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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

The Canterville Ghost

by Tim Kelly

SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

A Two-Act Play

For Fourteen Women and Six Men

CHARACTERS

JENNIE . . . . . a maid at Canterville Chase
MRS. UMNEY . . . . . the housekeeper
LADY CANTERVILLE . . . . . the former owner
WEEDS . . . . . the gardener
PAM . . . . . American teenager
WENDY . . . . . her sister
MRS. OTIS [LUCY] . . . . . new owner of Canterville Chase
MR. OTIS [HORACE] . . . . . her husband
VIRGINIA . . . . . Lucy's younger sister
SIR SIMON . . . . . 'The Canterville Ghost'
VICAR . . . . . village clergyman
LORD CECIL . . . . . Lady Canterville's nephew
MRS. DAMPIER . . . . . vicar's wife
MADAM BALAKLAVA . . . . . a 'psychic researcher'
MARTIN THE MANIAC . . . . . a ghost
HESTER THE HORRID . . . . . another ghost
LADY JOAN THE GRAVELESS . . . . . a ghost, too
VAMPIRE DUCHESS . . . . . still another ghost
MRS. MIDWINTER . . . . . a villager
MRS. MUSGRAVE . . . . . another villager

TIME: The present.
PLACE: An old English manor house.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set may simply be drapes or have a few representational flats. However, if space is limited, the DR room entrance can be placed off-stage; the same with the French doors. They can be suggested by having the characters look off-L whenever the garden is mentioned. The UC entrance will be UR, and the drapes which mask the 'walled room' will be off-RC. If there is no place to hang the portrait of Sir Simon, merely put a small frame on the table to suggest a 'miniature.' Ideally, however, a more effective setting can be created by utilizing the floor plan shown in the back.

Lightning is merely the stage lights flicked several times quite quickly. A good thunder effect can be achieved by hitting a sheet of metal with a hammer. There are also sound effects records for this.

The 'meringue pie' Madam Balaklava receives in the face is easily approximated by filling a paper plate with meringue. If Madam Balaklava can wear glasses the humor can be heightened by having her wipe them off separately and dramatically as she exits.

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

ACT I

Scene 1

SCENE: A sitting room in Canterville Chase, an English estate.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: JENNIE, a young maid, is standing at the open French doors looking into the garden. MRS UMNEY, a proper sort of housekeeper, enters DR carrying a vase of flowers.

MRS UMNEY. Any sign of them?

JENNIE. Not yet, Mrs. Umney. *[Turns]* If I was them Americans I wouldn't come here. I'd get on the first plane and fly straight home. *[MRS UMNEY moves to the table and puts down the vase]*

MRS UMNEY. You're a silly girl, Jennie. I don't know what you mean.

JENNIE. You know what I'm talking about. *[Fearful]* **Him.**

MRS UMNEY. You can't mean our gardener, Weeds?

JENNIE. *[Annoyed]* No, Mrs. Umney. I'm not talking about Mr. Weeds. I'm talking about Sir Simon. *[Hushed tone]* The ghost.

MRS UMNEY. *[Looking at the portrait]* The less said about him, my girl, the better.

JENNIE. You think Her Ladyship has told the new buyers about Sir Simon?

MRS UMNEY. It's not our place to speculate. *[Studies the portrait]* I do hope he'll behave.

JENNIE. Scared me half to death one night, he did.

MRS UMNEY. I thought you never saw him.

JENNIE. Never have. But I heard him coming up the stairs in his suit of armor, rattling his chains.

MRS UMNEY. *[Stares at rug]* I hope they won't notice the stain on the rug.
JENNIE. They're bound to see it. And ask about it.
MRS UMNEY. If we say nothing, they may suspect nothing.

[LADY CANTERVILLE enters in time to overhear this last remark]

LADY CANTERVILLE. That would be dishonest, Mrs. Umney.
MRS UMNEY. Good morning, M'lady.
JENNIE. We was discussing the ghost. *[LADY CANTERVILLE moves DS and studies the spot on the rug]*
LADY CANTERVILLE. Blood red. Nothing will wash it out.
MRS UMNEY. Canterville Chase won't seem the same in the hands of strangers, M'lady.
LADY CANTERVILLE. With taxes and all, I can't afford to keep it up. Mr. and Mrs. Otis are giving me a marvelous price.
JENNIE. And I may be giving notice.
LADY CANTERVILLE. That isn't sporting of you, Jennie. It wouldn't be cricket to leave the Americans without some staff. At least in the beginning.
MRS UMNEY. Besides, every member of your family has been in service here.
LADY CANTERVILLE. Go along, Jennie. See that there are fresh towels on the washstands.
JENNIE. Yes, ma'am.

[JENNIE exits]
MRS UMNEY. *[Turning to LADY CANTERVILLE]* How large a family, ma'am?
LADY CANTERVILLE. Two girls, teenagers. One is a year older than the other. Mrs. Otis' sister will also be in residence. I appreciate your staying on, Mrs. Umney. It'll make things easier for the Americans.
MRS UMNEY. I think of Canterville Chase as my home, Ma'am.

LADY CANTERVILLE. *[Looks to portrait]* Happily, you and Sir Simon seem to get on.
MRS UMNEY. I always speak respectfully of him. Perhaps he appreciates that.

[WEEDS enters from French doors, wipes off his cap]

WEEDS. They're comin' up the path now, M'lady.
LADY CANTERVILLE. How very punctual.
WEEDS. I don't think Sir Simon is going to like strangers about this place.
LADY CANTERVILLE. That's enough, Weeds. Go help with the luggage. *[Voices from garden. All react, look L. WEEDS steps R]*
PAM. Hurry up, Wendy. You're always lagging behind.
WENDY. I'm hurrying as fast as I can.
MRS OTIS. Slow down, girls.

[PAM, a teenager wearing jeans, bounces through the French doors. She and her sister, WENDY, are lively and extro-verted]

PAM. Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to burst in on anyone.
LADY CANTERVILLE. Quite all right, my dear. You're Wendy, I imagine.
PAM. No, I'm Pam.

[WENDY enters via French doors, also wearing jeans]

WENDY. And I'm out of breath.
LADY CANTERVILLE. Then sit and rest.
WENDY. I'm not that tired! *[Impressed]* Are you Lady Canterville?
LADY CANTERVILLE. I have that honor.
PAM. You're the first lady we've ever met.

WENDY. She means lady, you know — with a **title.**
LADY CANTERVILLE. I quite understand. *[To WEEDS]* The luggage.
WEEDS. Yes, Madam.

[WEEDS exits]

LADY CANTERVILLE. I hope you girls will enjoy living here.
PAM. It's terrific. *[WENDY moves UC taking in the room]*
WENDY. I'm going to love it here.
LADY CANTERVILLE. I hope so.
WENDY. Going to be great fun exploring.
MRS. UMNEY. Exploring, Miss? *[WENDY crosses to drapes]*
PAM. She's got this crazy idea she wants to be an archaeologist.
MRS. UMNEY. What on earth for?
PAM. Like digging in the earth, in old ruins, covering herself with dust. Stupid if you ask me.
WENDY. No one's asking you. I'm going to investigate every room in this place.
MRS. UMNEY. Not **every** room.
WENDY. What's behind the drapes?
LADY CANTERVILLE. It's a walled-up chamber.
PAM. That's exciting!
WENDY. Who walled it up?

[MRS. LUCY OTIS enters via the garden]

LUCY. I asked you girls not to charge ahead. What will Lady Canterville think?
LADY CANTERVILLE. *[Stands]* I think they're charming. *[LUCY moves to LADY CANTERVILLE. MRS. UMNEY moves behind the sofa]*
LUCY. You're a diplomat, Lady Canterville. It takes one where my daughters are concerned. I'm hoping a good English

Boarding school will calm them down.
PAM. We don't want to go to boarding school.
LUCY. That's one reason why you're going.
WENDY. Boarding school. Yeech!

[LUCY's sister, VIRGINIA, enters from the garden. She's an intelligent young woman, pretty and alert. She's followed by MR. HORACE OTIS]

HORACE. Lady Canterville. How nice to see you again. Didn't keep you waiting, I trust.
LADY CANTERVILLE. Right on time. *[Nods to MRS. UMNEY]* This is Mrs. Umney, the housekeeper I spoke of. *[HORACE, VIRGINIA and LUCY nod]*
MRS. UMNEY. I bid you welcome to Canterville Chase.
PAM. Chase? Who's Canterville and who's he chasing? He'd do that as a gallop, anyway!
MRS. UMNEY. Canterville Chase is the name of this place. Chase is an old English word that means manor or lodge.
PAM. *[Embarrassed]* Oh.
LADY CANTERVILLE. *[To MRS. UMNEY]* I think we'll have tea now.
MRS.UMNEY. Yes, M'lady.

[MRS. UMNEY exits DR]

LADY CANTERVILLE. *[To VIRGINIA]* You're Mrs. Otis' sister.
VIRGINIA. A pleasure to be here, Lady Canterville.
LUCY. Forgive me. I forgot you two hadn't met.
LADY CANTERVILLE. Please sit down. I wanted to speak to you one last time before we signed the final papers.
HORACE. No problem, I trust.
LADY CANTERVILLE. That would depend entirely on what one means by a 'problem'.
LUCY. I don't follow.

LADY CANTERVILLE. I have not cared to live in Canterville Chase myself since my grand-aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, was . . . 'frightened' . . . into a fit.

VIRGINIA. Frightened?

HORACE. A fit?

LADY CANTERVILLE. A fit from which she never fully recovered.

LUCY. What frightened her?

LADY CANTERVILLE. Two skeleton hands were placed on her shoulders as she was dressing for dinner.

PAM. *[Delighted]* Wow!

WENDY. Skeleton hands! Way out!

LADY CANTERVILLE. I feel bound to tell you, Mr. and Mrs. Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family. *[The announcement has no adverse effect on the Americans, which rather baffles LADY CANTERVILLE]*

HORACE. Sounds marvelous to me. Local color, eh?

LUCY. Better than we hoped for.

VIRGINIA. Who is the ghost?

LADY CANTERVILLE. *[Points to portrait]* Sir Simon de Canterville.

PAM. Was he wicked?

LADY CANTERVILLE. Infamous. A villain and a scoundrel.

WENDY. Great!

LADY CANTERVILLE. None of you, I fear, realize the gravity of the situation. Sir Simon is not to be taken lightly.

HORACE. Ghosts don't mean the same thing to Americans as they do to the English. What we ought to do is catch Sir Simon, cage him, and sell him to a circus. People would pay to see a caged ghost. *[Americans laugh. Sound of thunder]*

VIRGINIA. That's odd. Thunder on such a lovely day.

LADY CANTERVILLE. Sir Simon has a habit of darkening rooms and causing thunder when he's displeased. I think

he took exception to your remark about putting him in a cage. *[They try hard not to laugh again. All this ghost talk is a bit much]*

HORACE. I'm sure we'll come to terms with Sir Simon.

LADY CANTERVILLE. After the unfortunate accident with my aunt, most of the servants left. Except for Mrs. Umney, of course. She has a certain feeling for the spirit world.

LUCY. There's a maid, too, isn't there?

LADY CANTERVILLE. Jennie. However, I have doubts about her staying.

HORACE. Put your fears to rest, Lady Canterville. This house is exactly what we're looking for.

LUCY. Exactly.

HORACE. We'll take it, spook and all.

LADY CANTERVILLE. *[Alarmed]* You mustn't refer to Sir Simon as a spook.

HORACE. If he shows up we'll confront him with good ole American know-how. He'll soon learn to keep his place.

LADY CANTERVILLE. If you don't mind a ghost in the house, it's all right with me. Only, you must remember – I warned you.

HORACE. We'll take our chances.

LADY CANTERVILLE. Splendid. If you'll excuse me, I'll get the final papers.

HORACE. *[Stands]* Of course.

[LADY CANTERVILLE exits USC]

PAM. That's the best news I've ever heard!

WENDY. Our own private ghost!

VIRGINIA. What a strange story.

LUCY. Lady Canterville's not the sort of woman who would lie.

HORACE. Oh, she believes in what she says. Up to a point. I bet there isn't a manor house or a castle or *[Pause, grinning at PAM]* a chase, in England without a resident

ghost floating about. Helps sell property.
VIRGINIA. Then you don't believe her story?
HORACE. Because we're Americans, Lady Canterville probably thinks a ghost will cinch the deal. She's awfully anxious to unload the place.
WENDY. Reverse psychology.
HORACE. Precisely.
PAM. I was hoping it was for real.
HORACE. Take my word for it. If there's a ghost here, it will turn out to be a whistle of wind in the bell tower.

[WEEDS appears at French doors]

WEEDS. Beg pardon, governor. I'll need the keys to the car trunk.
HORACE. *[Pulls out his car keys]* I forgot I locked it. You're Weeds.
WEEDS. That's right, governor. George Weeds. Finest gardener and yardman hereabouts.
VIRGINIA. Weeds? What a wonderful name for a gardener.
WEEDS. It was my father's name, too.

[MRS. UMNEY enters DR]

MRS. UMNEY. China or Ceylon?
LUCY. *[Pauses]* How's that?
MRS. UMNEY. The tea.
LUCY. The China, I think.
MRS. UMNEY. Very good, Madam. *[She turns to exit]*
VIRGINIA. *[Sees the blood stain]* What on earth is that?
LUCY. I'm afraid something has been spilt.
MRS. UMNEY. *[Turns back]* Yes, Madam. Blood has spilt on that spot.
AMERICANS. Blood?
VIRGINIA. How horrible.
HORACE. *[Steps C]* I must say you're putting on a good show, Mrs. Umney.

MRS UMNEY. I speak the truth, sir.
LUCY. I don't care for blood stains in a sitting room. It must be removed at once.
WEEDS. Won't do no good, Mrs. Otis.
VIRGINIA. Why not?
WEEDS. *[Scared]* It's the blood of Lady Eleanor.
WENDY. Who's Lady Eleanor?
WEEDS. Sir Simon's wife.
MRS UMNEY. Died of a broken heart. Sir Simon's wickedness drove her to an early grave.
WEEDS. Nothin' will take out that spot.
LUCY. Nonsense. A drop of lighter fluid will take care of it. *[Stands]* Horace, hand me your lighter. *[He gives lighter to LUCY]* And your handkerchief. I'll only use a corner. *[He hands her a handkerchief, She wets a corner, kneels down and begins to rub at the stain. Dialog continues through this business]*
MRS UMNEY. That blood stain has been admired by tourists.
WEEDS. It's somethin' of a local attraction.
MRS. UMNEY. *[Positive]* **Nothing** will take it out.
LUCY. Rubbish. *[MRS. UMNEY steps closer. All watch as LUCY rubs away]*
VIRGINIA. I've never seen a red that vivid.
WEEDS. That blood stain don't talk, but I've heard things in this house that would make anyone's hair stand on end.
HORACE. We all like a bit of fantasy, Weeds. But there's no need to overdo it.
MRS UMNEY. It's no joke, Mr. Otis. The ghost is real.
WEEDS. Don't do to mock Sir Simon. He's got a nasty temper.
PAM. *[Points]* Look! The spot's disappearing.
WENDY. Almost gone.
LUCY. It is gone. *[Stands]* A little cleaning fluid and some elbow grease will fix a troublesome stain every time. *[Pleased with her work]* You may serve tea when ready, Mrs. Umney. *[MRS. UMNEY is amazed about the spot.*

LUCY gives lighter and handkerchief to HORACE]
MRS.UMNEY. In all the years I've been here, no one has been able to wipe away that stain.
LUCY. *[An order]* Tea, Mrs. Umney.
MRS. UMNEY. Yes, Madam.

[MRS. UMNEY exits DR]

HORACE. And you can get the luggage, Weeds.
WEEDS. I don't believe me eyes. The stain's gone.
HORACE. But the luggage is still in the car trunk.

[WEEDS exits into garden, scratching his head]

VIRGINIA. I feel guilty not appreciating all the trouble they've gone to.
LUCY. *[Laughs]* Blood stains on the carpet.
PAM. *[Laughs]* Two skeleton hands!
WENDY. *[Laughs]* Instead of a guest in the house, we have a ghost. *[All are laughing when, suddenly, the stage darkens and we hear a peal of deafening thunder]*
VIRGINIA. What's happening?
LUCY. *[Points]* The garden's all in shadows.
HORACE. Never saw a storm come up like that. *[All look into the garden]*

[SIR SIMON enters fast through the drapes in an absolute fury]

SIR SIMON. Vulgar Americans! *[Horrified, terrified, all turn to see the ghost]*
PAM. The ghost!
WENDY. It's Sir Simon!
SIR SIMON. You have dared mock the spirit of Simon de Canterville! You will pay for your insults! Auuuuuuuuuugh! *[On his cry he charges after PAM and WENDY, who run*

screaming into the garden. VIRGINIA, in shock, flees screaming. More thunder as SIR SIMON runs in pursuit of the girls, who are yelling, 'Help!' 'Help!' offstage. LUCY spins about and does a comic swoon into her husband's arms]

HORACE. *[To no one in particular]* Send for the U.S. Marines! *[Very fast curtain]*

Scene 2

SCENE: The same. One week later, in the afternoon.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: JENNIE is dusting at the sideboard. The vicar, REV. DAMPIER, enters from the garden.

VICAR. Morning, Jennie

JENNIE. Oh! *[Turns]* Oh, it's you, Vicar. Gave me quite a start. Been away on a holiday, haven't you?

VICAR. *[Steps in]* My wife and I spent a week in London.

JENNIE. Enjoy yourselves?

VICAR. I'm afraid I'm much too fond of our village. All I could think of was getting back here. Big city life is so exhausting.

JENNIE. *[Moves C]* Sit yourself down, Vicar. I expect you'll be wanting to see Mrs. Otis.

VICAR. *[Sits]* Mr. Otis, too – if he's about. I do feel guilty not being here to greet them on their arrival. What sort of people are they?

JENNIE. Awfully American. Would you have tea, Vicar?

VICAR. Very kind of you, Jennie. But, no.

JENNIE. I'll tell them you're here. I won't be long.

[JENNIE exits]

VICAR. Take your time. *[He looks at the portrait of SIR SIMON]* I do hope you're not causing any mischief, Sir Simon. Americans coming here could be a blessing for the village.

[VIRGINIA enters]

VIRGINIA. Jennie, oh . . . . *[She breaks off, seeing the visitor]* I'm Virginia Washington. Mrs. Otis' sister.
VICAR. *[Standing]* And I am the Reverend Augustus Dampier. Vicar of the parish.
VIRGINIA. *[She crosses to him, shakes his hand]* Lady Canterville spoke of you. Please sit down.
VICAR. *[Sitting]* I've been away. London. A brief holiday.
VIRGINIA. Where is Mrs. Dampier?
VICAR. She'll pay her respects tomorrow. Wednesday is my wife's day for respects.
VIRGINIA. You're so formal in this part of the world. It's hard to get used to.
VICAR. I fear it's inbred. The people of this village are creatures of habit. *[Lightly]* How do you find Canterville Chase?
VIRGINIA. I'm enchanted by it. *[Moves in front of sofa]* You see, my sister and her husband have always wanted to live in England. Horace's business interests have done well enough that he can retire here at an early age. Naturally, I tagged along.
VICAR. You find nothing ... uh ... 'strange' about this place?
VIRGINIA *[Looks to portrait]* You're speaking of Sir Simon.
VICAR. Yes.
VIRGINIA. Sir Simon de Canterville has met his match in Horace Otis.
VICAR. Oh, dear. You mean there's been some 'unpleasantness'?

[HORACE followed by LUCY enters]

HORACE. Nothing we can't handle, Vicar. *[HORACE crosses D to VICAR and pumps his hand forcifully]* We Americans know how to handle ghosties and beasties and things that go bump in the night.

VICAR. *[Pulls back a mangled hand]* You have a strong grip, Mr. Otis.

HORACE. Comes from eating a good English breakfast. You've met Virginia.

VICAR. We were having a pleasant chat.

HORACE. My wife Lucy. *[VICAR starts to get up]*

LUCY. Stay seated, Vicar. So glad you dropped in. *[She sits VIRGINIA stands US of sofa]*

HORACE. We've heard a great deal about you.

VICAR. That's flattering.

LUCY. You run the orphanage.

VICAR. I never refer to it as an orphanage, Mrs. Otis. I call it – 'Children's Village'.

VIRGINIA. That's charming.

LUCY. And you run the home for old people, too.

VICAR. I never call it a home, Mr. Otis.

HORACE. What **do** you call it?

VICAR. 'Safe Harbor'.I encourage the residents to think of it as a hotel. That way they can check in when they wish and leave when they wish. Like guests.

HORACE. Must cost a pretty penny.

VICAR. *[Hesitantly]* Yes . . . a pretty penny.

LUCY. Virginia, ring for Mrs. Umney.

VICAR. I can't stay.

LUCY. One cup of tea before you leave?

VICAR. Another time. For now, I just wanted to stop by and bid you welcome. I'm delighted you're comfortable.

LUCY. It hasn't been easy sleeping here.

VICAR. You mean . . . Sir Simon?

HORACE. He's a noisy sort of pest.

VICAR. *[Tense]* Oh, Mr. Otis, you mustn't talk like that. No telling what he'll do.

HORACE. It's more a question of what I might do.
VICAR. You haven't antagonized him?
HORACE. No, but he's antagonized me.
LUCY. My husband permits nothing to interfere with a good night's sleep.
VIRGINIA. The ghost gave us quite a start when he first appeared.
LUCY. Ran after my daughters with a sword.
HORACE. Made a vulgar display of himself. No class at all. Shrieking and yelling.
LUCY. We soon put him in his place, however.
VICAR. A sword, you say? Tsk, tsk. I fear you don't grasp the gravity of the situation. Sir Simon can be quite **malicious.**
HORACE. In my book he's a fraud and a fake.
LUCY. *[Points to rug]* He allows me to erase the blood stain every night – only it's back the next morning.
VIRGINIA. And he's forever changing the color. One morning it's rose; the next it's purple.
HORACE. The old boy's color blind.
LUCY. Lady Canterville told us what he did to the Duchess of Bolton.
HORACE. Sir Simon is against good American horse sense. You know what they say about horse sense, Vicar? It dwells in a stable mind. *[He laughs]* The ghost isn't going to scare us again. It's going to be the other way around.

[MRS. UMNEY enters]

MRS UMNEY. Lady Canterville's nephew just rang up.
VICAR. That would be Lord Cecil.
LUCY. What did he want?
MRS UMNEY. He said if it wouldn't be inconvenient, he'd stop by for a moment.
LUCY. How nice.
VICAR. Mrs. Umney, I was trying to tell these charming people that Sir Simon can be dangerous.
MRS UMNEY. Isn't easy, Vicar. Americans are rebels.

HORACE. Come on. What exactly can that pile of floating ectoplasm do?

MRS UMNEY. *[Steps DS]* Mrs. Biddy, the former housekeeper, woke up one morning and saw a skeleton seated in an armchair by the fire reading her diary.

VICAR. How very rude of the skeleton.

MRS UMNEY. Poor thing had to be confined to bed for six weeks.

LUCY. The skeleton?

MRS UMNEY. No, Mrs. Biddy.

VIRGINIA. Just too much imagination.

HORACE. Once you give in to Sir Simon's foolishness, you become a willing victim.

LUCY. He scattered my husband's papers all over the upstairs hall. *[MRS. UMNEY moves to the portrait]*

HORACE. A petulant thing to do. Immature.

MRS UMNEY. He's been acting unusually restless.

VIRGINIA. Especially for such an old spirit.

HORACE. Second night we were here, we heard him rattling all over the place in his suit of armor.

MRS UMNEY. That's how he frightens Jennie.

VICAR. What did you do?

HORACE. Do? What any sensible man would do.

VICAR. What **would** any sensible man do, Mr. Otis? What did you do?

HORACE. I said, 'Boo'.

VICAR. *[Incredulous]* Boo?

AMERICANS. Boo.

MRS UMNEY. I don't believe anyone has ever said 'Boo' to Sir Simon before.

LUCY. There's more.

VICAR. *[Worried]* I'm not sure I want to hear it.

LUCY. I knew we weren't going to get a wink if that charging kept up, so I offered him an oil can.

VICAR. Oil can!

VIRGINIA. It's what the girls use for their bikes.

LUCY. I said, 'My dear man, I must insist on your oiling that oversized tin can you're wearing.'
VICAR. *[Shocked]* You didn't!
LUCY. I did.
VICAR. What happened then?
LUCY. He fell over backwards and rolled down the stairs.
VIRGINIA. Woke the entire house.
VICAR. Mr. and Mrs. Otis – you're tempting fate.
HORACE. Not at all. I thought it would be wise for Sir Simon and me to know where we stood right off the bat.
VICAR. Off the bat? What on earth does that mean?
LUCY. It means that Sir Simon will either behave himself, or he'll have to go.
VICAR. Go! Go where? This is his home.
LUCY. Then it's time he started acting like it. His manners are worse than my daughters.
VIRGINIA. I feel the reason he made such a racket was because he couldn't see in the dark.
HORACE. Virginia was very kind.
MRS UMNEY. She gave Simon a box of candies.
VIRGINIA. He seemed quite annoyed. Didn't even thank me.
VICAR. I'm afraid people from the colonies aren't what Sir Simon is accustomed to. I'm genuinely worried.
HORACE. We can take care of ourselves.
VICAR. I'm not worried about you. I'm worried about Sir Simon.
LUCY. Enough talk about the silly ghost. *[Shift in mood]* Vicar, I wonder, could we have a visit to Children's Village?
VICAR. *[Stands]* What better time than the present? I'm on my way there now. Do join me.
HORACE. Great idea.
LUCY. *[Remembers]* Oh, Lady Canterville's nephew.
VIRGINIA. I'll see him. Go along, both of you.

LUCY. Invite him for tea. The English can't seem to live without it.
VIRGINIA. I will.
HORACE. Come along, Lucy, Vicar. *[Inhales deeply]* Great day for a walk.

[HORACE marches into the garden]

LUCY. We're coming.

[LUCY exits after him]

VICAR. *[Stands]* Your brother-in-law and sister are 'confident' people, aren't they?
VIRGINIA. They don't let any grass grow under their feet.
VICAR. Grass grow under their feet? What a funny language you Americans speak. Poor Sir Simon . . . there'll be trouble . . . serious trouble . . . .

[VICAR exits into garden, shaking his head, mumbling]

MRS. UMNEY. The Vicar is upset.
VIRGINIA. Sir Simon is an upsetting influence. Go along and see if there's anything extra nice for tea.
MRS. UMNEY. Yes, Miss. *[MRS. UMNEY crosses DR. VIRGINIA moves to sofa, sits]* There is one thing . . . .
VIRGINIA. Yes?
MRS. UMNEY. Perhaps Madam Balaklava could help.
VIRGINIA. Who's Madam Balaklava?
MRS. UMNEY. A spirit medium, Miss Virginia. And a psychic researcher. Quite successful at ridding other estates of ghosts and ghouls.
VIRGINIA. You're not serious?
MRS. UMNEY. If you really want to get rid of Sir Simon, and I'm not sure I approve, Madam Balaklava is the only one who can help.

[PAM and WENDY, still dressed in jeans, come charging into the room from USC]

WENDY. Give it back! One of those is mine!
PAM. Not if I have them both!
WENDY. I'll get it back if I have to break your arm.
VIRGINIA. Get what back? You sound like a karate nut.
WENDY. She has my deodorant spray.
VIRGINIA. You girls ought to shape up. You do nothing but run in and out of every room. With all the clothes you have, I'll never understand your passion for jeans. You're too old for all this adolescent nonsense, anyway. *[Pause, then to MRS. UMNEY.]* You were saving something about a Madam Balaklava.
MRS. UMNEY. She's famous in these parts.
PAM. What for?
MRS. UMNEY. For one thing, she got rid of Martin the Maniac.
WENDY. *[Greatly impressed]* Who's he?
MRS. UMNEY. Sometimes he's known as 'The Masked Mystery'.
PAM. He sounds exciting.
MRS. UMNEY. He terrorized Milford Manor for centuries.
VIRGINIA. And this Madam Balaklava exorcised – is that what you're saying?
MRS. UMNEY. I don't know about that, Miss, but she certainly got rid of him. Not only that, she banished Hester the Horrid from Heathcliff House.
VIRGINIA. You're putting us on.
MRS. UMNEY. No, Miss. Madam Balaklava is a genius when it comes to the 'Unknown'.
WENDY. *[Fascinated]* If she's so great, why hasn't she been here before?
MRS. UMNEY. No one has requested her presence. She doesn't 'de-ghost' unless she's invited.
VIRGINIA. De-ghost? Lot of mumbo-jumbo. I can accept the presence of Sir Simon. In a way, I feel rather sorry for the poor man, but a ghost named Martin the Maniac,

and another called Hester the Horrid is going too far.
MRS. UMNEY. You don't want to forget Lady Joan the Graveless. *[VIRGINIA throws up her hands in despair]*
PAM. What was she famous for?
MRS. UMNEY. The popular press of the day referred to her as 'The Corpse-Snatcher of Chertsey Barn'. *[PAM and WENDY are mesmerized and barely suppress gasps]*
VIRGINIA. You're fortunate, Mrs. Umney, that Sir Simon has never done **you** any harm.
MRS. UMNEY. I am, indeed. Others haven't fared so well from family ghosts. A dear friend of mine was driven to the brink of despair, courtesy of The Vampire Duchess.
PAM. *[Bug-eyed]* Vampire Duchess! This is better than the late, late show.
MRS. UMNEY. Yes – the Duchess of Startup. Until Madam Balaklava visited the Startup Castle no one would come anywhere near the place.
VIRGINIA. As long as Sir Simon isn't too malicious, I see no need to send for a psychic researcher.
MRS. UMNEY . *[Shrugs]* As you wish, Miss.

[MRS. UMNEY exits DR]

WENDY. Virginia, don't you love all this stuff?
VIRGINIA. Stuff is right. Stuff 'n nonsense. I don't know why Mrs. Umney feels she has to keep us entertained with all these ghost stories. *[Soft laugh]* Martin the Maniac.
PAM. *[Stands]* Come on, Wendy.
WENDY. *[Stands]* I'm ready.
VIRGINIA. Ready for what?

[PAM moves into the garden, followed by WENDY]

PAM. You'll hear about it later.
VIRGINIA. *[Calls after them]* Women of mystery, aren't you?

[JENNIE enters]

JENNIE. The Duke of Cheshire, Miss Virginia.

[JENNIE exits. A good-looking young man, CECIL, enters UC, walks to VIRGINIA]

CECIL. Ah, Mrs. Otis. This is a pleasure. *[She holds out her hand. He takes it, shakes gently]*

VIRGINIA. I'm not Mrs. Otis. She's my sister.
CECIL. *[Releases her hand]* Then you're – ?
VIRGINIA. Virginia Washington.
CECIL. *[Smiling]* What could be more American than that? I hope I'm not intruding. I happened to be driving this way and thought I would call and introduce myself.
VIRGINIA. I'm glad you did. We wanted to meet you but my sister and her husband have gone with the Vicar. A tour of Children's Village.
CECIL. Wonderful place. *[Shakes his head]* Too bad, though.
VIRGINIA. Why do you say that, your Lordship?
CECIL. Call me Cecil. When people use the title, I feel like a prize snob. *[CECIL sees the portrait, crosses to it. VIRGINIA studies him]*
VIRGINIA. You didn't answer my question.
CECIL. Hmmmmm?
VIRGINIA. About Children's Village.
CECIL. *[Turns]* It's bankrupt. Hopelessly so. Same thing for Safe Harbor. The Vicar has a warm heart, but no business sense.
VIRGINIA I noticed his church seems a little the worse for wear.
CECIL. The roof leaks, the windows are cracked, and on a cold day the congregation shivers through its prayers. *[Back to portrait]* I trust he's being a gentleman.
VIRGINIA. I can't give you a good report about your kinsman.

CECIL. Sir Simon probably wants you out of the place. He never could abide strangers.
VIRGINIA. We'll be friends in no time.
CECIL. *[Smiles]* You and I, you mean?
VIRGINIA. *[Smiling also]* Sir Simon and myself.
CECIL. You've got spirit. I'll say that for you.
VIRGINIA. Let's forget about 'spirit'. *[Stands]* Cecil, I wonder do you know the meaning of the inscription on the landing?
CECIL. *[Faces her]* You mean what's on the stained glass window?
VIRGINIA. Yes *[Recites]*

'When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin,
When the barren almond bears,
And a little child gives away its tears –'

CECIL. *[Finishes]*

'Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville.'

VIRGINIA. It's painted in such curious letters, almost faded out. Took me a long time to decipher it all.
CECIL. Sorry I can't help you. I don't know what it means. Been there for centuries. Like the blood stain.
VIRGINIA. You will stay for tea.
CECIL. I'd be delighted.
VIRGINIA. Lucy and my brother-in-law will be back in plenty of time.
CECIL. *[Crosses C]* Then we have time for a walk. Why don't you show me the gardens?
VIRGINIA. Happy to.
CECIL. *[Crosses L]* I was hoping you'd say that. Remember, you must never say no to a relative of Sir Simon de Canterville. The old boy might take offense.
VIRGINIA. I make it a point never to offend a ghost.

[VIRGINIA crosses L, enters the garden. CECIL follows. As soon as he exits, stage darkens. Peal of thunder, sound of ancient clock striking the hour of four. Again – peal of thunder. SIR SIMON, in a rage, storms through the drapes]

SIR SIMON. 'Doom and gloom, thunder and spite! Curses on all who mock my might!' *[Looks around, disappointed]* Where is everyone? *[Another peal of thunder]*

[JENNIE enters UC, doesn't see the ghost at once]

JENNIE. Did you call out, Miss Virginia? *[She sees SIR SIMON, screams]*
SIR SIMON. I'll turn your hair white, my girlie! *[JENNIE runs behind the large chair, SIR SIMON in pursuit]*
JENNIE. Help, Mrs. Umney! Mrs. Umney! He's out of his room again! *[She runs for the servant's door]*
SIR SIMON. I'll rattle your bones when I catch you!
JENNIE. I'm giving notice!

[JENNIE exits – fast. SIR SIMON is DR. WEEDS enters through the French doors]

WEEDS. That you yellin', Jennie?
SIR SIMON. *[Turns menacingly, his hands as if to strangle]* No! It was me, and I'm going to plant you in your own garden, Mr. Weeds!
WEEDS. YIPES!

[WEEDS turns fast, runs into garden]

WEEDS. It's Sir Simon! Run for your lives!
SIR SIMON. *[Delighted with his mischief, SIR SIMON gives chase, stops C and does a jig-step – like a happy child]* I'll drive them out yet, I will, I will. *[He gives chase to*

WEEDS again. As he starts out, PAM hurries in. She's been doing her hair and has a can of hair set in her hand. She directs spray at SIR SIMON and hits him]

SIR SIMON. Ouch! *[He turns to confront PAM]* Beware!

PAM. Beware, yourself. You're one bad joke!

SIR SIMON. You dare call Sir Simon de Canterville one bad joke!

PAM. Believe me, I dare!

SIR SIMON. You'll regret this!

PAM. *[Mockingly]* You're going to scare yourself! *[SIR SIMON moves to grab her. PAM turns and quickly sprays him again]*

SIR SIMON. Stop it, stop it!

PAM. Who's afraid of the ghastly ghost!

SIR SIMON. Wretched female! *[He slaps at her, dancing about in an agitated state as she moves out of range]*

PAM. You great big grisly ghoul! Do you really want a fight? *[She advances menancingly with hair spray can]*

SIR SIMON. *[Arms up to protect himself]* No, No! *[PAM lightly sprays him. He turns to run into the garden]*

PAM. Come back! Fight like a Canterville!

[Just as SIR SIMON reaches the French doors, there is another peal of thunder, and a ghostly figure wearing a white sheet, looking like a Halloween goblin, hurries in, L, its arms waving spookily. Obviously WENDY in costume]

WENDY. Boo!

SIR SIMON. *[Terrified]* Aaaaauuuuuggggggh!

[Quickly, SIR SIMON turns on his heel, runs across stage for the safety of the drapes. As he passes PAM she gets in another blast. At the drapes, SIR SIMON

turns back, livid] I will be avenged! *[PAM is laughing so hard she has to sit down in the large chair]*

WENDY. Boo!

[WENDY, arms outstretched under the sheet, runs for the ghost. Alarmed, SIR SIMON flees behind the sanctuary of the drapes. Peal of thunder on his escape. Fast curtain]

Scene 3

SCENE: A few nights later. French doors are closed.

[JENNIE is leading in MRS. DAMPIER]

JENNIE. Come right in, Mrs. Dampier.

MRS. DAMPIER. Thank you, Jennie. I hope Mr. and Mrs. Otis won't be offended by my coming at this late hour. *[JENNIE indicates sofa. MRS. DAMPIER sits]*

JENNIE. I don't think so, Ma'am. Y'see, they're not expecting to get any sleep tonight.

MRS. DAMPIER. Why?

JENNIE. It's Madam Balaklava, Ma'am.

MRS. DAMPIER. The psychic?

JENNIE. Yes, Mr. Otis says he's had it with the ghost. Oh, Sir Simon has been behaving something awful.

MRS. DAMPIER. I'm sorry to hear that.

JENNIE. He got into Weeds' greenhouse and broke a lot of glass.

MRS. DAMPIER. I've never known Sir Simon to be so willful.

JENNIE. Even Mrs. Umney has turned against him. He materialized in the kitchen and poured flour over the floor. And he turned her custard dessert sour.

MRS. DAMPIER. Shocking.

JENNIE. We think Madam Balaklava will set things right.
MRS. DAMPIER. I don't know what the Vicar is going to say about this. Augustus takes a dim view of mediums and psychics.
MRS. UMNEY. Mrs. Dampier! We didn't expect you tonight.
MRS. DAMPIER. Obviously, and I didn't expect to be here, but the Vicar has a nasty cold, so I'm taking on his duties.
MRS. UMNEY. Don't stand there like a stick, Jennie. Run along and fetch your mistress.
JENNIE. Right away, Mrs. Umney.

[JENNIE exits UC]

MRS. DAMPIER. What's this about Madam Balaklava coming here this evening?
MRS. UMNEY. If you could see and hear some of the things Sir Simon's been up to . . . .
MRS. DAMPIER. Jennie was telling me. Still, I don't see the necessity for summoning that dreadful Balaklava fraud to Canterville Chase.
MRS. UMNEY. There's no controlling the ghost. The girls say he's gone bananas.
MRS. DAMPIER. Bananas?
MRS. UMNEY. Forgive me. When one is around Americans, one is inclined to pick up their peculiar expressions.
MRS. DAMPIER. I was afraid there'd be trouble when I first heard The Chase was for sale.
MRS. UMNEY. Sir Simon's been generally disagreeable. Besides, he's tried to keep Lord Cecil and Virginia apart. They belong together.
MRS. DAMPIER. How?
MRS. UMNEY. Every time Lord Cecil is about to say something romantic, the ghost makes him have a violent sneezing fit.
MRS. DAMPIER. How ungallant of Sir Simon.
MRS. UMNEY. The other evening he took the roast beef right off the table and sent it sailing to the ceiling.

MRS. DAMPIER. Good gracious.
MRS. UMNEY. It was stuck up there dripping gravy for almost two days. We had a frightful time getting it down. Finally, Weeds harpooned it with a pitchfork.
MRS. DAMPIER. Like living in a Chamber of Horrors.
MRS. UMNEY. So, Madam Balaklava was sent for.
MRS. DAMPIER. She's a charlatan.
MRS. UMNEY. She got rid of Martin the Maniac, Hester the Horrid, Lady Joan the Graveless –
MRS. DAMPIER. *[Holds up her hand in protest]* You're an impressionable woman, Mrs. Umney. Has anyone thought of speaking calmly and rationally to Sir Simon?
MRS. UMNEY. Won't do any good, speaking to the ghost. He's set in his ways.

[LUCY enters followed by VIRGINIA]

LUCY. What an unexpected pleasure.
MRS. DAMPIER. I hope this isn't an imposition.
VIRGINIA. *[Moves to large chair]* No indeed, we're all excited tonight.
MRS. DAMPIER. I wish you didn't feel it necessary to call on Madam Balaklava.
LUCY. *[Sits]* I'm afraid we have no choice.
VIRGINIA. At first we were quite willing to live and let live.
LUCY. Now we're afraid that unless the ghost is stopped, he may do serious injury. Has Mrs. Umney told you about the roast?
MRS. DAMPIER. Most distressing. *[Then]* I'll come to the reason for my visit, if I may. We're having a church bazaar soon.
MRS. UMNEY. To raise funds for Children's Village?
MRS. DAMPIER. And for Safe Harbor.
MRS. UMNEY. They can use the money. They owe everyone in the village.
LUCY. *[Stiffens]* That'll be all, Mrs. Umney.

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