



Sample Pages from Gothic Ghost Stories

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GOTHIC GHOST STORIES

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS ADAPTED BY
Lindsay Price



Gothic Ghost Stories
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Characters

The Peverils (5W/2M)

Blanche
Bernice
Freddy
Harry
Madge
Lucille
Aunt Barbara

The Twins Story (2W/3M/3Any)

The Twins
Lady Rosalind
Dick Peveril
Mrs. Canning
John
Servant
Colonel Blantyre

Lost Hearts (4W/2M)

Stephen Elliott
Mrs. Abney
Mrs. Parkes
Ms. Bunch
Boy & Girl Ghosts

A Room in the Tower (3W/3M/1Any + Ensemble)

Percy
John the Servant
Mrs. Clinton
Jack Stone
Jane Stone
Julia Stone
Servant

Everyone is involved in the dream sequence

The Open Window (2W/3M)

Vera
 Framton Nuttel
 Mrs. Sappleton
 Husband
 Brother

The Choking Ghost (1M/3Any)

Man
 Three figures who represent the Ghost

John Charrington's Wedding (2W/2M)

Geoffrey
 Fanny
 May
 Byles

The Old Nurse's Tale (7W/2M)

Hester
 Rosamond
 Dorothy
 Agnes
 Girl
 Maude/Lady
 Grace
 Lord Furnival
 Musician

Character Doubling

There are many characters here who show up briefly, and only once. Please feel free to double- or triple-cast roles to give actors more to do. In the spirit of storytelling, the Peverils can take on roles in the stories. This can be changed or rearranged depending on the size of your cast.

Accents
.....

All of the stories are set in the UK so British accents would be appropriate. But don't feel compelled to do them unless you can do them well. Poor accents will take away from any creepy environment you're striving to create. They're not necessary to the stories themselves.

Setting

There is a permanent seating area in one of the downstage corners where the Peverils gather, and a variety of levels in the main playing area. If you can have a short staircase that goes offstage, great. Other than that, everything should be done with quick on and off pieces. Don't focus on realism with the story sets. Use black cubes, chairs, small tables, things that can easily be picked up. Same with props. The more time you spend changing scenery, the less time the audience will stay in the environment you've created.

If you decide to use set pieces instead of the suggested mime, the set for the dream sequence in "A Room in the Tower" should be exaggerated and fragmented. Only the suggestion of a door instead of a full working door, for example.

Lighting and Sound

Lighting and sound are going to be your best friends so use them to your advantage. Creepy sounds, eerie music, and echoes abound in the script. Consider using found light like lamps and flashlights (I know they're not period, but a flashlight under the chin is a great effect). Use fake candles. Use blue light. Use red gels. A red light on a cyc looks great. Create areas of light instead of a general wash.

Watch the transfers between the Peveril area and the main playing area. Consider crossfades rather than blackouts. Have the Peverils start talking immediately so that they can draw focus away from the main playing area.

Actors in the stories should stay in character as they move set pieces or exit. That way the play can continue before the main playing area is cleared. Use blackouts sparingly and for ghostly effect rather than for scene changes.

In "The Open Window" lyrics from the song "Bertie The Bounder" from the 1909 musical "Our Miss Gibbs" are used. If you can't find the original music, create your own tune. And make it creepy!

Makeup and Costumes

The time period for all the stories-within-a-story ranges from the 1850's to 1914. The main bookend story was written in 1911 but don't feel that it needs to be set in that period. It makes more sense if the Peveril scenes have some distance in costuming from the stories they tell. Don't get too wrapped up in authentic costumes. Certainly a gothic look would work well, but you can also get away with the atmosphere of the time period. For example, dress everyone in black but have the ladies wear shawls. So long as there aren't t-shirts and running shoes in the mix, you'll be fine.

Explore and experiment with the makeup and costuming of the ghosts. Each has a specific look to them and they don't all have to be traditional "white sheet" ghosts. Experiment with decay, cobwebs and so on. The ghosts in "Lost Heart" have holes in their chests. This could be achieved with a shirt that has a dark hole with red scratches around the edges drawn on it.

Gothic Ghost Stories was first presented at Listowel District Secondary School in October 2018 with the following cast:

The Peverils

Blanche: Natasha Bowles
Bernice: Emma Roelofsen
Freddy: Kaelan Mick
Harry: Cam McCluskie
Madge: Kaia Taylor
Lucille: Grace Jackson
Aunt Barbara: Victoria Kochut

Lost Hearts

Stephen Elliott: Ryan Weale
Mrs. Abney: Chantel McIntosh
Mrs. Parkes: Jereelyn Corcoran
Ms. Bunch: Natasha Bowles
Boy: Gavin McMann
Girl: Keely Chauvin

The Room in the Tower

Percy: Cam McCluskie
John: Brendan Jantzen
Mrs. Clinton: Kaia Taylor
Jack Stone: Keegan Long
Jane Stone: Chantel McIntosh
Julia Stone: Emma Roelofsen
Servant: Mackenzie Hallam

The Open Window

Vera: Hailey Kent
Framton Nuttel: Tyler Dahm
Mrs. Sappleton: Allysa Danielli
Husband: Rama Shtovba
Brother: Ahmed Rizwan

The Choking Ghost

Man: Keegan Long
The Figures: Brendan Jantzen, Tyler Dahm, Joey Dyck

The Twins Story

The Twins: Hailey Kent, Abby Givens
Dick Peveril: Evan Saisensuk
Betty: Amaya Gedcke
Mrs. Canning: Kaia Taylor
John: Joey Dyck
Colonel Blantyre: Keegan Long

John Charrington's Wedding

Geoffrey: Evan Saisensuk
Fanny: Keara Kuper
May: Keely Chauvin
Byles: Joey Dyck

The Old Nurse's Tale

Hester: Grace Jackson
Rosamond: Allysa Danielli
Dorothy: Jereelyn Corcoran
Agnes: Amaya Gedcke
Girl: Victoria Kochut
Shepherd: Brendan Jantzen
Mrs. Stark: Natasha Bowles
Mrs. Furnival: Kaia Taylor
Maude/Lady: Chantel McIntosh
Grace: Emma Roelofsen
Lord Furnival: Kaelan Mick
Musician: Brendan Jantzen

Crew

Direction: Mrs. S. Webster
Stage Manager: CJ Brooks
ASM: Abby Givens
Lights: Matt Vesnaver
Sound: Zoey Irvine
Hang and Focus: Austin Schultz
Make Up/Hair: Gen Szymkovak, Emma Raynard, Sarah Donnelly, Brittany Albrecht
Costumes: Natasha Sider, Natalie Phelan,
Dramaturg: Paydyn Dunn
Set Design: Amaya Gedcke, Paydyn Dunn
Set Crew: Dan White, Austin Buchanan

ACT ONE

In the dark we hear Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor. For the first few seconds, play with light. Either have a blood red cyc come up slowly on the collection of ghouls on stage, or show the ghosts in silhouette first, or have quick hits of light so that we see flashes of a particular ghoul. Flashlights under the chin make a great effect.

As the music really kicks in, the small collection of ghosts and ghouls is fully revealed. These represent some of the ghosts featured in the stories. For example: A boy and girl with missing hearts. A pair of twins, white as sheets. A mother and her daughter, blue from cold, covered in a cobweb of ice. A lady with an evil face. A haughty young man. A lord crippled by cruelty.

You don't need to represent all of the stories; just make sure there is a Gothic, ghoulish tableaux to start us off. Perhaps the ghosts start to move toward the audience, reaching for them.

Once the ghouls are established, one of the ghosts gives a blood curdling scream and there's a blackout.

As soon as you can, throw up a warm light for BLANCHE and her mother BERNICE to enter into.

BLANCHE: *(to the audience)* Did the scream scare you? I hardly notice them anymore. It's so hard to take ghosts seriously when you see them every day.

BERNICE: Blanche, is that anyway to welcome our guests? *(to audience with a gesture)* Welcome to Peveril house.

BLANCHE: But it's true. We are constantly overrun with the sights and sounds of spooky spectres. They knock and groan, crash down the stairs, materialize in the garden. You'll see.

BERNICE: *(to audience)* We're so glad you decided to join us. *(sees something offstage)*

BLANCHE: *(to audience)* This is the best week of the whole year. It's my favourite, anyway. Did you bring your skates?

BERNICE: (*pointing off*) Oh dear, Aunty B has just gone into the shrubbery. She's going to frighten Flo-Flo. Whistle for her, Blanche.

BLANCHE whistles half-heartedly. A dog's bark is heard.

BLANCHE: Flo is an animal of extreme intellect. She's not so silly as to be bothered by something so commonplace as a family ghost.

BERNICE: (*exiting*) Flo-Flo!

BLANCHE: Blue Aunt Barbara is such a bore. She never says anything. (*the ghost of AUNT BARBARA, dressed in a hideous shade of blue, enters slowly*) Aunty B. Aunt B! What is it? What do you want to tell us? (*AUNT BARBARA slowly turns and gestures vaguely offstage*) See that? So vague. I think she wants to confess something horrible and wicked that happened two hundred years ago, but she's forgotten what it is.

*AUNT BARBARA wanders off. A dog's bark is heard.
BERNICE re-enters.*

BLANCHE: I just want to know why she wears that horrible shade of blue. It does nothing for her complexion.

BERNICE: She is dead, Blanche.

BLANCHE: True. But that doesn't mean you have to neglect your looks.

BERNICE: (*to audience*) You mustn't confuse our banter. All our ghosts are family. We love them very much.

BLANCHE: We love everyone.

BERNICE: Except for those who dislike golf and skating.

BLANCHE: The fiends.

BERNICE: But there is some truth in the saying, you can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family.

BLANCHE: The Peveril line is, well, ripe with scoundrels.

BERNICE: Deviants.

BLANCHE: Ne'er-do-wells and good-for-nothings.

BERNICE: But we love them!

BLANCHE: And we have changed. There hasn't been a scoundrel in at least... 50 years. Give or take a couple of missteps.

All of a sudden we are surrounded by the sound and echo of a yell, as if someone is urging a horse up a staircase. There is a clatter, a horse's neigh, and a scream. BLANCHE and BERNICE shake their heads as if they've heard it all before.

BLANCHE: Master Anthony broke his neck trying to ride a horse up the main staircase.

BERNICE: After doing something most awful down in the garden.

The clatter and scream is heard again.

BLANCHE: He is so loud. *(to audience)* Did you bring earplugs? He sometimes does that at dawn.

BERNICE: You won't see him, but you may see others.

BLANCHE: Mama must think highly of you. It's a high compliment to be assigned a room featured by defunct family members. You're not afraid of ghosts, right?

BERNICE: If you see Great Great Grandma Bridget by the fire, feel free to observe. But don't talk to her. She can get unpleasant.

BLANCHE: For no reason. Grandma Bridget is so vague.

BERNICE: She did cut the throat of a distance relative and then disembowel herself with an axe.

BLANCHE: I suppose...

BERNICE: *(to audience)* Enough talk. I'm sure you're tired from your journey and a nice crackling fire is calling your name. *(calling out)* It's time for stories!

There is a chatter and a cheer as several folks enter and gather downstage right in a cosy living room type setting.

BLANCHE: I know you're here for our tremendous New Year's Ball, but it's lovely you were able to come a couple of days early.

MADGE comes forward, limping and leaning on FREDDY and HARRY. LUCILLE enters, looking around with an air of misplaced knowledge.

MADGE: Blanche! It's so good to see you.

BLANCHE: Madge – what on earth happened to your knee?

MADGE: Twisted.

BLANCHE: How will you join us for skating?

MADGE: I am to rest this afternoon.

FREDDY: Let's get you to a seat.

The boys get MADGE settled.

MADGE: If I rest now, I'll be able to dance at the ball. I'd rather dance that skate any day. (*BLANCHE is about to say something*) Even though I love skating with all my heart.

LUCILLE: (*butting her nose in, right up close to FREDDY*) Is this the long gallery? Madge has told me all about it. Is that where we are? I must know.

BLANCHE: (*looking at MADGE, who shrugs in apology*) Yes...? We often start the day here. There's coffee and –

LUCILLE: (*right up to BLANCHE*) You are so lucky to live in a family with such active spiritual activity. I wouldn't be able to sleep for the excitement of seeing a ghost!

BLANCHE: Once you've seen one, they lose their charm.

LUCILLE: (*she goes right up to BERNICE*) How thrilling it must be to make constant contact with the beyond.

BERNICE: And you are?

MADGE: Aunt Bernice, this is Lucille. She's a... friend. (*aside to BLANCHE*) Mother made me bring her.

LUCILLE: (*soaking it all in*) I have wanted to experience this environment ever since I first heard tell of it.

MADGE: (*aside*) She and Mother are peas in a pod with their immense interest in "psychic" affairs.

BLANCHE: Oh dear.

MADGE: Exactly.

BERNICE: Oh yes, I believe my brother mentioned you. Welcome to Peveril House.

BLANCHE: Do you like skating, Lucille?

LUCILLE: No. Awful pastime.

The others react.

LUCILLE: (*back to BERNICE*) I will fit right in here Mrs. Peveril. I am well read in all aspects of phantom phenomenon.

BLANCHE: (*aside to MADGE*) What has she read?

MADGE: A *Christmas Carol*.

They, along with FREDDY and HARRY, laugh out loud and try to hide it with coughs.

LUCILLE: (*right up to BERNICE*) What have you seen so far this morning? (*with overdramatic seriousness*) Has Aunt Barbara appeared today?

BERNICE: She keeps going into the shrubbery. (*guiding LUCILLE to a seat*) Shall we get settled?

Everyone sits and jostles for position with pillows and blankets. Make this stage picture with multiple levels – perhaps FREDDY sits on the back of the couch, HARRY sits on the floor or a stool to give variety in sitting heights. While they do this, BLANCHE is left standing to address the audience.

BLANCHE: Of course our ball is the event of the season but I rather enjoy these days leading up when we're a smaller group, sitting round the fire telling stories. Ghost stories. We are Peverils after all. Start thinking of your story; you'll be expected to join in.

BLANCHE turns to the group as FREDDY stands, waving his arm in the air.

FREDDY: I'm first! Dibs!

BLANCHE: Freddy, you're always first.

FREDDY: That's because my stories set the tone. My stories are rich with detail and imagery. (*beat*) And your stories are horrible.

BLANCHE: Mama!

BERNICE: Your stories are a bit... silly, my dear.

BLANCHE: (*sitting with a bit of a pout*) Oh nonsense.

BERNICE: Go Freddy.

BLANCHE: So unfair. None of you appreciate my flair. And I have just as many details as you Freddy Peveril.

HARRY: I have two words. (*he holds up a finger for each word*) Ghost. Pony.

BLANCHE: What's wrong with that? Ponies can't be ghosts? Are ghosts restricted to the human world? They can't frolic in meadows with other ghost ponies, and ghost bunnies, and ghost – all right go, Freddy.

The Bach music plays briefly as FREDDY steps toward the main playing area. At the same time, two ghosts come to stand beside him – a BOY and GIRL with missing hearts. The two ghosts reach out toward the audience. FREDDY looks at them with a big grin. He then turns to the audience.

FREDDY: Tonight, we begin with “Lost Hearts.”

FREDDY and the ghosts exit.

Warm lights come up on the other side of the stage, where we see the story come to life. STEPHEN ELLIOTT enters with MRS. PARKES and MS. BUNCH. STEPHEN looks around, amazed by what he sees.

MRS. PARKES: Welcome, Welcome!

MS. BUNCH: We're so happy to have you here.

MRS. PARKES: So happy. Welcome to Aswarby. This is Ms. Bunch.

MS. BUNCH: And this is Mrs. Parkes. We run the household here between us.

STEPHEN: Only the two of you?

MRS. PARKES: We're a small household, just us and Mrs. Abney.

MS. BUNCH: And now you!

STEPHEN: That must be an awful lot of work.

MRS. PARKES: We manage, yes we do.

STEPHEN: (*looking around*) This is the nicest house I've ever seen.

MRS. PARKES: We're glad you think so. Isn't that a kind thing to say? We quite like living here, don't we Ms. Bunch?

MS. BUNCH: One of the best situations I've had in all my years of service.

STEPHEN: (*looking out*) The light in the windows, it looks like so many fires...

MRS. PARKES: What a lovely thing to say. I've never looked at them that way. You have a way with words, you do. I look forward to seeing what else you tell us.

MS. BUNCH: (*draws STEPHEN to a seat*) Tell us, what do you know about your cousin?

STEPHEN: Nothing. Until last month I didn't know I had a cousin.

MRS. PARKES: We didn't know you existed either!

MS. BUNCH: No idea!

MRS. PARKES: (*as if sharing a secret*) We must admit, it's a bit of a surprise you're here.

MS. BUNCH: We must admit.

STEPHEN: It's a huge surprise to me. I thought I was to stay in that orphanage for good.

MRS. PARKES: We're sorry about your parents. When did it happen?

STEPHEN: A year now.

MRS. PARKES: Sad. So sad.

MS. BUNCH: Tragic.

MRS. PARKES: So tragic.

MS. BUNCH: But it's turned out for the best.

MRS. PARKES: The best for all of us, I think.

MS. BUNCH: Mrs. Abney is somewhat of a recluse.

MRS. PARKES: We rarely have visitors.

MS. BUNCH: And she rarely goes out.

MRS. PARKES: There's not a lot she needs us to do.

MS. BUNCH: She reads.

MRS. PARKES: She reads. A lot.

MS. BUNCH: A lot. And writes.

MRS. PARKES: Reads and writes all day long.

MS. BUNCH: So it's a surprise to have a new person in the house.

MRS. PARKES: Such a surprise! Maybe things are changing at Aswarby Hall.

MS. BUNCH: You're the talk of the county! (*beat*) Don't worry, Stephen. You're in good hands.

MRS. ABNEY enters. She is eccentric, always carrying a notebook and pencil. She makes notes constantly.

ABNEY: Stephen Elliot? Hello, hello! Welcome. How are you my boy? How are you? How old are you? That is, you're not too tired I hope by your journey to eat dinner?

STEPHEN: No ma'am. I am well.

ABNEY: Good, good. And, how old are you, my boy?

STEPHEN: I'll be fourteen next birthday.

ABNEY: Ah, ah! And that's in September, correct? Very well, very well. Not soon then. (*she writes this down in a small journal she's carrying*) I like – ha ha – I like to get things down in my book. So you're still thirteen. Certain?

STEPHEN: Yes ma'am. Quite certain.

ABNEY: Good, good. Well. All right! Parkes and Bunch will take good care of you.

MRS. PARKES: Indeed we will ma'am.

MS. BUNCH: Looking forward to it.

ABNEY: They are the very best. I don't know what I'd do without them. Enjoy your time here, Stephen Elliott.

ABNEY exits, writing in her book as she goes.

MRS. PARKES: It's wonderful to have you here.

MS. BUNCH: So wonderful. And please feel free,

MRS. PARKES: Feel free,

MS. BUNCH: To ask us any questions.

MRS. PARKES: We're an open book.

MS. BUNCH: We want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

MRS. PARKES: Yes, yes, absolutely. We can tell you about the paintings...

MS. BUNCH: The different rooms in the house...

MRS. PARKES: We've been here so long, we know everything about the place.

MS. BUNCH: Seems like forever, doesn't it Mrs. Parkes?

MRS. PARKES: That it does.

STEPHEN: Is Mrs. Abney a good person?

PARKES and BUNCH look at each other and then start to laugh.

MRS. PARKES: Oh my goodness!

MS. BUNCH: Oh my word!

MRS. PARKES: Is Mrs. Abney a good person?

MS. BUNCH: You get to the heart of it, don't you lad?

STEPHEN: I don't know anything about her.

MRS. PARKES: Quite right, quite right. That is an excellent question, Master Stephen, and one that we are happy to answer.

MS. BUNCH: Happy to.

They each take a deep breath.

MRS. PARKES: Mrs. Abney is the kindest person I've ever met.

MS. BUNCH: The kindest person I've ever seen.

MRS. PARKES: (to BUNCH) Did she not take in that boy out of the forest?

During the following, the BOY and GIRL ghosts enter upstage – one from stage left, one from stage right. They move very slowly – take a step and hold for 3 seconds before taking another step. They move toward upstage centre where they will stop and stare out.

MS. BUNCH: Giovanni. Poor boy. Tragic.

MRS. PARKES: And that poor girl. So lovely, but so silent.

MS. BUNCH: Tragic.

STEPHEN: What happened to them?

MS. BUNCH: (*drawing STEPHEN to sit*) One day, Mrs. Abney went out for a walk through the woods.

MRS. PARKES: I remember it being terribly cold.

MS. BUNCH: Quite cold. There was frost on all the windows.

Lights shift slightly as this is now the past. MRS. ABNEY enters. She gestures as if there is a girl by her side.

ABNEY: Mrs. Parkes. Feed this poor thing and get a fire going. We must have some dry clothes somewhere. (*starts making notes in her book*)

MRS. PARKES: Of course ma'am. (*as if to the "girl"*) Where have you come from, my dear? What's your name? Where is your family?

ABNEY: She has none, I'm afraid.

MRS. PARKES: No family?

MS. BUNCH: What a tragedy.

ABNEY: (*as if to the "girl"*) Parkes and Bunch will take good care of you. They are the very best. I don't know what I'd do without them. Enjoy your time here, Phoebe. (*exits*)

Lights shift back to the present.

MS. BUNCH: Poor Phoebe. She was with us for just – three weeks?

MRS. PARKES: Three weeks.

STEPHEN: Did her family come? Did someone come to claim her?

MS. BUNCH: It was the oddest thing. One morning she was up and out of her room before any one of us had opened our eyes. We never saw her again.

MRS. PARKES: Never again.

STEPHEN: She disappeared?

MS. BUNCH: She disappeared. Mrs. Abney was quite upset.

STEPHEN: But where did the girl go?

MRS. PARKES & MS. BUNCH: Well...

MRS. PARKES: The wandering blood was thick in her veins.

MS. BUNCH: So strong.

MRS. PARKES: She felt the pull. She must have.

MS. BUNCH: That must have been what happened.

MRS. PARKES: Domestic life was too much.

MS. BUNCH: Too much indeed.

STEPHEN: What about the boy? You said there was a boy as well.

MRS. PARKES & MS. BUNCH: Ohhhhhhhh.

MRS. PARKES: That poor boy.

MS. BUNCH: Poor boy. Tragic.

Lights shift to the past. There is the sound of a squeeze box.

MRS. ABNEY enters.

ABNEY: Mrs. Parkes, what is that sound?

MRS. PARKES: It's a squeeze box, ma'am. I haven't heard one of those in such a long time. Listen to that, brings a tear to the eye it does.

ABNEY: Who's playing?

MS. BUNCH: *(looking out to the audience, as if out a window)* There's a boy down the lane. Where did he come from, I wonder?

ABNEY: Bring him up to the house, Mrs. Parkes.

MRS. PARKES: Yes ma'am. *(runs off)*

ABNEY: What do you think Ms. Bunch, he looks about, what, thirteen? I'm sure he hasn't eaten a hot meal in quite some time. Put something together, will you? *(writes in her book)*

MS. BUNCH: Yes of course, ma'am.

MRS. PARKES: *(entering as if talking to "the boy")* Don't be scared, my dear. We're not upset by the music. It's been ages since we've had any at Aswarby Hall. Here he is, ma'am. His name is Giovanni.

ABNEY: *(as if to "boy")* Yes, there's nothing to be afraid of here. Parkes and Bunch will take good care of you. They are the very best. I don't know what I'd do without them. Enjoy your time here, Giovanni.

MRS. ABNEY exits. Lights shift back to the present.

MS. BUNCH: He disappeared same as the girl.

MRS. PARKES: Just the same.

MS. BUNCH: Just went off one morning.

STEPHEN: How strange.

MRS. PARKES: Too much of the wanderlust. That must have been what happened.

MS. BUNCH: Must have. We still have the squeeze box.

STEPHEN: So they both came and then left? They both disappeared?

MRS. PARKES: All right, enough questions. You've had a day, you have. Dinner and then bed.

Music plays. Lights change. MRS. PARKES and MS. BUNCH stand and turn upstage. STEPHEN lies down on cubes to make a bed with a blanket. The BOY and the GIRL turn toward STEPHEN.

Blackout.

Lights come back up. The BOY and the GIRL are closer to STEPHEN.

Blackout.

Lights come back up. The BOY and the GIRL are standing over STEPHEN. STEPHEN sits up straight in bed. He doesn't see the BOY and the GIRL.

STEPHEN: Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?

The BOY and the GIRL reach out to STEPHEN and groan.

Blackout.

Lights up. The BOY and GIRL have disappeared. PARKES and BUNCH sit with STEPHEN on the cubes. He is sharing his nightmare with them.

MRS. PARKES: Goosebumps. I have goosebumps.

MS. BUNCH: The hair is standing right up on the back of my neck.

STEPHEN: And then all of a sudden I was in the wine cellar.

MRS. PARKES: How did you get there?

STEPHEN: I don't know. It was dark all around. I could hear sounds that may have been rats but I was sure it wasn't rats.

MRS. PARKES: How did you know?

STEPHEN: I had a feeling.

MS. BUNCH: What was it?

STEPHEN: I don't know. I thought I heard a voice calling from the back bin. And if I put my ear to lid, I'd be able to hear what the voice was saying. So I went closer and closer and closer and then –

MRS. PARKES & MS. BUNCH: And then?

STEPHEN: And then I woke up.

MRS. PARKES: Goosebumps!

MS. BUNCH: Neck!

MRS. PARKES: Terrifying.

MS. BUNCH: I have chills.

MRS. ABNEY enters with her book.

ABNEY: What's giving you chills, Ms. Bunch?

MS. BUNCH: Stephen had a terrible dream last night. He heard voices in the wine cellar.

STEPHEN: Well I dreamt I did.

MRS. PARKES: (*shivering*) Terrible.

ABNEY: You don't believe in ghosts, do you Mrs. Parkes?

MRS. PARKES: Of course not. I'm fully grounded in the here and now. Come, Ms. Bunch. (*they exit*)

ABNEY: (*to STEPHEN*) You must come to my study later. I want to hear about this dream. (*holds up her book*) It must be recorded. (*looks out, a little dreamy*) Spring is coming, Stephen. According to the ancients, this is an important time for the young. Censorinus has much to say on the subject. (*snapping back*) You must take care of your health. Keep those windows closed. (*exits while making notes in her book*)

Music plays. Lights change. STEPHEN is back in his “bed” asleep with his blanket. This time, a red glow rises on STEPHEN. (or if you have a cyc, use that) The BOY and the GIRL enter and slowly lurch toward STEPHEN. The BOY reaches his clawed hands out toward STEPHEN. The GIRL groans. As the two lean over STEPHEN, he sits up with a scream.

Blackout.

Lights up. The BOY and GIRL have disappeared. STEPHEN looks around with confusion as MRS. PARKES enters. STEPHEN’s blanket is torn to shreds.

MRS. PARKES: Morning Master Stephen. It is a beautiful day. Sleep well?

STEPHEN: Not really.

MRS. PARKES: Here, what did you do to the blanket?

STEPHEN: What?

MRS. PARKES: (*holding up the blanket*) How did you manage to tear it so? Did you have another nightmare?

STEPHEN: I’m sorry, Mrs. Parkes. I don’t know how it happened.

MS. BUNCH: (*entering holding a laundry basket*) What happened to your door, Master Stephen?

MRS. PARKES: What is it?

MS. BUNCH: There are deep scratches in the door. Too high for a cat or a dog, much too high for a rat. (*beat*) Rats again.

MRS. PARKES: (*pauses before she speaks*) You should keep your door locked, my dear. The window too.

STEPHEN: I always do, after I’ve said my prayers.

MS. BUNCH: That’s good. Then no one can hurt you.

Music plays. The lights dim to blue. We hear the sound of wind, rain and storm. STEPHEN moves downstage as if looking out a big window. MS. BUNCH and MRS. PARKES sit folding laundry into a basket. The lights flash and we hear the sound of thunder.

The music fades and the lights come up to full.

MRS. PARKES: Come away from the window, Master Stephen. On a day like today you should sit by the fire.

STEPHEN: The wind is so fierce. It looks like there are an endless procession of ghosts sweeping by. They're trying to find something to hold on to and connect again with the living. But the wind is just too strong.

MS. BUNCH: (*she shivers*) You have a way with words, you do.

MRS. PARKES: You must stop giving me goosebumps.

There is lightning and thunder.

STEPHEN: Do you believe in ghosts, Ms. Bunch?

MRS. PARKES: She does not.

MS. BUNCH: My mother does. She's told me many stories of shapes she's seen. Things on the edge of the woods. Things happen in the dark that we know nothing about.

MRS. PARKES: Nonsense.

MS. BUNCH: She has no reason to make up stories. Do you believe in ghosts, Master Stephen?

MRS. PARKES: Nonsense!

STEPHEN: I don't know. I haven't seen any.

MRS. PARKES: And nor will you. We are very much among the living here. Come Ms. Bunch. Laundry waits for no one. Not even ghosts.

MS. BUNCH picks up the basket and the two exit. There is another flash of lightning and thunder. MRS. ABNEY enters with her book. She looks around as if she doesn't want PARKES and BUNCH to know she's in the room.

ABNEY: Stephen my boy, do you think you could come to my study at 11 o'clock tonight? I know it's, ah, late but I'll be busy till then. I want to show you something that is important to your future. (*she looks around*) Don't mention this to Parkes and Bunch all right? 11 o'clock.

STEPHEN: I'll be there.

MRS. ABNEY turns to leave and then turns back. Eerie music plays.

ABNEY: Have you ever wanted to be immortal, Stephen? To live forever?

STEPHEN: I don't know. It's not possible, is it?

ABNEY: I've read extensively about the matter. Some say it can be done. With certain rituals. The ancients believe and I am convinced of their wisdom. (*a little crazy, just a little*) Modernists say the process is barbaric but they don't understand. They don't know what it means to control the elemental forces of our universe. (*beat, back to normal*) It's dinner time, yes? Don't want to miss that. 11 o'clock. And don't say a word.

STEPHEN: Do you believe in ghosts, Mrs. Abney?

ABNEY: No. They hold no power over me. (*she exits writing in her book*)

There is lightning and thunder. Music plays. Lights change. STEPHEN lies down on his bed.

There is lightning and thunder. The BOY and GIRL enter to stand over STEPHEN. He sits up. There is lightning and thunder and STEPHEN sees the ghosts.

STEPHEN: Who are you?

There is lightning and thunder. MRS. ABNEY enters. She carries a large silver cup in her two hands. She crosses the stage as she chants to herself.

Staging Note: there has to be enough space between MRS. ABNEY and the two ghosts so that they can lurch toward her throughout the following.

The BOY and the GIRL turn menacingly toward MRS. ABNEY. They start to lurch toward her. STEPHEN slowly follows. He watches what happens next.

The GIRL groans. MRS. ABNEY looks up.

ABNEY: Stephen is that you? (*seeing the BOY and the GIRL*) No. No. It's not possible.

BOY: (*hissing*) My heart....

GIRL: (*moaning*) My heart...

ABNEY: You're dead. Both of you. You're gone, buried in the wine cellar and no one missed you. You're nothing but dust. You cannot hurt me now.

BOY: (*hissing*) My heart.... My heart...

GIRL: (*moaning*) My heart....

ABNEY: They went to good use, my dears. The ritual requires the beating hearts of three youth, burnt to ashes and drunk in red wine. (*she holds up the silver cup*) One more removal and I will be beyond the reach of human justice. Death will not touch me.

The BOY and the GIRL give a wild and terrifying groan.

ABNEY: Your vengeance is feeble. You have no power here.

BOY: (*hissing*) Vengeance.

GIRL: (*moaning*) Vengeance.

BOY: We will wander no longer. (*he grabs at MRS. ABNEY*)

ABNEY: Stay back.

GIRL: You will not harm another. (*she grabs at MRS. ABNEY*)

ABNEY: No, no, stay back. I am not afraid.

BOY: You have exposed our souls to the sky. (*he grabs and doesn't let go*)

GIRL: It's your turn. (*she grabs and doesn't let go*)

ABNEY: You have no power. No power!

The BOY and the GIRL fall on ABNEY. Blackout. We hear ABNEY's screams.

A spot comes up on FREDDY. He is at the end of his story as he moves toward the Peveril group downstage. Note: in this final section, you could also have a red light (or they hold red lights under their chins) on the two ghosts, MRS. ABNEY and STEPHEN so we see them as FREDDY finishes. Then they exit slowly as the PEVERIL scene continues.

FREDDY: Mrs. Abney was found in her chair, head thrown back, face stamped with an expression of rage, fright and pain. Her left side was ripped wide, exposing the heart. The window was open and it was the opinion of the coroner that Mrs. Abney had met her death by the agency of some wild creature. But Stephen Elliott came to a very different conclusion.

There is a murmur among the listeners.

MADGE: Well done, Freddy.

HARRY: That was a cracking good story.

FREDDY: See, I set the tone.

BLANCHE: Yes, yes. Far be it from me to set a poor tone.

HARRY: Lucille, your turn!

LUCILLE: I am here merely to observe, to bear witness to any and all ethereal encounters.

FREDDY: Okay...

BLANCHE: Who's next?

BERNICE: I have one about a dream.

FREDDY: Dreams aren't as near scary as ghosts, Mother.

BERNICE: Oh no?

FREDDY: You're asleep, you wake up, the dream is gone. The ghost is never gone. The ghost lingers until you least expect it and then (*trying to scare BLANCHE*) Boo!

BLANCHE: Ha ha. You and Aunt Barbara would make a great team Freddy.

FREDDY: I look ghastly in blue. (*realizing*) That's probably a good thing.

BERNICE: You don't believe that what you dream can come true? The dream world can become the real world?

HARRY: I'm with Freddy. A dream is a dream.

BLANCHE: I think it would be much odder if dreams didn't come true. We dream about people we know and places we go when we're awake. I say things and see things all the time that I'm sure have happened before. Maybe it happened in a dream.

HARRY: That's awfully philosophical for you.

BLANCHE: What, I can't think deep things?

HARRY: Ghost. Pony.

BLANCHE: Shut up. Now I'm curious, mama! Tell your story.

BERNICE: (*standing*) "The Room in the Tower."

BERNICE moves to the main playing area as music plays. Slow and distorted. Or creepy music box. Use music and light to create a feeling of dread.

The lights are dim and dreamlike. BERNICE gestures and the whole cast enters in a slow nightmarish fashion to get into place. BERNICE joins them.

We start the story with a dream. All those in the dream move with exaggerated slow movements. And then in contrast, all lines should be spoken at normal speed. It's important we hear the lines clearly. Emphasize the contrast between vocal speed and physical speed.

When it comes to the setting, it's a dream, so anything is possible – keeping in mind that the dream is dark and dreadful in tone. What follows is a mime/movement suggestion, but feel free to use small set pieces. Be suggestive rather than realistic. A fragment of a door rather than a real working door. Make it exaggerated, and nightmare appropriate.

EVERYONE in the cast is involved with the dream, acting out the garden party – in a nightmare fashion. Have everyone pick one gesture or movement and repeat it over and over. For example: leaning forward in a conversation, or bringing a mimed tea cup to the lips, or turning to greet someone. Pick a single movement and repeat it throughout.

PERCY walks up to a “door” and knocks with slow movements. BERNICE acts as the SERVANT and opens the door. The SERVANT gestures slowly across the stage, but speaks at normal speed.

SERVANT: Tea, is being served in the garden.

The SERVANT slowly turns and walks a few slow exaggerated steps. PERCY follows.

Everyone continues to repeat their gesture.

JACK STONE, his mother JULIA STONE, and his sister JANE STONE join this scene. They all move with slow exaggerated movements and end up side-by-side in the middle of the party. They are stern and silent. They stare at PERCY.

JACK slowly turns toward PERCY. Moving exaggeratedly, he beckons toward PERCY.

JACK: Hello. Welcome to my house. *(he slowly gestures toward JULIA and JANE)* This is my mother, and my sister.

PERCY: I'm surprised to be here. We don't really know each other. In fact, I don't remember liking you at school at all. *(looking around, slowly and exaggerated)* Is it hot out here?

JACK: *(with an evil smile)* Oppressive.

JULIA STONE turns PERCY with an evil smile.

JULIA: Jack will show you to your room. I have given you the room in the tower.

JACK, JULIA and JANE all gesture toward the room (or staircase if you have one).

JACK moves and PERCY slowly follows. Everyone now slowly stops what they are doing to focus on PERCY with evil smiles. JACK slowly opens a "door" and points in. PERCY resists. JACK turns to him.

JACK: What's the matter?

PERCY: I don't know. Something awful happened in there.

JACK: This is your room.

PERCY: Don't make me go in.

Suddenly, like out of a horror film, everyone moves in a herky-jerky fashion toward PERCY. They grab PERCY and drag him down. PERCY starts to struggle.

PERCY: No. No. No!

Blackout. Followed by the sound of an echoing door slam.

Lights up as soon as possible. Everyone is back in position for the beginning of the dream. The dream is going to replay again.

This time, while the steps of the dream must be the same, (and the line "Jack will show you to your room. I have given you a room in the tower," must be clearly heard) see what you can play with. Are there times you can speed up the action? Can you change the light,

distort the music? Remember, it's a dream so you have a lot of flexibility in the presentation.

As before, PERCY walks up to a "door" and knocks with slow movements. The SERVANT opens the door. The SERVANT gestures slowly across the stage, but speaks at normal speed.

SERVANT: Tea, is being served in the garden.

The SERVANT slowly turns and walks a few slow exaggerated steps. PERCY follows.

Everyone continues to repeat their gesture.

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JACK: This is your room.

PERCY: Don't make me go in.

Suddenly, like out of a horror film, everyone moves in a herky-jerky fashion toward PERCY. They grab PERCY and drag him down. PERCY starts to struggle.

PERCY: No. No. No!

Blackout. Followed by the sound of an echoing door slam.

Everyone moves back to their first position and freezes.

Lights up as JOHN and PERCY sit side-by-side. PERCY sits with his head in his hands. This conversation is in real time; it is not a dream.

JOHN: So you've been having the same dream for years?

PERCY: There are variations. I'm shown into the dining room. Or the drawing room where we play cards. (*everyone in the dream holds up a solid black playing card and lets it drop*) But there's no numbers on the cards, they're completely black. Over the years, Jack stopped introducing the family and they've gotten older. The sister isn't always there, she's gotten married.

JOHN: Percy, it's just a dream. It's your mind playing tricks on you.

PERCY: I suppose. But the mother... The mother always says the same thing.

JULIA: (*slowly turning head to audience*) Jack will show you to your room. I have given you the room in the tower.

PERCY: And it fills me with such dread. Every time.

Eerie music plays. Lights slowly change. Everyone in the dream starts to slowly move with their repeated gestures. PERCY stands and wanders among the action.

PERCY: Why does it feel so real? Why do I wake up screaming? I can smell the decay in that room. I can feel the horror. I feel it.

PERCY finds himself at the beginning of the dream once again. He walks up to a "door" and knocks with slow movements. The SERVANT opens the door.

The SERVANT gestures slowly across the stage, but speaks at normal speed.

SERVANT: Tea, is being served in the garden.

The SERVANT slowly turns and walks a few slow exaggerated steps. PERCY follows. But this time it is only JACK who is waiting for him.

Everyone continues to repeat their gesture.

PERCY: It's only you. It's only you. She's not here. Mrs. Stone is not here. *(looking around)* She's dead? *(he laughs)* She's dead! That means I don't have to stay in the tower. There has to be a different end.

A voice is heard. It is evil and it echoes.

JULIA: *(voice only)* Jack will show you to your room. I have given you the room in the tower.

PERCY: No. She's not here. Who said that?

Everyone takes a step toward PERCY.

EVERYONE: *(whispering)* In evil memory of Julia Stone.

PERCY: No.

Everyone takes another step toward PERCY.

EVERYONE: *(louder)* In evil memory of Julia Stone.

PERCY: No.

Everyone lunges at PERCY and drags him down.

EVERYONE: *(louder)* In evil memory of Julia Stone.

PERCY: No! No!

Blackout. Everyone moves back to their first position. JOHN and PERCY are centre stage. Again, this conversation is in real time.

JOHN: How often do you have this dream?

PERCY: Once a month at least.

JOHN: And you never see the cause of your dread?

PERCY: Never.

JOHN: Well, there will be none of that this weekend. *(they start to walk)* The house where we're staying in Ashdown forest is warm and filled with light. My mother will see to that. Nothing to dread, I

promise you. See, we're coming up to it now. (*he turns and sees PERCY has stopped walking*) What's the matter?

PERCY: (*looking around with dread*) Whose house is this?

JOHN: A friend of mine. I have it for the summer. What's wrong?

PERCY: Nothing.

Bright music plays. There is the sudden and jolting sound of laughter. Everyone who was involved in the dream now move in real time bubbling over with laughter and chatter. PERCY walks among the partygoers, looking around. He has been here before. Let this happen for a moment before JOHN approaches PERCY.

JOHN: You see? There's nothing to dread here.

PERCY: Everything seems to be fine. Yes, it's just fine. (*he takes a breath*) You're right John, the house is lovely. And everyone is so cheerful.

JOHN: We're a cheerful group. You're going to have a great weekend.

MRS. CLINTON: (*approaching*) My son isn't boring you, is he Mr. Abbott? (*teasing*) He has a tendency to talk.

JOHN: (*teasing playfully*) I must get that from you.

PERCY: Please, call me Percy.

MRS. CLINTON: Are you settled?

PERCY: Not yet.

MRS. CLINTON: Jack will show you to your room. I've given you the room in the tower.

Lights change briefly, music slows, there is a moment of everyone moving in slow motion turning toward PERCY with evil grins. And then everything snaps back to normal.

PERCY: What did you say?

JOHN: It's right at the top of the house, but I think you'll be comfortable. We're absolutely full up. Would you like to see it?

There is the sound of thunder. Everyone looks up.

JOHN: Looks like we're going to have a thunderstorm.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh dear, that will stop the party.

EVERYONE: (*whispering*) In evil memory of Julia Stone...

Everyone turns slowly upstage. JOHN and PERCY move to "the room." On the wall of the room is a large, ominous painting of JULIA STONE. You can accomplish this simply by having the actor stand on a cube in a pose.

There is the sound of thunder. PERCY looks around.

PERCY: It's the same room. It's the same room...

JOHN: What do you think? Got everything you want?

PERCY: (*gesturing to the painting*) Rather more than I want.

JOHN: Hard-featured lady.

PERCY: It's scarcely human at all. It's the face of some witch, some devil.

JOHN: Yes, it isn't very pleasant. I can imagine getting a nightmare if I went to sleep with that close to my bed. Shall we take it down?

PERCY: Yes. Let's get rid of it.

The two mime taking the painting off the wall. As they do, JULIA STONE steps down off the cube, brushes the face of the two men, which leaves a blood red mark. She slowly moves to join the rest of the group facing upstage.

PERCY: Good riddance.

JOHN: You've got something on your face.

PERCY: (*touching his face and looking at it*) It's blood. You've got the same. We didn't cut ourselves.

JOHN: No we didn't. Certainly not our faces. So where did the blood come from?

There is the sound of thunder and lightning.

PERCY: I don't know. I don't want to know so long as that picture is out of my room.

JOHN: Pictures can't hurt you Percy.

PERCY: And dreams can't either. *(takes a deep breath)* I'm going to sleep well tonight.

Blackout. There is the sound of thunder and lightning and then heavy, heavy rain. We hear the rain for a moment, and then there is another peal of thunder as PERCY calls out.

PERCY: *(in the dark)* What is it? Who's there? Who's there?

PERCY lights a candle and we just see his face as he looks around. We can hear his ragged, fearful breathing.

Suddenly there is the echo of PERCY's ragged breathing all around them.

PERCY: There's nothing that can hurt me. Nothing can hurt me.

There is the sound of thunder and lightning. This time the lightning lights up the area with bright light and we can see that the "painting" of JULIA STONE is back on the wall. The actor is again standing on the cube.

JULIA turns to PERRY and reaches her hand out of the painting, laughing.

PERCY: *(looking at the painting)* No!

The stage is plunged into blackness. There is no sound for a few seconds and no light. Total silence. Then there is the echoing sound of footsteps getting closer and closer to PERCY.

We hear the voice of JULIA STONE.

JULIA: *(raspy and whispered)* I knew you would come to the room in the tower. I have been waiting for you. Can you feel my breath on your neck? Tonight I shall feast; before long we will feast together.

There is thunder, and lightning. In the flashes of light we see a draped figure lunging toward PERCY. In the dark there is the sound of PERCY crashing away from the ghost. There is the sound of a howl of pain as PERCY cries out.

PERCY: Get away from me! Get away from me!

There is the sound of a slamming door, thunder and lightning.

Lights come up. PERCY is alone, bent over, breathing heavily. He now has a red handprint on his shoulder. The painting of JULIA STONE is back to its normal pose. JOHN rushes in to PERCY.

JOHN: What's the matter? What happened? I heard a noise as if – there's blood all over your shoulder...

PERCY: I can't go back in. I can't. She's in there!

JOHN: Percy, this is just a nightmare. Nothing can harm you.

PERCY: See for yourself. Go on.

JOHN moves past him.

JOHN: What is that smell?

JOHN turns to the painting. JULIA STONE reaches out toward him. Everyone on stage turns to JOHN, also reaching out to him with evil grins. JOHN stumbles back to PERCY.

Come away, quick, come away!

They run off. There is the sound of a door slam which echoes.

BERNICE steps forward. JULIA STONE moves forward to stand beside BERNICE. JULIA holds a red light under her chin.

BERNICE: They learned that a woman, Julia Stone, had killed herself in that tower room. And that officials tried to bury the body three times, but each time the coffin was found protruding from the ground. Finally, they buried the coffin outside the garden gate of Julia's house, in unconsecrated ground. But it didn't matter. They found the coffin open, without a body, and filled with blood.

The lights fade on the main playing area. Everyone exits slowly. BERNICE joins the Peverils.

BLANCHE: Oh that's awful.

BERNICE: I'll take that as a compliment.

MADGE: I'm certainly not going to sleep tonight.

FREDDY: We'll have to stay up all night then.

BLANCHE: I'm not sure that'll help either. Freddy put another log on, I've got the shivers. What did you think, Lucille?

LUCILLE: Passible. Don't you tell *family* stories?

BLANCHE: Sure we do.

FREDDY: We don't really need to tell them, we live them.

BERNICE: Who's next?

MADGE: Harry you go. You said you had a new one.

BLANCHE: What? We're not going to hear "The Body Snatchers" again?

HARRY: I don't tell it every time.

BERNICE: Only every other time, dear.

BLANCHE: (*standing with dramatic flair*) "That is not a woman," said Macfarlane in a hushed voice. "It was a woman when we put her in the grave," whispered Fettes. And as Fettes took the lamp, his companion untied the fastenings of the sack and drew down the cover from the head. The light fell very clear upon the dark, well-moulded features and smooth-shaven cheeks – the body of the dead and long-dissected Gray." I think I could do the whole thing, just as well Harry.

HARRY: There's nothing wrong with a good story.

BERNICE: True.

BLANCHE: There's nothing wrong with a new one, either.

HARRY: (*throwing a couch pillow at BLANCHE*) How about stupid ghost stories?

BLANCHE: (*throwing it back*) There's nothing wrong with Ghost Pony!

BERNICE: All right, all right. Harry let's hear your tale.

HARRY: "The Open Window."

Eerie music plays and the lights change.

On the other side of the stage, 15-year-old VERA enters with a very nervous FRAMTON.

VERA: My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel. In the meantime you must try and put up with me.

FRAMTON: Oh. Yes, all right. *(Uncomfortably long pause. VERA simply stands staring out. FRAMTON is made quite nervous by the silence and then eventually breaks it.)* Are you also staying, ah, here?

VERA: Temporarily. Don't you think every girl of fifteen should stay with their aunts?

FRAMTON: Ah, I don't know...if they have one, I g-guess.

VERA: Do you know many of the people around here?

FRAMTON: No. Hardly a soul. My sister stayed in the rectory four years ago. And she, ah, gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here. She felt it would be *(clears throat)* good for me to talk to people.

VERA: Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?

FRAMTON: Only her name and address. *(beat)* I am in the country in search of a nerve c-cure. My nerves are v-very bad, you see.

VERA: I see.

FRAMTON: You do?

VERA: *(staring at FRAMTON intently)* It's obvious.

FRAMTON: Oh. The doctors agree in ordering c-complete rest, an absence of m-mental excitement and the avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise...

VERA: Really.

FRAMTON: *(clears his throat)* On the matter of diet they are not so much in ah, agreement.

VERA: Fascinating. *(She walks away in silence. There is a moment, and then VERA turns to FRAMTON.)* My aunt's great tragedy was three years ago. That would be since your sister's time.

FRAMTON: Her t-tragedy? Those kinds of events seem out of place in such a restful spot.

VERA: *(moving downstage, looking out with a little bit of drama)* You may wonder why we keep these French windows wide open on a October afternoon.

FRAMTON: Ah, it is quite warm? For the time of year?

VERA: I suppose. That would be one reason.

There is a pause. VERA continues to stare out, downstage. Finally FRAMTON breaks the silence.

FRAMTON: Has the window have anything to do with the, ah, tragedy?

VERA: I'm so glad you asked. (*she points out*) Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her younger brother, my uncles, went off for their day's shooting.

Use a fog machine, if possible, when the men enter to create an extra ghostly look to their entrance.

The HUSBAND and the BROTHER enter slowly. They move to stand by VERA.

VERA: (*wistful*) They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favourite snipe-shooting ground they were engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog.

FRAMTON: No.

VERA: Yes. It had been a dreadfully wet summer and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. (*beat*) Their bodies were never recovered. Their little brown spaniel was lost too.

BROTHER: (*singing, brightly*) Bertie why do you bound? What have you found wrong with the ground?

These lyrics are from the song "Bertie The Bounder" from the 1909 musical "Our Miss Gibbs." If you can't find the original music, make up a tune.

The HUSBAND and the BROTHER slowly cross the stage and exit.

VERA: Poor Aunt, she thinks they'll come back someday. They'll walk right through that window as they used to. She tells me so often about them. That's why it's kept open every evening till dusk. (*she shivers and holds herself*) And do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will walk through that window. Did I mention to you it was three years ago, almost to the day?

MRS. SAPPLETON: (*entering briskly*) Sorry to keep you waiting. (*FRAMTON gives a jolt and a small cry*) Are you all right?

FRAMTON: Yes. Yes. Mrs. Sappleton? I'm, ah, pleased to meet you. (*referring to himself*) Framton N-Nuttel.

MRS. SAPPLETON: Has Vera has been amusing you?

FRAMTON: She's very interesting.

MRS. SAPPLETON: I hope you don't mind the open window. My husband and brother will be home soon and they always come this way.

FRAMTON looks at VERA who shakes her head sadly. MRS. SAPPLETON moves downstage and looks out as if through the window.

FRAMTON: Ah, what?

MRS. SAPPLETON: They've been out for snipe in the marshes today and I know they'll make a mess of my carpets. I tell them to come through the kitchen. But every time, right through the window. *(with affection)* Isn't that just like you menfolk.

FRAMTON: Oh, I don't, ah...

MRS. SAPPLETON: *(returning to a chair to sit)* Although there has been a dearth of bird this season and a decided lack of duck. But we shall get by as we always do. I remember your sister, Mr. Nuttel. Charming girl. Is she well?

FRAMTON: Ah... ah... Yes. *(clears his throat, he's obviously rattled)* I am in the country in search of a nerve c-cure. My nerves are very bad you see. *(he watches as MRS. SAPPLETON turns her attention to the window, which rattles FRAMTON further)* The doctors agree in ordering complete rest, an absence of m-mental excitement and the avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise.

MRS. SAPPLETON: *(not really paying attention, she's looking out the window)* Do they.

FRAMTON: On the matter of diet they are not so much in ah, agreement...

MRS. SAPPLETON: *(she sees something out the window)* Oh!

VERA: What is it, Aunt?

MRS. SAPPLETON: Here they are at last! And just in time for tea. And don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes.

Creepy music plays. Use that fog if you can. Lights change to highlight the slowly entering figures of the HUSBAND and the BROTHER, who move menacingly

across the stage. FRAMTON looks at them in alarm. He looks back at VERA, whose hands are at her mouth, her eyes wide with fear.

BROTHER: (*hoarsely and creepily*) Bertie why do you bound? What have you found wrong with the ground?

FRAMTON screams and runs. If possible have him run through the house so you get a good long escape. The music cuts off and the lights go back to normal. The others all stare at the disappearing FRAMTON.

HUSBAND: (*cheerful*) Here we are mother, fairly muddy but most of it dry.

BROTHER: (*curious*) Who was that who bolted as we came up?

MRS. SAPPLETON: A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel. Could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of goodbye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost.

VERA: I expect it was the dog. He told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted in a cemetery by a pack of rabid dogs and he had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling, grinning, and foaming just above him. (*with a smile*) Enough to make anyone lose their nerve.

The focus shifts to the PEVERIL grouping as the story characters exit. Everyone groans at the twist in the story.

BLANCHE: Unfair, unfair!

HARRY: What?

BLANCHE: That's not a ghost story at all.

FREDDY: Tricks and gimmicks, Harry.

HARRY: There was a ghost. Of sorts.

MADGE: I liked it.

HARRY: Thank you, Madge. You are a true Peveril.

MADGE: Who wrote it?

BLANCHE: Who's next?

FREDDY: Isn't it time for skating?

BLANCHE: Madge can't skate today. How about the "The Ebony Frame?" *(she stands and acts out in a most dramatic fashion)* "They said I was a witch. They tried me and said I should be burned. The night before, the devil did come to me with an offer. And I took it. I sold my soul – willingly. For the price of my measly soul I got the right to come back to life! I could come through my picture, if anyone, looking at it, wished for me. I got the right to come back to you, oh, my heart's heart." *(she sighs and falls back on the couch)*

HARRY: Trust you to find the ghost who sold her soul for love.

BLANCHE: I can't think of a better reason.

MADGE: What about "The Choking Ghost?"

BLANCHE: I don't know that one.

MADGE: *(standing)* A man wakes up in the middle of the night in pitch darkness. Something, or someone, has woken him.

MADGE moves to the main playing area and watches the action. At the same time A MAN stands in a dim light. He is feeling around, trying to locate the door in the room.

MADGE: He gets out of bed to see what's the matter but when he does, the room becomes unknown. He can't find the door. He can't find the bed. But what he can find in front of him, is a noose.

A figure stands above the MAN on a riser or cube and drops a noose in front of the MAN.

MADGE: *(looking at the action)* A noose suspended in mid-air. The man grew frightened, trying to move away from the spot and his feet were glued to the floor. And that is when the noose of its own accord draped itself around the man's neck.

The figure behind puts the noose around the MAN's neck. The MAN cries out, struggles tries to reach up his hands to tear it off, but two other figures come forward to clamp the MAN's hands to the side of his body.

MADGE: He was helpless. He couldn't move, he couldn't fight. It was then that the man was hoisted up into the air and let drop.

The two figures on the side, along with the figure behind, lift the MAN into the air. There is the sound of a body dropping and a creaking back and forth.

The figures move the MAN from side to side as if he is swinging.

LUCILLE stands up with a bang and interrupts the story.

LUCILLE: But I want to hear about the twins!

Everyone turns to look at her, even the characters in the story. Everything comes up full light as LUCILLE storms the stage toward MADGE. The characters in the story look at one another, confused. During the following, they shrug their shoulders and exit.

LUCILLE: I came here to learn about the twins. Here we are in the long gallery, in a house teeming with the supernatural, spectres around every corner and no one has said one word about them.

MADGE: Lucille...

LUCILLE: Don't "Lucille" me. *(storms back toward the others)* Why is it so wrong to ask? You're all so cavalier when it comes to ghosts. It doesn't seem wrong to ask for a specific story.

BERNICE: We don't often speak of the twins in detail. Just enough for the safety of our guests.

BLANCHE: I guess we thought everyone knew their story.

LUCILLE: I don't. And I want to hear it.

Music plays. Or perhaps creepy children noises. Red light rises upstage and there we see the silhouette of the TWINS standing hand-in-hand.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

The Bach music plays. Red light comes up and we get another brief glimpse of the TWINS standing hand-in-hand. The lights crossfade to the Peveril area. The TWINS turn upstage.

BERNICE: We don't often speak of the twins in detail. Just enough for the safety of our guests.

BLANCHE: I guess we thought everyone knew their story.

LUCILLE: I don't. And I want to hear it.

BERNICE: All right, but I must impress upon you that we take the twins quite seriously. And so should you. They are not just a ghost story.

LUCILLE: *(overdramatic)* I vow, with all my heart, and all my soul, that I will take anything you say with the most deadly and solemn seriousness.

HARRY: *(aside)* That seems to be overdoing it.

BERNICE: *(standing)* All right. The twins. It all started so long ago.

BLANCHE: *(standing)* There was a relative of ours, Dick Peveril. He was...not a nice man.

FREDDY: *(standing)* He was evil.

Evil music underscores this section.

BERNICE, BLANCHE, FREDDY and HARRY move to stand on the edge of the main playing space to watch and narrate. At the same time DICK enters with LADY ROSALIND on his arm from the other side of the stage. DICK is haughty and has a cruel smile.

ROSALIND: It's a shame you're not the master of your house.

DICK: I could be. I will be one day.

ROSALIND: Yes. But you're not the master now.

DICK: It's only a matter of time.

ROSALIND: Hmmm.

DICK: My brother just died. I'm supposed to go to the funeral.

ROSALIND: Oh how sad.

DICK: Not really. I never liked him.

ROSALIND: (*with hope*) And you're next in line?

DICK: No. (*with distaste*) He has twins.

The TWINS turn to face the audience. They stand hand-in-hand.

ROSALIND: Pity. (*sighs*) Such a shame...

ROSALIND strolls off. DICK stands, fuming.

HARRY: Dick Peveril went north, arriving too late for his brother's funeral. But soon there were two other funerals to attend.

The TWINS move downstage. They stand hand-in-hand. DICK moves to stand behind them. He strangles each TWIN and they fall to the ground.

FREDDY: In the dead of night, Dick Peveril sneaked upstairs. He strangled the twins and dragged their bodies here to the long gallery.

BERNICE: The fireplace easily accommodates large logs, so Dick threw their bodies in the fire. He burned them to ash.

DICK: (*laughing evilly*) Who's the master? Who's the master now!

The TWINS rise slowly from the ground. They reach out to DICK. DICK starts to convulse and drop to his knees.

BLANCHE: Dick Peveril only enjoyed his bloodstained inheritance for a year. He grew dreadfully ill and wanted to be forgiven for his heinous crimes.

HARRY: But the twins had other ideas...

The TWINS stand behind DICK. They reach out their hands.

DICK: (*reaching out*) I must confess... I must confess... I must...

The TWINS twist their hands as if breaking a neck. DICK cries out, crumbles to the floor and dies.

HARRY: And the hauntings began.

DICK rises slowly. He puts a small red light under his chin to light his face and stares at the audience. He moves upstage.

At the same time JOHN THE SERVANT enters peering into the gloom.

JOHN THE SERVANT: Is someone there? Hello? Is there someone there? *(to himself)* John, what's the matter with you? Just because the master has died doesn't mean that...

The TWINS move toward JOHN THE SERVANT and circle him. They reach out to him and, as they do, JOHN starts to convulse and drop to his knees. Another SERVANT rushes in. JOHN THE SERVANT holds up a hand.

JOHN THE SERVANT: Stop! Don't come any closer. It's the twins! I saw them.

He convulses, points a finger toward the TWINS, screams, and dies. The SERVANT runs off.

During the following, JOHN THE SERVANT rises slowly. He puts a small red light under his chin and stares at the audience. He moves upstage.

HARRY: The twins appear rarely and only here in the long gallery between sunset and sunrise.

BLANCHE: They never cause any trouble elsewhere in the house.

FREDDY: But if anyone sees them, here, between sunset and sunrise? Death.

HARRY: Terrible, painful, terror-filled death.

BERNICE: Soon the legend of the twins reached far and wide.

BLANCHE: There have been many who disbelieved. Many who came to Peveril house with curiosity and reckless behaviour.

MS. CANNING enters, laughing. She is a proud, haughty beauty. BETTY, a Peveril ancestor follows behind.

MS. CANNING: I don't believe in ghosts. And I certainly don't believe they can cause your death. Isn't that the most ridiculous thing you've ever heard? Voltaire would mock your cautious fears, Betty.

BETTY: Ms. Canning, please. We ask that no one remains in the long gallery between sunset and sunrise. It's for your safety.

MS. CANNING: Not only will I sit in the long gallery from sunset to sunrise, I will sit here until I see them. (*she poses*) I will prove to you there's nothing to fear.

She sits grandly and BETTY exits.

FREDDY: She saw nothing on the first day.

MS. CANNING: I think they're afraid of me. Come out, come out wherever you are, silly twins.

FREDDY: She saw nothing on the second, third or fourth day. But on the fifth...

The TWINS move forward and circle around MS. CANNING.

MS. CANNING: (*standing*) Well, well, well. There you are. Hello my lovelies. Look at you. (*she laughs*) This is what people are afraid of? Why, you're babies. Nothing but shadows. Pieces of paper in the wind. Be gone with you. Isn't it time you went back to the fire? (*She laughs. The TWINS move to stand behind MS. CANNING.*) Off you go. Ta ta. (*she poses*) I must write Voltaire of this at once. I have made the spirits manifest themselves and I have lived to tell the tale. He will laugh and laugh.

BLANCHE: Ms. Canning was a beautiful woman. One of the great beauties of her day. She prided herself on her complexion.

FREDDY: Two weeks after seeing the twins, the first grey patch appeared on her face.

One of the TWINS reaches around MS. CANNING and places a grey smudge on her face.

MS. CANNING: What is that? How annoying. Why won't it come off?

BLANCHE: She kept herself secluded for a week. But it didn't matter. The patch began to grow. It doubled in size.

The other TWIN reaches around and places a bigger smudge on her face. MS. CANNING starts to grow distressed.

MS. CANNING: This isn't happening.

FREDDY: And began to grow tentacles.

One of the TWINS start to run her fingers up MS. CANNING's arms. The other pulsates her fingers over her eyes. MS. CANNING struggles but cannot move.

MS. CANNING: I can't see!

BLANCHE: And the disease finally attacked her tongue and throat.

Both TWINS now move their fingers to her neck.

MS. CANNING: No. No! (*she screams*)

The TWINS strangle MS. CANNING to death. She falls to the floor.

HARRY: And then there was Colonel Blantyre.

During the following, MS. CANNING rises slowly and puts a small red light under her chin. She moves upstage to join the others.

COLONEL BLANTYRE enters tentatively. He holds a chair in front of him. The TWINS turn toward him slowly.

COLONEL: There's nothing to be afraid of in here. Nothing at all. I'll show them. Dare me, will they? Say I'm a coward? I am not one to back away from a dare and I am no...

The TWINS move toward the COLONEL. As they do they reach out their hands.

COLONEL: You don't scare me. You don't scare me. You don't scare me. You don't! You don't! You don't!

The COLONEL runs off screaming and the TWINS follow him.

HARRY: We don't know exactly what happened to him. Except that he died.

Music fades. All with red lights click them off and exit slowly in character as the scene continues. The lights fade on the main playing area and the four move back toward the Peveril area.

BLANCHE: In fact, everyone who's ever seen the twins has died.

FREDDY: Not one person who's seen the twins has lived to tell the tale.

LUCILLE: Not one?

BERNICE: We take them quite seriously.

FREDDY: No one is to be in the long gallery after nightfall.

LUCILLE: (*looking around*) But, we've been here all morning.

BLANCHE: That's because it's lovely in the morning.

BERNICE: Absolutely delightful. It's the best room in the house.

BLANCHE: Up to a certain time.

HARRY: Why are you so interested in the twins, Lucille?

LUCILLE: (*a bad liar*) It's a ghost story. Isn't that what we're sharing here?

HARRY: You weren't thinking of trying to see them, were you?

FREDDY: Sneak in after sunset to experience the ethereal?

MADGE: Lucille, you wouldn't do that, would you?

BLANCHE: Not the week of our New Year's Ball.

LUCILLE: (*bad liar*) Oh no. Why would I? I certainly don't want to die.
(*she laughs fakely*) That would be absurd.

BERNICE: I think it's time for skating. That's enough ghost stories for today.

FREDDY: Agreed.

BLANCHE: What about Madge?

MADGE: I'm going to stay here and read. It's so cosy.

LUCILLE: Why does she get to stay?

HARRY: (*aside*) Because she's not an idiot.

BERNICE: Because she knows not to run it too fine.

MADGE: I'll be well away before sunset.

BLANCHE: Come on, Lucille, if you really want to see a ghost, let's go find Aunt Barbara. Maybe she'll confess to you her horrible past. She won't speak to us about it.

FREDDY: I saw her in the stables this morning. Just watch you don't get kicked by the horses.

BLANCHE: Maybe you can find out why she wears that hideous shade of blue.

They exit, dragging LUCILLE with them, who protests as she goes. MADGE settles down on the couch with her book. She turns a page and reads aloud.

MADGE: Oh, Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.

Lights up. This story is to be played with melodramatic overexaggeration. Lots of large poses and gestures.

FANNY runs in from the left. GEOFFREY runs in from the right. They meet in the middle and pose.

FANNY: Geoffrey! Where's Mr. Charrington?

GEOFFREY: Goodness knows.

FANNY: (*posing dramatically*) I thought you might have heard from him, as you're to give him away tomorrow.

GEOFFREY: (*posing dramatically*) What do you mean? He's not back?

FANNY: (*turning away*) No Geoffrey, he has not returned. And what's more, you may depend upon it that he won't. (*turning back*) You mark my words there will be no wedding tomorrow.

GEOFFREY: (*pointing dramatically*) You mark my words. You had better give up making such a thundering idiot of yourself. (*FANNY gasps and poses*) There'll be more wedding tomorrow than you'll ever take part in.

FANNY runs off as MAY runs on from the other side of the stage. GEOFFREY turns to meet MAY who approaches with letters.

MAY: He's written to you too. Oh Geoffrey, is he coming? Have you heard?

GEOFFREY: (*clutching her hands*) Yes, dear May. I'm to meet him at the station at three and come straight on to the church. Everything is going to be just fine. (*MAY turns away. GEOFFREY places his hands on her shoulders.*) My dear, are you all right?

MAY: I wish he hadn't stayed the extra day. He's so kind. But I wish he hadn't stayed.

MAY cries dramatically into her hands and runs off. BYLES runs on and GEOFFREY turns and runs to meet him.

GEOFFREY: Are they waiting still, Byles? He wasn't on the train. May must be devastated.

BYLES: Waiting sir? No, no sir. Why, it must be over by now.

GEOFFREY: Over! Then Mr. Charrington's come?

BYLES: I've never seen Mr. John look so... His clothes were all dusty and his face was like a sheet – Deathly. Pale. I didn't like the looks of him at all. Mr. Geoffrey, he's gone wrong!

The two gasp, look to the audience, and pose melodramatically.

MADGE: *(interrupting the story)* Blah, blah, blah. Mr. Charrington's dead. May married a dead man. *(sarcastically)* Now *that's* never been done before.

There is a murmur from those onstage at being interrupted. They stomp off, complaining loudly. MADGE turns to a new place in her book and reads aloud.

MADGE: "The Old Nurse's Story." *(turning a page)* "You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nursemaid; I was engaged and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond was born."

The GIRL enters with a blue light under her chin.

GIRL: Rosamond... Oh Rosamond...

The GIRL exits and MADGE sits up suddenly as if she heard something.

MADGE: Hello? Is anybody there? Harry, you better not be playing tricks. I'm a Peveril. I'm not scared by bumps. *(satisfied there's no one there, she returns to her book)* "When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was ten years old, both her parents died in a fortnight – one after the other. Ah! That was a sad time..."

Music plays, light change to focus on the main area of the stage.

HESTER and ROSAMOND enter, hand-in-hand.

HESTER: Chin up, Miss Rosamond. We are in this together.

ROSAMOND: I miss them, Hester.

HESTER: I know. Your parents loved you very much. When you were a baby, you were never out of your mother's arms. I had little to do in those days.

DOROTHY enters. At the same time, MISS FURNIVAL and MRS. STARK enter to sit.

DOROTHY: You must be Hester, and you would be Miss Rosamond. Welcome to Furnival Hall. Although I wish it wasn't under these circumstances. Miss Rosamond there's some toast and tea by the fire, if you're hungry.

ROSAMOND: Yes, please. Is there butter?

DOROTHY: There is.

ROSAMOND moves off to the side and kneels.

DOROTHY: Imagine to have your parents die within two weeks of each other.

HESTER: It's been a trying time. I'm just happy that there was somewhere for us to go.

DOROTHY: And that she had someone to take care of her.

HESTER: (*looking at ROSAMOND*) I'd go to the ends of the earth for the child.

DOROTHY: (*gesturing*) Miss Furnival has her own maid, Mrs. Stark – they've been together for years. And I have Agnes to help me. It's a fine home, a good place to be. We can go where we like in the house although....there are some ugly places.

HESTER: What does that mean?

DOROTHY: It's time to take Rosamond to Miss Furnival.

They cross the stage with ROSAMOND to two old woman sitting side-by-side. Stern and cold.

DOROTHY: Miss Furnival, this is Miss Rosamond.

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

MRS. STARK: It's the child.

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

MRS. STARK: (*louder*) The child. The child with the dead parents.

HESTER: (*to ROSAMOND*) It's all right, this will soon be over.

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

MRS. STARK: (*yelling*) Dead parents!

MISS FURNIVAL: Oh. Yes. Is she well behaved?

HESTER: Yes ma'am. The very best. She's a true treasure.

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

MRS. STARK: (*yelling*) She's says the child is a treasure.

MISS FURNIVAL: Oh. We'll see.

DOROTHY: May she leave to get settled, Miss Furnival?

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

MRS. STARK: Yes, go, go. You've taken up enough of her time.

DOROTHY, HESTER, and ROSAMOND cross back across the stage.

DOROTHY: That went quite well.

HESTER: Did it?

DOROTHY: Quite well indeed. Let me show you to your room.

Music plays. The lights dim to a blue light and briefly we see the GIRL with the blue light. The lights come back up. HESTER, DOROTHY and ROSAMOND walk together.

HESTER: I can't believe we've been here for three months.

DOROTHY: It's like you're part of the family.

ROSAMOND: Can I go say good morning to Miss Furnival?

HESTER: I think she'd enjoy it.

ROSAMOND runs over to MISS FURNIVAL and MRS. STARK, who seem delighted to see ROSAMOND.

DOROTHY: Who knew they'd take so well to her? She's like a ray of sunshine.

HESTER: Can we walk in the north part of the manor today, Dorothy? I've enjoyed learning about the Furnivals.

DOROTHY: Well then, let me show you a portrait of Miss Furnival when she was young. She was quite the beauty in her day.

They turn to see the portrait of GRACE (the actor playing GRACE stands on a cube). The portrait is of a young haughty condescending woman.

HESTER: Who would have thought that was the same Miss Furnival!
She seems truly beautiful, if a little proud.

DOROTHY: It was a long time ago. And sadly, folks change. Back then she would have been called Miss Grace, her older sister, Maude, would have been Miss Furnival.

HESTER: She had a sister?

DOROTHY: From what they say, Maude was even more beautiful.
There's a portrait around somewhere. (*looks around*) But if I show it to you, you must never let anyone know. Not even Rosamond.
All right?

HESTER: Why is it a secret?

DOROTHY: Promise me, Hester.

HESTER: Yes, of course.

DOROTHY: Here it is with its face to the wall.

She mimes turning a large picture. MAUDE enters to stand on a cube. She stands with the same haughty condescending look.

HESTER: They both have such a look of scornful pride. What made them so, I wonder?

DOROTHY: That's enough. I never should have shown you.

She mimes turning the picture back to the wall. MAUDE and GRACE exit.

DOROTHY: We should go back to the drawing room. You don't want to lose sight of Rosamond. There are ugly places in this house.

Lights dim to a blue light. The GIRL appears briefly.

GIRL: Rosamond... Rosamond...

Lights up. DOROTHY moves a table. She's mixing something in a bowl. AGNES enters and begins peeling potatoes. HESTER is mending something. ROSAMOND also moves to join them.

The Bach toccata begins to play. After a moment, HESTER looks up with a questioning look on her face. She looks to DOROTHY and AGNES and sees that neither of them react to the music.

HESTER: Who is playing the organ?

DOROTHY: What?

HESTER: The organ. Can't you hear it?

DOROTHY: It's the wind in the trees, Hester.

HESTER: But?

DOROTHY: It's wind. That's what you hear.

AGNES looks at DOROTHY and quickly looks back to her work.

HESTER: But it doesn't sound anything like –

DOROTHY: I'm telling you what you hear. And there's nothing more to say about it. *(she exits)*

HESTER: Agnes. *(AGNES does not look up)* Agnes, look at me. You can hear the organ. Don't tell me otherwise.

AGNES: We're not supposed to talk about it. *(looking around and then whispering)* It's the old Lord playing.

HESTER: Why is it a secret?

AGNES: His ghost is playing as he used to when he was alive.

HESTER: *(let that sink in before she speaks)* Oh. Why does he play?

AGNES: I won't go into that hall, not for love or money. *(she looks around)* I shouldn't say more.

AGNES runs off. The organ fades away into echoes.

HESTER: Well, that is strange. Still, the music does me no harm, even if I don't know where it comes from. At least, I hope it does me no harm. How are you Rosamond?

ROSAMOND: The cold is so much, Hester.

HESTER: I know. You won't go to church today and you'll dine with Miss Furnival.

ROSAMOND: *(standing)* All right.

HESTER: Do you mind?

ROSAMOND: No, I know they like having me around. But sometimes they sit and say nothing, staring into the fire. They're so sad.

There is the sound of a horrible wind and storm. Lights dim to a blue light. ROSAMOND exits. HESTER turns upstage. We see the GIRL with a blue light under her chin cross the stage and exit after ROSAMOND. Lights up and HESTER runs downstage, looking out as if looking out windows. She is searching for ROSAMOND.

She hurries over to MRS. STARK and MISS FURNIVAL.

HESTER: Pardon me ma'am.

MRS. STARK: What's the matter, Hester?

HESTER: I'm looking for Rosamond.

MISS FURNIVAL: What?

HESTER: I came home from church and I can't find her.

MRS. STARK: She's not here. She left over an hour ago to find Dorothy.

HESTER runs to the other side of the stage as DOROTHY enters.

DOROTHY: She's not in your rooms.

HESTER: Could she have hidden in the east wing?

DOROTHY: The door is always locked and I've never seen the key.

HESTER: What if she went outside?

They run downstage, as if looking out the window.

DOROTHY: Look! There, do you see?

HESTER: Footsteps. Those are her footsteps.

DOROTHY: Oh no.

A SHEPHERD enters carrying, or supporting a frozen ROSAMOND.

SHEPHERD: Hello? Hello, are you missing a wee one? I found her stiff with cold.

HESTER: Rosamond!



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