the person Godfrey paints and the fact that sooner or later they... Well, let's see, he's painted Lady Pearmeyer...

ROSE

Deceased. Cornelius Coombes: deceased; Lady Henrietta Heydukes: deceased; Sir Victor Rhodes: drowned at sea; Horace Dunlap: influenza; Louisa Ashton: an infected bite; Captain Bellemount...

WILLIAM

Captain Bellemount?!

ROSE

He fell off his horse and isn't expected to survive the week.

WILLIAM

Good heavens, Rose, have you kept an ongoing account of all Godfrey's commissions?

ROSE

Yes, I have and it frightens me, William, because it's not...natural.

WILLIAM

But they don't all die in the same way.

ROSE

No, never! They die all sorts of ways. Illnesses, accidents, and Lady Heydukes never woke up.

WILLIAM

I hadn't heard about Captain Bellemount.

ROSE

It's tragic. He has four children, all of them quite young.

WILLIAM

You don't think Godfrey...?

ROSE

No! Of course not! It's not something simple; it's something...well, it's something unnatural, something...evil.

WILLIAM

*(pause)* "Something beyond reason, beyond conscience, beyond all that is good in heaven and on earth." No, it can't be true, it just can't. It's an incredible coincidence, that's all. Otherwise, why haven't we made the connection before now? Why hasn't anyone else?

ROSE

Because it's too unthinkable, too wicked. You know, William, sometimes I think Godfrey refuses to paint me because he's afraid.

WILLIAM

Have you discussed this with anyone else?

ROSE

I was going to speak with Father Gibson, but I...I'm afraid he'd think I was mad.

WILLIAM

Have you considered confronting Godfrey yourself?

ROSE

Yes, but...

WILLIAM

What...? Are you frightened?

ROSE

Yes.

WILLIAM

You know, when I went to see him, I was almost at my wit's end. I don't know why really, but I was simply in a panic. Once I started speaking, I felt better, but it was hellish at first. Of course, the studio is dismal at night, but truly, I thought I'd faint, and I'm not that sort. I've never fainted in my entire life.

ROSE

William, we must speak with him.

WILLIAM

But what can we say? What we're suggesting is...well, it's preposterous! In fact, I don't even believe in such things!

ROSE

But you believe in God.

WILLIAM

Yes, but not devils or ghosts or supernatural curses! I'll grant that Godfrey does have a way of looking bedeviled, but I think it's...well, it's not likely to be what we're thinking it could be.

ROSE

Oh, so you admit you think it?!

WILLIAM

No, no! Oh, damn, I don't know what I think!

ROSE

William, listen: Uncle Gerard is visiting his sister, so he won't know if I stay out later. I want to wait here in the studio until Godfrey arrives.

WILLIAM

But what if he doesn't come?

ROSE

He will. If we turn out the lamps, he won't see us. It's our duty as his friends -- his only friends-- to help him. Please, say you'll stay here with me, please, William.

WILLIAM

Of course, Rose, whatever you wish.

ROSE

Oh, bless you, William. You are my truest and dearest friend.

(Fade out.)

### **SCENE 7**

(Bells chime nine o'clock. It's pitch black in the studio where ROSE and WILLIAM are waiting.)

WILLIAM

I feel a damn fool, sitting in the dark like this. Really, Rose, let's at least light a lamp so we can see each other. Nicholas keeps a pack of cards in his paint box.

ROSE

No. If he sees the light, he won't come in.

WILLIAM

The longer I sit here, the more preposterous this vigil seems. I know he'll laugh at us.

ROSE

Shush, I hear something.

WILLIAM

Oh, God, he's coming. I wish to heaven I could disappear!

ROSE

Shush!

(The door opens and GODFREY enters.)

ROSE

Godfrey? Is that you?

GODFREY

Who's here?! Speak up!

ROSE

Rose.

WILLIAM

William.

(WILLIAM lights a lamp.)

GODFREY

What the devil do you want?

ROSE

We want to see you, Godfrey. We...we were worried about you.

WILLIAM

Good God, man, you're looking horrid.

GODFREY

If that's what you came to tell me, I'm quite aware of it, thank you.

ROSE

Godfrey, we're your friends; we miss you.



GODFREY

I don't want your friendship. In fact, I don't want to see either of you ever again, so please leave.

(GODFREY pulls out the canvas that was once Rose's portrait and sets it on his easel.)

ROSE

That was a portrait of me once, wasn't it? I can tell by that bottle green dress I was wearing. Who are you painting over it?

GODFREY

Myself. Now get out of here!

WILLIAM

Come, Rose, we'd better leave.

ROSE

No, I will not, not yet. Now listen to me, Godfrey Schalken: something horrible is happening to you. William and I know it. We don't know what it is, but we want to help you. We want to help you be yourself again.

GODFREY

Myself is vile and loathsome and no longer worth the effort. Your sympathy may be well intentioned, but believe me, you're wasting your time and mine. Now go!

ROSE

You'll die soon after you finish your portrait, won't you? You're under some kind of curse, aren't you?

(Pause as GODFREY begins to paint, ignoring Rose.)

ROSE

Oh, please, Godfrey, for the sake of your immortal soul, let me call a priest!

GODFREY

Nothing can help me; I'm beyond redemption.

ROSE

No one is beyond redemption! Please, William, go find a priest. I'm staying here and I won't leave him for an instant!

GODFREY

Priests! Hah! The time for priests has long since past. Just get the hell out of here!

ROSE

Let's go, William!

WILLIAM

*(attempting to open the door)* I can't! The door's locked!. Christ, the damn thing's bolted shut. But it can't be; there's no outside bolt!

ROSE

Godfrey, for godssake, help him!

GODFREY

Fools! Fools!

WILLIAM

Damn! It won't budge!

*(GODFREY resumes painting his portrait as ROSE and WILLIAM heave their weight against the door.)*

WILLIAM

Hello! Is someone out there?!

ROSE

Godfrey, stop painting and help us!

GODFREY

I am helping -- the only way I can!

ROSE

No, Godfrey, look at me. Oh, dearest, please look at me! Oh, William! William! Look at his eyes! William, stop him, stop him!

GODFREY

No! Don't!

*(WILLIAM snatches the brush from Godfrey's hand. At that very instant two lamps seem to light themselves revealing the faces of FRAU VANDERHEUSEN and DIETER. ROSE screams!)*

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Oh, do shush, child!

ROSE

Go away!!

DIETER

Really, how ungracious.

GODFREY

Let them go! For godssake, let them go!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Please calm yourself, Godfrey, and you too, my dear. Sit down there, that's a good girl.

WILLIAM

Who...who are you?

GODFREY

Foul fiends from hell, that's who!

ROSE

I...I remember. You're the woman from Rotterdam.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Indeed. Frau Vanderheusen, Godfrey's patroness. And this is my son, Dieter. Now, please, calm yourself, my dear Rose. You're trembling.

ROSE

How...how do you know my name?

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Every portrait in our collection has a name. You're Rose Velderkaust and you're William Horton.

ROSE

What...what have you done to Godfrey?

DIETER

We've inspired him, immortalized him, given him an honored place in history.

GODFREY

In hell!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Tush, tush. Dieter, dear, I'm afraid you'll have to remove your gloves.

GODFREY

No!

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Oh, shush! He'll be gentle, I promise.

(DIETER removes his gloves and swiftly places his bare hand on ROSE and WILLIAM'S heads, rendering them immobile. FRAU VANDERHEUSEN swings her lamp gently as WILLIAM and ROSE fall into deep hypnotic stupors.)

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Now, relax my dears. There now, William, sit next to Rose and rest your eyes, your tired and weary eyes. Yes, you're very sleepy, very sleepy indeed.

GODFREY

Please, Frau Vanderheusen, I implore you, please let them go. They haven't harmed a soul. They're good, decent people with their lives before them.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Dieter, replace his canvas with a fresh one.

GODFREY

I beseech you, madam, if you have a shred of humanity...

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

What nonsense, Godfrey! You know me better by now. Please, get to work. You have one more portrait left in you -- before the last. Help him, Dieter.

GODFREY

No, no!!

(DIETER approaches Godfrey from behind, placing his hands over his ears. GODFREY moves to resist him, but succumbs.)

DIETER

He'll obey you now, mother.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Good.

DIETER

I do hate it when I'm forced to expend my energies in unseemly ways. It makes us seem like such vulgarians.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You're much too fastidious, Dieter. Now, shall we make it a classic family portrait?

DIETER

Certainly. I'll stand here behind Rose with my hand on her shoulder. You stand there, behind William. Drape your cape to one side.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

These sumptuous materials should create a very dramatic effect.

DIETER

The planes of lamp light could pose quite a challenge for Godfrey.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

You don't think we'll appear too postured?

DIETER

No, I think Master Schalken will agree: This is one of those rare moments when all action has ceased, and everything is held together by an ephemeral adjustment of forces, an allegory of balances so to speak.

FRAU VANDERHEUSEN

Now do be still, Dieter, while I compel him to his final vision.

(FRAU VANDERHEUSEN raises her hand like a conductor as GODFREY begins brushing the paint with swift, compulsive strokes, and the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

# Ultor De Lacy

## CHARACTERS

UNA ARDAGH, age 17

ALICE ARDAGH, her sister, age 19

COLONEL ROBERT ARDAGH, their father, mid-fifties

MAURA MULL RYAN, a housekeeper, mid-forties

TOBY CROOKE, an elderly hunchbacked peddler

DOCTOR MARTIN HESSELIUS, an elderly physician

CAPTAIN ULTOR DE LACY, a dashing suitor, early thirties

Note: The roles of Toby Crooke and Doctor Martin Hesselius are intended to be played by the same actor.

## TIME

1750

## PLACE

The Ardagh estate at the “Glen of Capperkullen” where the Irish counties of Tipperary, Limerick, and Claire converge. There is a garden, a parlor, and Una Ardagh’s bedroom with an accessible door and window.

**SCENE 1**

(A luxuriant garden where ALICE ARDAGH, age 19, sits on a bench reading. TOBY, an unkempt hunchback, enters with a large sack on his shoulders.)

ALICE

Good heavens! You startled me!

TOBY

Please it yer ladyship t' waste a wee moment wi' old tad Toby? He's got wares t' show and charms t' keep the old claws off ye. Will it please yer eyes t' study the hump? It ain't pretty, but it's as Mother Nature would have it.

ALICE

You poor man.

TOBY

Nay, milady, I ain't poor. See here, I profess the art o' healin' if yer ladyship be pleased t' buy a charm against the sins o' nature.

(TOBY displays a collection of charms and necklaces as a funeral dirge is heard.)

TOBY

Death's a sharp tone, ain't it, milady? It runs like a wild wolf through these woods. Two o' the swineherd's lovelies died last week wi' the same signs -- seized by the throat whilst layin' in bed, then pierced by a needle-sharp tooth.

(COLONEL ROBERT ARDAGH enters.)

COLONEL ARDAGH

Toby! What the devil are you doing here?

TOBY

Sellin' amulets, sir. (*dangling a charm*) Here's one that ne'er fails. Only pin it t' yer bolster and you may spit in its face.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Please pack up your nonsense and leave! I've instructed the grounds keeper not to let anyone on the premises. There's illness and contagion everywhere.

TOBY

Aye, and methinks you'll have need of this, milady.

COLONEL ARDAGH

She certainly does not! Alice is very well taken care of without your heathen trinkets.

TOBY

Alice maybe so, sir, but Una ain't.

COLONEL ARDAGH

What the devil is that supposed to mean?

TOBY

It don't mean nothin' t' offend ye, sir.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Ha! You're a damnable nuisance. Now go peddle your mischief elsewhere!

(TOBY leaves, whistling.)

COLONEL ARDAGH

Now that's the sort of mentality that spreads superstitious gossip, and infects the imagination. Exactly what we don't need!

ALICE

What a plaintive melody.

COLONEL ARDAGH

We shouldn't be thinking of death on such a magnificent night. Now tell me, Alice, what's your opinion of our Captain?

ALICE

I think he's entirely handsome and charming, despite his name -- Ultor. What does it mean?

COLONEL ARDAGH

I've no idea, but I do know the De Lacys are of high blood and rich as the devil. They were originally French, but have lived in Ireland since the reign of Henry the Eighth. They still have French relations and Ultor says his grandfather was quite popular in the Court of Saint Germain's. Well, I hope Una's made a favorable impression. Their marriage will continue, though not the Ardagh name, at all events our blood and lineage.

ALICE

What a pity we can't tell her of her own engagement.



COLONEL ARDAGH

Absolutely not. She seems too irritable lately, the mere knowledge that her hand is pledged might excite a capricious opposition that neither of us would like to see.

ALICE

Brave, proud Una. I thought nothing could quell her gaiety of heart. What is it, father? What's changed her so?

COLONEL ARDAGH

Young girls are often capricious: all fun and frolic one day and melancholy the next. You're a rare exception, my dear Alice, and you mustn't worry.

ALICE

Look, father, the moon is out early and you can see Ultor's estate on the horizon.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Just think how proud your mother would have been, God rest her precious soul. Our own Una mistress of that magnificent fortress. Well, my dear, it will be a cold night. Let's go in before we catch our deaths.

ALICE

Thank you, father, but I prefer to remain.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Please yourself then. I'll send Una out with a shawl.

(COLONEL ARDAGH exits as the funeral dirge fades.  
UNA enters and places a shawl on Alice's shoulders.)

ALICE

Una, I wonder if the girl died horribly?

UNA

I don't concern myself with other's deaths, but the hymn is quite discordant.

ALICE

On the contrary, I find it rather sweet.

UNA

I hate funerals. What a fuss! Why you must die, I must die, everyone must die, and all are happier when they do.

ALICE

Una! What are you saying?

UNA

Oh, nothing...

ALICE

There, there, why you're shivering. Let's go inside. Perhaps father and Captain De Lacy will join us in a game of cards.

UNA

No! No, please!

ALICE

Good heavens, Una! Have I said anything wrong?

UNA

I...I'm sorry. The strangest things set me off. Please, let's remain here a few moments longer.

ALICE

Of course, my dear. The moon is bright tonight, isn't it? (*pause*) What's troubling you, Una? You seem so melancholy.

UNA

Sometimes a strange lethargy steals over me. I don't know why.

ALICE

You haven't come down for morning prayers in over a week. Are you trying to avoid our guest?

UNA

What do you mean?

ALICE

Aren't you pleased that Captain De Lacy is here?

UNA

Well, yes, of course, I'm delighted. He's so...romantic. I'm sure if he ever tells us the story of his life, it will be like reading a great adventure novel. But he's so...strange.

ALICE

How so, my dear?

UNA

He won't confide in me. Whenever I ask him anything about his past -- his childhood or the manner of his education-- he says he is under vows that would tax a monk. Imagine! Then he says that the time is very near when I shall know everything. Know what I wonder? Furthermore, he says I will think him cruel and selfish because love is always selfish, the more ardent, the more selfish.

ALICE

But love is generous and kind.

UNA

I said so, and he replied: "Never believe it. Love is more possessive than you can conceive." Oh, Alice, he's so full of whims and fancies, and why should he speak to me of love?

ALICE

I'm certain he'll explain in good time.

UNA

Oh, Alice, do you think we shall ever fall in love?

ALICE

You know I'm destined for the sisterhood. There are many eligible convents in Dublin where some of the noblest ladies of Ireland reside.

UNA

But what if you should meet someone, someone as wonderful as father?

ALICE

No earthly tie or allurements has the power to draw me away from my true vocation.

UNA

I hope you won't leave us for a very long time.

ALICE

All I know for certain is that I love our Lord Jesus Christ and always shall.

UNA

And I love no one and never shall.

ALICE

Oh, darling Una! You offend father and me. Don't you love us?

UNA

Yes, of course, but that's not what I meant.

ALICE

What is it, Una? Where is my sweet sister with her songs and laughter?

UNA

Perhaps she's growing old before her time.

ALICE

Nonsense, I won't allow it! But you do look so fragile and pale.

UNA

Please, don't stare. Turn away!

ALICE

And your eyes -- they seem to have lost their sparkle.

UNA

*(starting to leave)* Good night, Alice!

ALICE

*(grasping Una's arm)* Una, darling, as you hope for peace, tell me what's wrong!

*(The GIRLS turn, embarrassed, as ULTOR DE LACY, a dashing man in his early thirties, enters.)*

ULTOR

Forgive my intrusion, ladies.

ALICE

Good evening, Captain. I...I was just leaving.

UNA

No! I mean, please, dear Alice, stay with us.

ALICE

Of course, if you wish. *(pause, awkwardly)* It's a bit chilly this evening, isn't it?

ULTOR

Yes, but your hospitality has a warming effect. You've been so kind to me. I've seldom been so happy as in your beautiful chateau, and in the society of your father. What a fortunate man -- keeping company with two beautiful girls in the middle of nowhere.

UNA

Alice will be leaving for the convent.

ULTOR

And you, Una?

UNA

I shall remain here, though we might move closer to the city. Father thinks I need suitors. He has been the one man in my life, and I feel no need of another.

(ALICE and ULTOR exchange a knowing glance.)

ULTOR

But surely you wish to broaden your social spectrum, to visit London and Paris.

UNA

No, I've never had any such desires. I'm content to remain here.

ULTOR

Well, perhaps you're not ready to consider traveling abroad -- or a husband for that matter. My own father enjoined me not to marry before the thirty on the grounds that earlier marriages destroy one's power of enterprise. He said marriage incapacitates a man from accomplishing his destiny. Now, however, I'm prepared to enter that holy state.

UNA

Destiny... I wonder if I have a destiny?

ULTOR

Of course you do. Everyone does.

UNA

Well, if I do, I certainly don't wish to know it. I feel it must be something terrible.

ALICE

Una! What are you saying?

UNA

I'm sorry. I haven't been feeling quite myself lately. If you'll please excuse me.

ULTOR

Of course, Una.

(UNA leaves.)

ULTOR

Your sister is a delicate creature.

ALICE

She used to be quite gay. Sometimes I wonder if she's become susceptible to...to all the idle chatter one hears about the epidemic. I'm afraid the servants' gossip may have affected her imagination.

ULTOR

So you feel it's nothing but imagination?

ALICE

Father says the victims infect one another with their superstitions, and thereby manifest the very same symptoms.

ULTOR

All the more reason for getting Una away from here.

ALICE

We must pray for her, Captain.

ULTOR

Pray...?

ALICE

Yes, we are in God's hands. Nothing can happen without his permission.

ULTOR

Tell me, do you believe that God and nature are one and the same?

ALICE

Yes, in a way, since God is our creator and as all things proceed from nature, then God is nature.

ULTOR

Then all things in heaven and on earth act and live as nature ordains. Is that what you believe?

ALICE

Yes.

ULTOR

Then I entirely agree with you.

ALICE

Well, on that happy note, I think I shall retire. Good night, Captain De Lacy.

ULTOR

Good night, Alice.

(As ALICE departs, MAURA MULL RYAN, a house-keeper, enters, dressed in black.)

ULTOR

Ah, Maura, isn't it? Tell me, is the funeral service over?

(MAURA nods.)

ULTOR

I hope you conveyed the family's condolences.

(MAURA nods, and turns to leave.)

ULTOR

Please, don't leave. Your mistress has left her book here. Why don't you take it to her? What are you afraid of? Don't we have a tongue in that little prune head?

(MAURA hesitates, then walks towards ULTOR who thrusts the book into her hand.)

MAURA

Thank you.

ULTOR

Ah, so we do speak after all? We speak and we have eyes, but we will continue to be silent, won't we?

(MAURA nods.)

ULTOR

A pity the Ardaghs are so refined. They don't understand our country ways, do they? Forgive me if I frighten you, Maura. I usually don't bother with servants, so you needn't be afraid. Good night.

(ULTOR exits as MAURA crosses herself.)

MAURA

Our Father, who art in heaven, deliver us from evil.

(Blackout.)

**SCENE 2**

(One week later. A parlor where tea is being served. COLONEL ARDAGH and ALICE are seated with MARTIN HESSELIUS, an elderly physican with a slight German accent.)

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I should tell you all with pleasure, but you would not believe me.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Why should I not?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Because you believe in nothing but what accords with your own prejudices. I remember when I was like you, but I have learned better.

ALICE

Try us, Doctor. Perhaps we're not such dogmatists as you suppose. Besides which, father and I know very well that you generally require proof for what you believe, so we're strongly predisposed to respect your conclusions.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

You are right in supposing that I have not been led lightly into my beliefs. I have been forced by extraordinary evidence to credit that which runs counter to all scientific theories. I have learned to respect certain local legends that you dismiss as delusions. But life and death are mysterious states and we know little of the resources of either.

ALICE

Please, doctor, explain your conversion.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I'm afraid the good Colonel would consign me to a madhouse. Suffice me to say I find our young Una far from well. I pray it will not be of any lasting consequence, but in the meantime, Alice, you must not leave her alone for a single moment. That is the only direction I need give for the present, but it is indispensable.



COLONEL ARDAGH

We can rely upon your kindness, Alice, I know. My own skill and science can be of no use. It will be necessary to send for a specialist with the proper means.

COLONEL ARDAGH

“Proper means?” What the devil does that mean?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I will explain everything by and by. Munster Castle is north of here, is it not?

ALICE

Yes, you can see it from our garden when the fog is lifted.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I hear the village around it is deserted.

COLONEL ARDAGH

It’s been fifty years since the smoke of a chimney was seen there, but plans are underway for extensive renovations.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I was going to ask a colleague to come with me to explore the ruins. There is a chapel, isn’t there, with a great many tombs?

COLONEL ARDAGH

So I hear.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Well, I mean to unearth some of those fine people. With God’s blessing, I hope to accomplish a pious sacrilege which will enable honest people to sleep in their beds without fear of being murdered.

ALICE

Good heavens, Doctor, what are you saying?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

There is but one object which interests me during the few years which remain to me on earth, and that is to wreak the vengeance which can still be accomplished by mortal men.

COLONEL ARDAGH

What vengeance?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

I mean to decapitate the monster.

ALICE

What monster?

COLONEL ARDAGH

Good Lord...

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Strike off its head!

COLONEL ARDAGH

Strike off it's head?!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Yes! With anything that can cleave through its murderous throat! You shall hear all about it when I return. Good day.

(DOCTOR HESSELIUS exits.)

COLONEL ARDAGH

Good God almighty, I've never seen old Hesselius so unsettled.

ALICE

He speaks calmly enough, but he...

COLONEL ARDAGH

He's raving! I'm calling in an abler physician.

ALICE

But there's no one here as learned or as kind.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Or as daft! This consultation has left me precisely where I was! Oh, Alice, my dear, what are we going to do? She's wasting away before our eyes.

ALICE

Maybe the specialist will be more coherent. All I know is that Every time Una confides in me she only says she can't account for the change that's come over her.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Her damnable uncomplaining silence!

ALICE

And she grown so...so cold. I'm forever afraid I've offended her. But we must have faith, and pray for her safety.

COLONEL ARDAGH

With whom did you leave her?

ALICE

With Captain De Lacy. They've gone for a walk.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Thank heaven for him. He's already watching over her like a doting husband.

ALICE

I hope this sickness is not contagious. Perhaps Doctor Hesselius should have examined the Captain as well.

COLONEL ARDAGH

I already thought of that, but after that nonsense about tombs and monsters, I thought it best not to bother the poor fellow. In any case, the Captain shows no sign of weakness.

ALICE

Quite the contrary. He seems so strong, so full of vigor and life, while Una... Now that our prayers are being answered and she is betrothed to a good and noble gentleman, why does everything seem so...gloomy? Why do I have such a sense of foreboding?

COLONEL ARDAGH

Well, my dear, as old Hesselius said, life and death are mysterious states and we know little of their resources. Too true, too true.

### **SCENE 3**

(Crossfade to the garden where ULTOR sits with UNA.)

ULTOR

What a magnificent evening. The moonlight has made your face all aglow.

UNA

Alice says I'm too pale.

ULTOR

Your beauty has the fragility of the finest porcelain.

UNA

Yes, it breaks so easily. I can scarcely walk as far as a small child, and sometimes the little strength I have falters and I faint.

ULTOR

Do you know what's causing your affliction?

UNA

No, but it seems to be affecting my dreams. They seem so real that I don't know if I'm dreaming or awake.

ULTOR

Tell me.

UNA

Well, I...I'm conscious of being in my room and lying in bed, and then suddenly I fancy something moving. At first I can't quite distinguish it, but then I see an animal. It's like a monstrous black cat pacing back and forth as if trapped in a cage. I'm so frightened, I can't cry out. It's as if my voice is paralyzed with terror and then the beast springs onto the bed, its glowing green eyes approach my face, and suddenly I feel a stinging pain as if two large knives were piercing my throat.

ULTOR

Oh, my dear Una.

UNA

When the swineherd's wife died last week, she thought something was strangling her, and it...it feels like that as well -- as if I can't gasp enough air to breathe.

ULTOR

And how do you feel now? I would be grieved if I thought you were in pain.

UNA

I'm just a little weak, that's all, but when I am with you, I'm perfectly myself again. See how I've recovered.

ULTOR

*(clasping her hand)* Tell me, Una, do you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you? I've never had a true friend. Shall I find one now?

UNA

Oh, Ultor, I don't know if I'm worthy to be your friend, though I...I feel...

ULTOR

What? What do you feel?

UNA

That I already know you, that I made your acquaintance years ago instead of only weeks ago.

ULTOR

Yes, we're already so intimate, I feel I can tell you anything.

UNA

Then, tell me, who was your first love?

ULTOR

I have only been in love with one woman. Surely you must have guessed by now. She is you, Una.

(Pause as Una withdraws her hand.)

ULTOR

But you do not love me.

UNA

I...I don't know. I'm not sure what love is.

ULTOR

Some day you will learn, and then you will love me more than the world. *(pause)* Are you afraid to die?

UNA

Well, yes, isn't everyone?

ULTOR

But to die as lovers die -- together, so they may live together. I would live in you, and you would die for me, I love you so.

UNA

I would die for you?

ULTOR

Forgive me, I meant to say I would die for you so great is my love, for you are mine, you shall be mine, and you and I will be one forever. Can you grasp what I'm telling you, Una? *(taking her face in his hands)* Please look at me.

(A shrill laugh is heard. UNA gasps as TOBY appears with his sack of trinkets.)

TOBY

See here, milady!

UNA

Toby!

TOBY

Aye, will ye give a wee moment o' yer time? It's most urgent concernin' the plague yer ladyship.

ULTOR

Please, go away, sir. You're trespassing.

UNA

It's alright, Ultor. It's only Toby.

ULTOR

I'm certain your father doesn't approve of beggars wandering at liberty on his property.

TOBY

I ain't a beggar! I profess the art o' dentistry, milady, and yer noble friend here has the sharpest tooth -- long and pointed like a pike. With me sharp sight I seen it, and if it happens t' hurt his lordship, I'll take me file and nippers t' make it blunt as a stump.

ULTOR

What impudence! Please leave these premises immediately!

TOBY

If m' lordship pleases, he'll no longer have the tooth o' a shark, but o' the handsome gent'lman he is.

ULTOR

How dare this charlatan insult me so?! Where is your father? I shall demand redress from him!

UNA

Ultor, I've never seen you like this.

TOBY

I ain't meanin' to offend yer ladyship.

(TOBY takes a cross-shaped charm from his pouch, and ULTOR makes a grimace of disgust.)

TOBY

Cast your noble eyes on this, eh? Ha, ha! Methinks the little lady here should buy this treasure. 'Tis the medicine o' a wise doctor. It's pretty and n'er fails, and I'll give it t' you cheap.

(ULTOR takes a menacing step towards TOBY, grasping his collar, but TOBY dangles the charm in front of him.)

TOBY

Hey!? Is yer lordship displeased? Have I been too bold?

UNA

Ultror! Stop it! Don't hurt him!

(ULTOR releases Toby, then marches off.)

ULTOR

Good night, Una!

UNA

Ultror, where are you going?!

TOBY

When yer teeth want pullin' yer lordship, call on Toby!

UNA

Oh, Toby, now look what you've done!

TOBY

Please, Miss Una, buy yerself a charm. It'll put the roses back in yer cheeks.

UNA

Don't be silly.

TOBY

It'll help ye sleep deep and free o' the black dreams.

UNA

Oh, go away! Leave me alone!

(UNA runs off as TOBY packs his wares as MAURA enters.)

TOBY

Maura, m' love. Toby's failed. Here, take it.

MAURA

I have no money.

TOBY

It's fer free. A present fer yer mistress against the needletooth. Put it neath 'er pillow -- t' keep her neck lily white.

MAURA

I...I will try.

(TOBY saunters off, whistling. Blackout.)

#### **SCENE 4**

(Several days later in Una's bedroom. UNA sits in bed, gazing in a mirror while ALICE combs her hair.)

UNA

I'm no longer beautiful, Alice. Even my hair is dull.

ALICE

Nonsense, everyone admires you, especially our handsome captain. By the time he returns from Limerick, you shall be our blooming Una once again.

UNA

I certainly don't feel blooming. Does Doctor Hesselius think me very ill?

ALICE

He said he's sending a specialist, so we shall know everything in a day or two.

UNA

But tell me, Alice, what does he think is the matter with me?

ALICE

He wasn't very specific, but he said if the right steps are taken you will be quite yourself again. You will be singing like a little bird, as you used to in the days when Una kept no secrets from poor Alice.



UNA

Una knows what her sage Alice means but there are sweeter birds, silent all day long, that sing by night alone.

ALICE

What do you mean? *(pause)* Una, darling, in heaven's name confide in me.

UNA

But how can I confide in you when I haven't the words to...to describe what I feel.

ALICE

Won't you try at least?

UNA

*(pause)* Well, sometimes I feel a...a strange excitement that is... Oh, Alice, you must promise not to divulge one word of what I'm about to say.

ALICE

Yes, of course.

UNA

Well, I...I have these strange dreams of visitations by a...a beast, a large catlike creature who leaps onto the bed. Lately I hear it murmuring words -- almost like a lullaby. It comes so close, I can feel its hot breath. It smells like sweet almonds, and its voice is deep and mournful.

ALICE

What does it say?

UNA

The words are unintelligible, but their effect is to send a torrent of tremors through my entire body. Oh, Alice, I cannot help myself. It...it thrills me. I wonder if this is the passion of love that people speak of? But how? How can I love a beast?

ALICE

Oh, my darling Una, you can't. You have some sort of fever that's affecting your mind.

UNA

Sometimes it seems to change into the form of a... a man-- as if I am wishing it to become human. Then last night...

ALICE

Yes...?

UNA

Last night I had a strange sensation as if...as if a hand were being drawn along my cheek and neck. Like this.

(UNA strokes Alice's cheek and neck.)

ALICE

Yes, go on.

UNA

Then soft, warm lips kissing my face, my throat.

(UNA slowly kisses Alice on the lips and throat.)

UNA

My heart beats faster, my breathing rises and falls rapidly, and I feel a warm liquid rush into my throat, as if I were drowning.

ALICE

*(nealry faint from pleasure)* Ohhh,...oh, Una, you must stop...

UNA

Then I feel a convulsion of unspeakable pleasures -- oh, Alice! then my senses leave me and I...I become unconscious. I know my body has strange new powers. I can receive pleasure and give it as well. It is all I think of, all I desire. Oh, please, my dear Alice, kiss me.

ALICE

No, no, Una, I feel so strange, but we mustn't -- do you hear something?

(There is a scratching at the door.)

UNA

Shush! Don't answer it!

ALICE

But why...?

UNA

Don't Alice, please! I beg of you!

ALICE

Heavens, Una, who could...?

(The scratching is heard again.)

MAURA

Please, miss, open the door! It's Maura!

(ALICE rushes to open the door.)

ALICE

Heavens, Maura! You scared the life out of us!

(MAURA enters, pressing Toby's charm into Una's hand.)

MAURA

Please, Miss Una, take this -- from Toby. Tonight, pin it under your pillow. For quiet sleep.

ALICE

What is it? Why should Una want that?

MAURA

She knows, miss.

ALICE

Knows what? Tell me.

MAURA

It's against the vampire, miss.

ALICE

Vampire?

MAURA

The evil one.

(MAURA makes a gesture towards her throat as the COLONEL enters and notices the charm.)

COLONEL

What's going on here?! What's this?

(Pause as MAURA refuses to speak.)

ALICE

Well, it's a...a charm, an amulet against the...vampire.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Vampire!? Rubbish! Give me that! We're all well educated in this household, and this hysterical talk is exactly what accounts for the progress of Una's disease! Now get out of here, and take your tawdry trinket with you!

(COLONEL ARDAGH gives the trinket to MAURA who thrusts it into ALICE'S hand, then dashes off.)

COLONEL ARDAGH

Impudent hag!

ALICE

Father, she meant no harm.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Give me that thing!

ALICE

Please, let me keep it, father. I just want to...to study it.

COLONEL ARDAGH

You're too sympathetic, Alice. These fools don't comprehend that diseases have natural causes. And it's usually women who succumb -- because they're weaker, more susceptible to the worse sort of tittle-tattle, thereby evoking the very images of terror that infested their neighbors!

ALICE

But father, what if...what if this disease is different? Let's suppose it was possible that this...this vampire did in fact exist, and...

COLONEL ARDAGH

Nonsense! Even if it were possible -- which is preposterous! -- it certainly wouldn't be frightened off by bits of copper or the perfumes of a druggist's shop.

ALICE

What do you suppose it is? It looks like a cross that's been fumigated or immersed in some unsavory herbs, and there's a strip of vellum with some sort of diagram, some cabalistic ciphers. I wonder what they mean?

COLONEL ARDAGH

Nothing to bother our heads about, but we'll not waste time waiting for that damned specialist! We're packing our bags tomorrow!

UNA

Tomorrow?

COLONEL

Yes! It's almost midnight, but Alice, I think you should stay with Una.

ALICE

Of course, father.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Now, Una, dear, sleep well.

UNA

Good night...

(The COLONEL kisses Una and leaves. SHE lies back in her bed with a sigh. An ethereal waltz is heard and UNA appears to become agitated.)

ALICE

Where should I sleep, Una? Should I lie next to you, the way I did when we were children.

UNA

Aren't you afraid?

ALICE

Of what?

UNA

Of me.

ALICE

I'm more afraid for you, and of...of myself, but papa wants me to stay, and Doctor Hesselius says I shouldn't leave you alone.

UNA

Well, they're wrong! I'll never get to sleep with you here, so if you really care for my welfare, then you'll go to your own room!

ALICE

Really, Una, you needn't raise your voice. I only want to help.

UNA

Then pray for me, and for yourself -- that your life won't be wasted in a convent, your youth spent worshiping a God who's deaf and blind.

ALICE

Una! What's come over you?!

UNA

Please, please, go!

ALICE

Should I leave the charm?

UNA

No!

(ALICE leaves. UNA turns off the lamp, and lies quietly for a moment. There is an eerie howling and UNA sits up, staring as if in a trance. ULTOR enters and UNA speaks in a hypnotic whisper. )

UNA

Ultror...?

ULTOR

Yes, my dearest. Look at me.

UNA

I...I wondered if it was you...

ULTOR

Are you pleased?

UNA

Yes...

ULTOR

Do you know we're engaged? Your father has promised me your hand.

UNA

I suspected as much, but do you really want me? -- even though I'm no longer beautiful.

ULTOR

You're beautiful enough. *(pause)* I didn't mean to wound your little heart. Please, Una, darling, think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness. If your heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the rapture of my shame I live in your warm life, and you shall die -- die sweetly unto mine.

UNA

But I...I'm not ready to die.

ULTOR

As I draw near to you, you in your turn will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty which yet is love.

*(ULTOR kisses her passionately, then punctures her throat, greedily drawing the blood from her veins. When he lifts his head, blood dribbles from his lips. A faint knocking is heard.)*

MAURA

Psssst, Miss! Miss Una, please open up!

*(ULTOR opens the door, hiding behind it. MAURA enters, and HE grasps her by the arm, drawing her inside the room.)*

ULTOR

Hah! Little prune head, what are you doing here?

MAURA

Leave the lamb alone!

ULTOR

And take the old prune?

*(MAURA holds up the amulet, but ULTOR snatches it, throws it aside, and grasps Maura's throat. He drains her and SHE falls to the floor. The instant she falls, UNA awakens from her trance and screams. ULTOR dashes out the window as ALICE and the COLONEL enter.)*

COLONEL ARDAGH

Good God almighty!

ALICE

Maura! Is she alright?

COLONEL ARDAGH

The poor woman's dead! What the devil happened?

UNA

I...I don't know. *(tearfully)* I...I was asleep.

COLONEL ARDAGH

What was she doing here?

ALICE

Look, there on the floor. She was trying to bring Una the amulet.

COLONEL ARDAGH

I'll carry Maura to her room, then I'll send Peter for an apothecary.

ALICE

And a priest.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Yes. Alice, stay with Una. Be brave, my dear girls.

*(COLONEL ARDAGH carries MAURA from the room.)*

ALICE

Oh, Una, what's happening to our happy home?

UNA

If only I'd kept it. She wouldn't have had to...

ALICE

You mustn't blame yourself. Maura had a weak heart. *(pause)* Una, what's that under your nightgown?

UNA

Nothing.



ALICE

You're bleeding. Please, Una, let me see.

UNA

No! It's nothing. I...I only scratched myself -- when I thought the...the beast was upon me -- in my dream.

ALICE

Those aren't scratches. They're small holes, like something pierced your flesh. Did Doctor Hesselius examine them?

UNA

Yes.

ALICE

Does it hurt?

UNA

No! Now please, stop badgering me! (*pause*) Oh, Alice, forgive my impatience. Tell me, do you think it's possible to love someone so passionately you no longer care for your destiny -- for the destiny of your soul?

ALICE

I don't know, but I think it would be an offense against...against God, and all that is good.

UNA

But how can it be bad? How can it be evil if it...

ALICE

If it what...?

UNA

If it feels so...so wonderful.

ALICE

Oh, my darling, Una, what will become of us?

(The SISTERS embrace, then kiss. Fade out.)

## **SCENE 5**

(The parlor where DOCTOR HESSELIUS and COLONEL ARDAGH are seated.)

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Now, listen to me, Colonel Ardagh. Your daughter is not to be moved. Those puncture marks on Una's neck indicate an advanced state of the strangest illness ever suffered by mortals. Believe me, I know. My dear brother lost both his wife and daughter, and I mean to unleash the vengeance of heaven upon the fiend who murdered them.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Forgive me, Doctor, but what has "murder" to do with my poor child?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Everything. You shall see.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Shall I? So far you've done nothing but talk in riddles! You've failed to produce the slightest impression upon her disease!

(ALICE enters with the tea service.)

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Una is suffering a series of seizures. Her death is very near unless the final, fatal seizure is arrested. Then with great care and skill, her strength might possibly return.

ALICE

What is the nature of these seizures?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

You have heard, no doubt, the appalling legend that prevails in Northern Romania, in Turkish Servia, even in Russia -- the legend, so they call it, of the vampire. Well, your sister is suffering from the visits of such a creature.

COLONEL ARDAGH

What?! Ha, ah! Oh, you scholarly physicians! Into what quackeries you rush when all your theories have failed.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

It is not a theory, Colonel; it is a fact, and one more assault might extinguish the last spark of vitality which, believe me, is ready to die.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Listen to yourself, Doctor. The life of my beloved daughter is at stake and you babble like a carnival conjuror! To hell with all your damnable learning! You're as ignorant as my servants! Alice, I'm leaving immediately to find a capable physician. Give Doctor Hesselius his coat and hat and show him out!

(COLONEL ARDAGH departs while DOCTOR HESSELIUS sighs deeply, and ALICE grasps his hand.)

ALICE

Oh, Doctor, what are we to do?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Ah, then you believe me?

ALICE

Yes, with all my heart. I know something strange is happening. Una knows it too, but father is hopeless.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Believe me, my dear Alice, there are no medical textbooks that explain what I've witnessed. I thought Maura's death would bring your father to his senses!

ALICE

He says it's all her own doing. He thinks the vampire is nothing but superstition, and to believe it is to invite it in the door!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Then keep trying to persuade him.

ALICE

But I don't understand. How does a vampire exist? How does it come into being?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

According to my research, it begins when a person, more or less wicked, puts an end to himself. A suicide with a spiritual will to live, under certain lunar and circulatory influences, becomes a vampire. Then it visits people in their slumbers.

ALICE

But how does it live?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

It is sustained by a horrible lust for living blood which supplies the vigor of its waking existence.

ALICE

Does it ever sleep?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Yes, in its own coffin. It returns there every day without displacing the grave sites which is utterly inexplicable -- unless it can will itself to become a specter as well as a flesh and blood being. But for now my colleague is prepared to proceed. But we need your sister's cooperation.

ALICE

I...I'm afraid she might not cooperate willingly. You see, if this vampire is causing Una's affliction, then it is also bringing...well, pleasure.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

She told you that?

ALICE

Yes, though I...I promised not to speak of it.

DOCTOR

I'm glad you did. Then she knows?

ALICE

She says it's a dream, some sort of beastly apparition at the foot of her bed. The difficulty is that her soul is acquiescing to its powers. It's very...seductive.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

If this is true, then it's better for us to remain silent, but I shall return later this evening, after your father's departure.

(DOCTOR HESSELIUS stands to leave, then hesitates, pulling a small painting from his bag.)

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Before I go, I wonder if you might recognize this gentleman?

ALICE

Why its Captain de Lacy.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

You know him?

ALICE

What a remarkable execution!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Please, tell me what you know of him.

ALICE

Why we shall soon be related. He's betrothed to Una -- though father hasn't told her yet. Oh, Doctor, could I show this portrait to her? Good heavens, you look ill...

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Is the Captain visiting here now?

ALICE

Why no, he left for Limerick a week ago.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Alice, turn the portrait over and note the date on the back.

ALICE

1601. Good heavens! Well, I certainly don't know this gentleman, but Captain de Lacy is his very effigy!

(UNA enters.)

ALICE

Una! What are you doing here?!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

You should be lying in your bed, young lady.

UNA

I just spoke with father and he says you're no longer my physician, so I shall do as I please. Besides, I'm feeling restless.

ALICE

Una, you shouldn't be so insolent! Doctor Hesselius is very concerned about you.

UNA

Well, he needn't be. I'm feeling quite fine today, as strong as a whole team of oxen.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Look, Una., your sister is holding a very interesting portrait.

UNA

*(pause, staring at the painting)* So Ultor has had his likeness taken.

ALICE

But he hasn't. Look at the date -- 1601, The Baron Turol de Lacy. He's been dead for more than a century.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Not so dead as you fancy.

ALICE

Whatever do you mean, Doctor?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Perhaps Una knows.

UNA

I assure you I do not.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

The De Lacys are a wicked family with blood stained annals who continue to plague the human race with their atrocious lusts.

ALICE

Good heavens!

UNA

Father's right. You've become quite hysterical.

ALICE

Una!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Look at that countenance: it is cruel and selfish, it is the expression of a wicked and lustful tyrant.

UNA

You are quite wrong, doctor. It is the very likeness of Ultor, and he is the kindest, most passionate man who ever lived. Now please, leave our house!

ALICE

Una!

UNA

Ultor and I are engaged, Doctor, and I will not have you slandering his good name.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Good day then, ladies.

(DOCTOR HESSELIUS leaves.)

ALICE

You...you know of the engagement?

UNA

Ultor told me, and we're both very happy, happier than I ever thought possible.

ALICE

But why didn't you tell me that you knew? Father and I have been so eager to share in your happiness.

UNA

It amused me to watch you wonder if Ultor would find me suitable or if we would care for each other. Well, you needn't worry.

ALICE

But Una, that's so unlike you -- to keep us in suspense, toying with our affections while knowing all along.

UNA

It was father who toyed with me. He should have told me from the beginning. I'm not a child!

ALICE

He was afraid you wouldn't approve. He wanted to wait until you were well again.

UNA

So now we all know, but isn't such knowledge sorrow as well as joy?

ALICE

Whatever do you mean?

UNA

When Ultor marries me, we will part, and oh, dearest sister, how I shall miss you! Will you come in an hour to bid me good night?

ALICE

Yes, of course.

(UNA departs. Blackout.)

### SCENE 6

(Music as dim lights focus on a crypt with a coffin. The lid opens and a CREATURE rises from within wearing a long, dark cape, liquid dripping from its hem. The CREATURE stands, making hideous sucking noises, then sighs. Fade out.)

### SCENE 7

(Later that evening. The bedroom where ALICE is sitting on Una's bed.)

ALICE

Princess Una laid to rest, was by her guardian angel blessed.

UNA

Is the moon full?

ALICE

Yes.

UNA

Alice, you've been the dearest, kindest sister, and I know I have caused you considerable grief, but it will soon be over. I shall not live to see tomorrow's dawn.

ALICE

Shush! Una, you're ill, I have no doubt, but I'm certain we shall see you better tomorrow and better still the day following.

UNA

But I'm not ill. Feel my temples, they are cool. Lay your fingers to my pulse. It's throb is slow and temperate. I was never more perfectly in health and yet I know that ere three hours pass, I shall be no more.

ALICE

Oh, Una, you mustn't say such things. (*starting to weep*) I can't imagine life without you; your suffering distresses me so...



UNA

But my dear Alice, I am not suffering. I have tasted ecstasy beyond endurance, raptures I never dreamed possible. Now please, won't you bring me a glass of warm milk.

ALICE

I'm not certain I should leave you -- even for a few moments. Oh, why isn't father here?!

UNA

I'll be fine.

(ALICE leaves. Waltz music is heard as ULTOR enters.)

UNA

*(whispering)* Ultor? Ultor, darling...

ULTOR

My little bride, my lovely little Una. How you tremble, my dearest. Are you ready?

UNA

Yes, yes, quickly before Alice returns.

ULTOR

*(grasping her, drawing her near)* To the resurrection and the life. Say it.

UNA

The resurrection and the life.

ULTOR

Come, my darling.

UNA

I will come, but shouldn't I call you by your rightful name? *(pause)* Your name is Turol de Lacy, Baron of Munster.

ULTOR

Yes, but how...?

(There is a scratching at the window.)

TOBY

Pssst. Needletooth, needletooth!

UNA

Toby!?

(TOBY opens the window and leaps inside. ULTOR grabs him by the collar and throws him on the floor.)

ULTOR

What are you peddling now, hunchback?

TOBY

Leave me, wolf-man, and her ladyship. Go wi' yer own kind where they take yer coffin.

ULTOR

What coffin?

TOBY

The one they carried out o' Munster Castle last night. They're rennovatin' the ruins, yer lordship, heh, heh.

ULTOR

Not yet! It's not time! Where...where is it?!

TOBY

I followed 'em, spyin' t' see where they go and fer a few guineas I might recollect the place.

ULTOR

Tell me, hunchback! Now!!

TOBY

Toby's afraid his memory ain't so...

(ULTOR reaches for Toby's throat.)

TOBY

Toby suddenly remembers, heh, heh.

ULTOR

Where is it? Who's taken it?!

TOBY

Two men moved it last night, yer lordship, and there I seen it, pretty fresh too fer bein' so old.

UNA

What is this coffin to you, Ultor?

TOBY

'Tis his home, milady.

ULTOR

The amphibious dwelling of resurrected love...

TOBY

Wolf love!

UNA

But you said your home was Munster Castle.

ULTOR

My home is consecrated with human blood, and I'm afraid I must leave you for now.

UNA

Please take me with you.

ULTOR

I can't.

UNA

Don't you...? Don't you love me?

ULTOR

More than you know. I have crossed centuries to love you, but I'm afraid I must leave -- only for a few hours.

(TOBY has inched his way to the door and opens it.)

TOBY

Now, Alice! Hurry!

(ALICE runs into the room holding a large crucifix. TOBY snatches it and approaches ULTOR who attempts to run, but falls under it's power, crying out in pain.)

UNA

Ultor! Ultor!

ALICE

No, Una, no! I beg of you, stand back.

(TOBY thrusts the crucifix at ALICE.)

TOBY

Hold this!

(TOBY pulls out the stake tied to his back, and stabs ULTOR who howls hideously, then mews like a cat. UNA faints, and ALICE rushes to her as TOBY pulls off his wig, revealing DOCTOR HESSELIUS.)

TOBY

Thank you, dear Alice, for helping me fulfill my mission.

ALICE

Oh, Una, my dearest, darling Una.

(Blackout.)

### **SCENE 8**

(The next day in the parlor. DR. HESSELIUS sits with ALICE and COLONEL ARDAGH drinking brandy.)

COLONEL ARDAGH

Well, doctor, you have delivered us from an unspeakable plague. I thank God every moment for preserving her life, and I curse my conceited incredulity, my obstinacy, my despicable affectation of superiority! How could you endure it?!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Please, Colonel, you're much too hard on yourself. I was as blind as you. You must forget all that, and concentrate on making Una well again.

ALICE

She calls out his name every night.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

They claim the Baron was a passionate lover, a Dionysian in the art of carnal courtship.

COLONEL ARDAGH

And I thought I was receiving into my home a worthy husband for my little Una.

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

We must all rest now. Tomorrow we will call the commission, and the inquisition will be held according to law.

ALICE

What will they do, Doctor?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Strike off the head, and burn it with the body on a pile of wood. Then the ashes are thrown upon the river and born away.

COLONEL ARDAGH

Then we'll be completely free from the pest?

DOCTOR

Well, not necessarily.

COLONEL ARDAGH

What do you mean?

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

If a vampire's relationship with a mortal is passionate enough, the victim might develop into a vampire as well.

COLONEL ARDAGH

You mean there's a possibility that Una could become...? Good heavens!

DOCTOR HESSELIUS

Only God knows, Colonel. We must pray for Him to be merciful. Only He can judge her now.

## **SCENE 9**

(Crossfade to Una's bedroom. SHE is sleeping soundly, then suddenly sits up, staring straight ahead. HER mouth opens slightly, then she smiles, revealing long pointed teeth. Blackout.)

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.

















