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SF PERUSALS

The Mystery of Irma Vep

A Penny Dreadful

Charles Ludlam

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

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ISBN 978-0-573-64046-9
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A tape of the original music and sound effects as used in the New York production is available upon request. Contact Samuel French for a quote.

in

THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP

A Penny Dreadful

Written and Directed by
CHARLES LUDLAM

starring
CHARLES LUDLAM and **EVERETT QUINTON**

Settings by **CHARLES LUDLAM**
Costumes by **EVERETT QUINTON**
Lighting by **LAWRENCE EICHLER**

Original Music Composed by
PETER GOLUB

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Jane Twisden ..... EVERETT QUINTON
Nicodemus Underwood ..... CHARLES LUDLAM
Lady Enid Hillcrest ..... CHARLES LUDLAM
Lord Edgar Hillcrest ..... EVERETT QUINTON
An Intruder ..... EVERETT QUINTON
Alcazar ..... CHARLES LUDLAM
Irma Vep ..... ? ? ?

ACT I

Mandacrest, on the moors

ACT II

Various places in Egypt

ACT III

Mandacrest

THERE WILL BE A FIFTEEN-MINUTE INTERMISSION AFTER ACT I.

Cast of Characters

Lady Enid Hillcrest
Lord Edgar Hillcrest
Nicodemus Underwood
Jane Twisden
An intruder
Irma Vep

The action of the play takes place in the library drawing room of "Mandacrest," the Hillcrest estate near Hampstead Heath, between the wars; and various places in Egypt.

Note: THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP is a full-length quick-change act. All roles are portrayed by two performers.

The Mystery of Irma Vep

ACT I

SCENE 1

(The study is a large room with French doors at the back that open out on a garden. There is a desk and chair. A fireplace with a mantel over which is a portrait of Lady Irma in her bloom. Two deep armchairs flank the fireplace. There are signs that the Hillcrests have travelled: African masks, an Egyptian mummy case, and a painted Japanese screen. There is a bookcase with morocco bound volumes and doors left and right. At rise Nicodemus enters from the garden, through the French doors, carrying a basket. His left leg is deformed and the sole of his shoe is built up with wood. Jane is arranging flowers in a bowl.

JANE. Watch what you're doing! You're soaking wet! Don't track mud in here!

NICODEMUS. It's God's good rain, my girl.

JANE. It's the devil's rain. That's what it is!

(Lightning flashes, then thunder is heard.)

NICODEMUS. Would you rather the drought went on and on? It's thankful you should be. And that mightily.

JANE. And don't clump so with that wooden leg. You'll wake Lady Enid.

NICODEMUS. And wasn't it to save Lord Edgar from the wolf that me leg got mangled so? I should think she'd be glad to hear me clump after what I did for him.

JANE. That was a long time ago. Lady Enid doesn't know anything about it.

NICODEMUS. She'll find out soon enough.

JANE. Now, now, Nicodemus, I won't have you frightening Lord Edgar's new bride with your wolf tales.

NICODEMUS. And the sooner she does find out the better, I say!

JANE. Hush. Your tongue will dig your grave, Nicodemus. There are some things better left unsaid.

NICODEMUS. Pah! It's a free country, ain't it?

JANE. Shhh!

NICODEMUS. Well, ain't it?

JANE. If Lord Edgar hears you you'll see how free it is. You'll find yourself without a situation.

NICODEMUS. That's a little bit too free for me. I'll bite me tongue.

JANE. We must stand by Lord Edgar. I'm afraid he'll be needing us now more than ever.

NICODEMUS. Why now more than ever? I'd say the worst was over. He's finally accepted the fact that Miss Irma's in her grave.

JANE. Don't talk like that. I can't bear the thought of her in a grave. She was always so afraid of the dark.

NICODEMUS. He's accepted it and you must too. Life has begun again for him. He mourned a more than respectable length of time and now he's brought home a new Lady Hillcrest.

JANE. That's just it. That's just the very thing! I don't think Lady Enid will ever make a fit mistress for Mandacrest.

NICODEMUS. And why not?

JANE. She's so, so—common. She'll never live up to the high standard set by Lady Irma.

NICODEMUS. That my girl is not for you or me to decide.

JANE. I can't stand the thought of taking orders from that vulgarian.

NICODEMUS. Come come, I won't have you talking that way about Lady Enid.

JANE. Lady Irma had a commanding presence and her manners were impeccable.

NICODEMUS. It takes more to please a man than fancy manners.

JANE. I would think a man—a *real* man would find nothing more pleasing than fine breeding and savoir fair.

NICODEMUS. If that French means what I think it does you'd better wash your mouth out with soap. Here's eggs and milk. The turtle was laying rather well today.

JANE. And where's the cream?

NICODEMUS. I skimmed it.

JANE. Again? Ah, you're incorrigible.

NICODEMUS. In what?

JANE. Now what will I tell Lord Edgar when he wants cream for his tea, huh?

NICODEMUS. Tell him what you like.

(*Lightning and a clap of thunder.*)

JANE. (*Shrieks*) Ahhh!

NICODEMUS. There there. Don't be skeered. Nicodemus is here to protect you. (*Tries to put his arm around her.*)

JANE. (*Eluding his embrace*) Keep your hands to yourself. You smell like a stable.

NICODEMUS. If you slept in a stable you'd smell like one too.

JANE. Keep your distance.

NICODEMUS. Someday, Janey my girl, you're going to smile on me.

JANE. Yeah, when hell freezes over and little devils go ice skating.

NICODEMUS. If I was cleaned up and had a new white

collar and smelled of bay rum and Florida Water you'd think different.

JANE. Don't you get any ideas about me. You are beneath me and beneath me you're going to stay.

NICODEMUS. Someday you might want to get beneath me.

JANE. UGH! How dare you speak to me in such a manner. I've had education.

NICODEMUS. What education have you ever had?

JANE. I've read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* from cover to cover, the *Holy Bible*, the almanac and several back issues of Godey's Ladies' Book.

NICODEMUS. Well I've read the Swineherd's Manual from kiver to kiver.

JANE. (*Contemptuously*) Hurmph!

NICODEMUS. You got no reason to look down your nose at me, Miss. We're cut from the same bolt o' goods.

JANE. Don't go giving yourself airs. Go on back to your pigsty before I say something I'll be sorry for.

NICODEMUS. I'm not leaving until you give me a kiss.

JANE. I'll see you hanged first.

NICODEMUS. (*Chasing her around the room*) Give me a little kiss and then I'll show you how I'm hung.

JANE. Get away from me you beast with your double entendres.

NICODEMUS. Double what?

(*Thunder, footsteps above.*)

JANE. Now you've done it. You've waked Lady Enid. Go quick before she sees you in the house.

NICODEMUS. What's she getting up now for? It's just about evening.

JANE. That's her way. She sleeps all day and she's up all night.

NICODEMUS. It's them city ways of hers. Lord Edgar told me she'd been on the stage.

JANE. (*Shocked*) The stage! Ugh! How disgusting!

NICODEMUS. To think, a real live actress here at Mandacrest!

JANE. Yes, it's utterly degrading. But she is the mistress of the house now and we must adjust to her ways.

NICODEMUS. That's not what I meant. I think Lord Edgar has really done well for himself.

JANE. You men are all alike. You're so easily taken in. (*Footsteps*) I hear her footsteps. Go!

NICODEMUS. But I want to get a look at her.

JANE. She's just an ordinary woman and she doesn't need you gawking at her. Go on back to your pigsty.

NICODEMUS. I found better company there than ever I found at Mandacrest. (*Exits*)

LADY ENID'S VOICE. (*Off*) Jane, were you talking to someone?

JANE. Just Nicodemus. He came to bring the eggs.

LADY ENID. (*Off*) Is he gone?

JANE. Yes, Lady Enid.

LADY ENID. Has the sun set?

JANE. It's pouring down rain, your Ladyship. There's very little out there that could be called sun.

LADY ENID. Draw the draperies and light a fire. I'm coming down.

JANE. Ah Lord, my work is never done. (*Draws the draperies across the French doors, cutting off the view of the garden. She takes a quick look at herself in the mirror; fans herself with her handkerchief; straightens her hair and collar; then lights the fire.*)

LADY ENID. (*Entering*) Ah, you've made the room warm and cheery. Thank you, Jane.

JANE. Can I fix you a nice cup of tea?

LADY ENID. If it's no trouble.

JANE. (*Sternly*) That's what I'm here for.

LADY ENID. Is Lord Edgar about?

JANE. He was up and out at the crack of dawn.

LADY ENID. Out? Out where?

JANE. He goes riding in the morning. It's a custom with him. (*Tea kettle whistles off.*) Ah, there's the kettle calling. (*Exits*)

LADY ENID. (*Looks about the room and examines the paintings and books. She looks out the French doors into the garden and out to the moors beyond. Then the portrait over the mantel catches her attention. She stands before it and stares at it a long time.*)

JANE. (*Returning with the tea things*) How do you take it?

LADY ENID. I beg your pardon?

JANE. Your tea, Miss.

LADY ENID. Plain.

JANE. (*Incredulous*) No cream or sugar?

LADY ENID. No, quite plain.

JANE. That's queer.

LADY ENID. Queer?

JANE. Tea ain't much without cream and sugar.

LADY ENID. I'm on an eternal diet. The stage you know.

JANE. But that's all behind you now.

LADY ENID. (*With a sigh*) Yes, I suppose it is. But the habit's ingrained. I shall probably refuse bread and potatoes 'til I die. (*Indicating the portrait.*) Who is that woman?

JANE. Why, that's Lady Hillcrest . . . I mean, that's the last Lady Hillcrest.

LADY ENID. She was very beautiful, wasn't she?

JANE. There will never be another woman who's her equal—oh, I beg your pardon, Miss.

LADY ENID. That's alright, Jane. You were very fond

of her, weren't you?

JANE. (*Bringing her a cup of tea*) She was like a part of meself, Miss.

LADY ENID. I see. (*Sits and sips tea. Sharp reaction to the tea.*) You do make strong tea, don't you?

JANE. (*Indignant*) When I makes tea I makes tea. And when I makes water I makes water.

LADY ENID. God send you don't make them in one pot.

JANE. (*Beat. Then realizing that a joke was made at her expense*) Hurmph!

LADY ENID. You don't like me, do you, Jane?

JANE. I don't hate you.

LADY ENID. I should hope not! That would be a terrible thing, wouldn't it? If you hated me and we had to live here together.

JANE. Yes, I suppose it would. I said I don't hate you.

LADY ENID. You don't hate me. But you don't like me.

JANE. I'm not used to you. You'll take getting used to.

LADY ENID. (*Shivers*) I felt a chill. A cat walked over my grave.

JANE. Isn't there a draft there, where you're sitting, Lady Enid?

LADY ENID. Yes, there is a little. Perhaps you'd better close the French doors.

JANE. Did Nicodemus leave them open again? If I've told him once I've told him a thousand times . . . Why isn't that the master coming over there?

LADY ENID. (*Quickly*) Where? (*Gets up.*) Yes, it's he. (*Hiding behind the curtain.*) Stand back! Don't let him see us.

JANE. What's that he's carrying? Armsful of heather and he's dragging something behind.

LADY ENID. Dragging something?

JANE. It looks like a big animal. Why, I believe he's killed the wolf.

LADY ENID. (*Nervously*) Wolf?

JANE. The wolf that's been killing our lambs. Well we'll all sleep better too without that devil howling all night.

LADY ENID. He killed a wolf?

JANE. Yes, and he's brought the carcass back with him.

LADY ENID. Is it dead? Is it really dead?

JANE. It's dead and it won't get any deader.

LADY ENID. Which way is he coming?

JANE. He's taking the path by the pyracanthas.

LADY ENID. He's done that before. But will he take the footbridge?

JANE. That's just what I was asking meself. He's getting closer—no he's turned off—he's going the long way 'round and through the ivy arches.

LADY ENID. Then he's still not over it.

JANE. Ah, you can't blame him for not taking the footbridge after what happened there.

LADY ENID. They cling to their dead a long time at Mandacrest.

JANE. Nay, I think it's the dead that cling to us. It's as if they just don't want to let go. Like they can't bear to leave us behind. (*Comes back to herself abruptly.*) The master will be wanting his dinner. (*Turning at the door.*) How do you like your meat, Miss?

LADY ENID. Well done.

JANE. No red meat?

LADY ENID. Not for me.

JANE. See, there's another difference. Miss Irma liked it bloody. (*Exits*)

LADY ENID. (*Turns sharply and looks at the portrait*)

Don't look at me like that. I didn't take him away from you, you know. Someone was apt to take your place sooner or later. It happened to be me. I know how you must feel seeing us so happy under your very nose. But there's nothing to be done about it, old girl. Life must go on.

(*Enter Lord Edgar.*)

LORD EDGAR. (*With armsful of heather, dragging wolf carcass as described*) Rough weather.

LADY ENID. (*Rushing to Edgar and planting a kiss on his lips*) Edgar, darling, you're back.

LORD EDGAR. Please, Enid, not in front of . . .

LADY ENID. In front of who? There's no one looking. (*Pauses*) Unless you mean her. (*Points to the painting.*)

LORD EDGAR. It does seem a bit odd. I mean kissing right in front of her.

LADY ENID. She looks vaguely sinister.

LORD EDGAR. Please, Enid. She's dead.

LADY ENID. Perhaps that's the reason.

LORD EDGAR. Let's don't talk about her.

LADY ENID. Yes, let's don't.

LORD EDGAR. Are you quite comfortable?

LADY ENID. Yes, quite. Jane doesn't like me but I think I'll win her over.

LORD EDGAR. I hope you'll like it here.

LADY ENID. I'm sure I will. Oh, Edgar, Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. Oh, Enid, Enid.

LADY ENID. Oh Wedgar, Wedgar, Wedgar.

LORD EDGAR. Oh Wenid, Wenid, Wenid.

LADY ENID. (With a qualm) Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. (*Slightly reprimanding*) Enid.

LADY ENID. (*Reassured*) Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. (*Condescendingly*) Enid.

LADY ENID. (*Snuggling his chest, with a sigh*) Edgar Edgar Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. (*Comforting and comfortable*) Enid Enid Enid.

LADY ENID. (*Passionately*) Edgar!

LORD EDGAR. (*Aroused*) Enid!

LADY ENID. (*More passionately*) Edgar!

LORD EDGAR. (*More passionately*) Enid!

LADY ENID. (*Rapturously*) Edgar!

LORD EDGAR. (*Likewise*) Enid!

LADY ENID. (*Climactically*) Edgar!!

LORD EDGAR. (*Orgasmically*) Enid!!

LADY ENID. (*Cooing*) Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. (*Drowsily*) Enid.

LADY ENID. Edgar?

LORD EDGAR. Enid.

LADY ENID. Take the painting down.

LORD EDGAR. I couldn't do that.

LADY ENID. Why not?

LORD EDGAR. I just couldn't.

LADY ENID. She's been dead three years.

LORD EDGAR. Yes, I know, but . . .

LADY ENID. Let's make a fresh start. Forget about the past.

LORD EDGAR. I want to, Enid, believe me, I do.

LADY ENID. We'll never feel comfortable with her watching every move we make.

LORD EDGAR. No, I suppose not.

LADY ENID. Then, why not put her things away in a chest somewhere or make a little shrine where you can visit her once in a while? But not our home.

LORD EDGAR. You're right of course. I know you are. It's just that . . .

LADY ENID. What?

LORD EDGAR. She made me promise that I would always keep a flame burning before her picture.

LADY ENID. What nonsense.

LORD EDGAR. I tell you she made me promise.

LADY ENID. Blow it out.

LORD EDGAR. I couldn't break my word.

LADY ENID. I thought you belonged to me now. That we belonged to each other.

LORD EDGAR. We do, but that was before we met.

LADY ENID. Which means more to you? Your love for me or your promise to her?

LORD EDGAR. Enid, please. Don't put it that way.

LADY ENID. Which is it, Edgar? Which will it be?

LORD EDGAR. Please don't make me choose.

LADY ENID. Do you love me?

LORD EDGAR. How can you doubt it?

LADY ENID. Then the choice is already made. Blow it out!

LORD EDGAR. Dare I? (*Blows out the candle.*)

LADY ENID. You see, nothing happened.

LORD EDGAR. Weird that we thought it would.

(*They laugh.*)

LADY ENID. And now, darling, as to this matter of dragging dead animals into the drawing room—it's really got to stop.

LORD EDGAR. I say, you're really out to reform me, aren't you?

LADY ENID. Just a little.

LORD EDGAR. I'll have Nicodemus tend to it. Why don't you change for dinner?

LADY ENID. Good. I'm famished.

LORD EDGAR. Don't be long.

LADY ENID. I won't, I promise. (*Exits*)

LORD EDGAR. (*Goes to the painting*) Forgive me, Irma, please. Please forgive me!

(*Enter Nicodemus.*)

NICODEMUS. Where is the new lady?

LORD EDGAR. Changing. You know how slow women are.

NICODEMUS. So you've finally killed the beast, eh, Lord Edgar.

LORD EDGAR. Yes, I've killed it. It will rage no more.

NICODEMUS. But what about the beast within? Is that through with raging?

LORD EDGAR. It's resting peacefully at the moment. That's about the most we can expect, don't you think?

NICODEMUS. You're a man of will, you are, Edgar Hillcrest.

LORD EDGAR. Nicodemus, take the guts out and burn it.

NICODEMUS. Don't you want to save the skin?

LORD EDGAR. No, burn every hide and hair of it.

NICODEMUS. And the ashes? What should I do with them?

LORD EDGAR. Scatter them on the heath.

NICODEMUS. And let the wind take up its howling?

LORD EDGAR. Then throw them in the mill run.

NICODEMUS. After her?

LORD EDGAR. Yes, after her. And Nicodemus . . .

NICODEMUS. Yes, Lord Edgar?

LORD EDGAR. Take down the painting.

NICODEMUS. And what do you want me to do with it?

LORD EDGAR. Burn it with the wolf. (*Exits*)

(*Underwood goes toward the mantel and tries to take down the painting. Enter Jane.*)

JANE. And what do you think you're doing?

NICODEMUS. The master wants the painting down.

JANE. You can't do that. You can't take Lady Irma!

NICODEMUS. I can and I will. It's the Master's orders.

JANE. Stop it! Stop it! Don't touch that picture. Ahgh! The sanctuary light's gone out. Oh God, this will never do.

NICODEMUS. Don't blame me. It was out when I came in. Lord Edgar must have extinguished it.

JANE. (*Indicating the carcass*) And what's this here?

NICODEMUS. You've got eyes in your head to see with. It's the wolf. He's killed the wolf.

JANE. Glory be! Is it possible?

NICODEMUS. It's cause for rejoicing.

JANE. (*Approaching the carcass warily*) It's no rejoicing there'll be this night, Nicodemus Underwood. He's killed the wrong wolf.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 2

The scene is as before. It is late evening. The household is asleep. Jane is stoking the last embers of the fire. Lady Enid enters silently in her dressing gown. She stands over Jane, whose back is to her, and watches. Jane suddenly becomes aware of her presence and, frightened, gasps. This in turn frightens Lady Enid, who gasps also.

LADY ENID. I didn't mean to frighten you.

JANE. I didn't mean to frighten you either. You shouldn't creep up on a person like that.

LADY ENID. I'm sorry, Jane. You have lived here a considerable time. Did you not say sixteen years?

JANE. Eighteen, Miss; I came when the mistress was married, to wait on her; after she died, the master retained me as his housekeeper. Though I knew him from childhood. I was raised at the Frambly Parsonage.

LADY ENID. Indeed.

(*Long silence between them.*)

JANE. Ah, times have greatly changed since then!

LADY ENID. Yes, you've seen a good many alterations, I suppose?

JANE. I have; and troubles too.

LADY ENID. The Hillcrests are a very old family, aren't they?

JANE. Oh, Lord, yes. Why the Hillcrests go back to . . . back to . . . well, I don't know exactly who. But they've been descending for centuries.

LADY ENID. Lord Edgar told me he was an only child.

JANE. Yes, a strange flower upon the old solid wood of the family tree.

LADY ENID. Was he always so fond of hunting, even as a child?

JANE. Nay, he only took that up after the mistress passed away. Oh, but that's a long story. I won't be after boring you with it.

LADY ENID. Oh, do go on, Jane. Everything about Lord Edgar fascinates me.

JANE. Where is himself?

LADY ENID. Sleeping soundly. Jane, it will be an act of

charity to tell me something of the family history. I know I shall not be able to rest if I go to bed, so be good enough to sit and chat for an hour.

JANE. Oh, certainly, Miss! I'll just fetch a little sewing and then I'll sit as long as you please. Listen to that wind! It's an ungodly night. Can I get you a hot toddy to drive out the cold?

LADY ENID. If you're having one.

JANE. Sure I loves me toddy and me toddy loves me.

(*She crosses to the table, gets her sewing, and pours out two toddies from a pan she has nestled among the embers. She gives one drink to Lady Enid and settles into the chair opposite her before the fire. Howling sound.*)

LADY ENID. That wind!

JANE. That's not the wind. That's a wolf howling.

LADY ENID. It seems you've been troubled by wolves of late.

JANE. Not wolves. It's one wolf in particular. Victor.

LADY ENID. Victor?

JANE. He was captured as a pup and tamed. But his heart was savage. Miss Irma kept him as a pet.

LADY ENID. Like a dog.

JANE. He was bigger than a dog; so big the boy used to ride about on his back. Though Victor didn't like that much, I can tell you. Though he bore it for the mistress' sake, for it was to her he belonged. His happiest hours were spent stretched out at Miss Irma's feet, his huge purple tongue lolling out of his mouth. He never left her side the whole time she was carrying. Lord Edgar locked him out when it came time for her to deliver. And when he heard her labor pains, he howled.

LADY ENID. Lord Edgar told me that he'd had a son but that he died when he was still a child.

JANE. Ah, there's a tragic story, Miss. But your toddy's gettin' cold. Finish that and I'll fix you another.

LADY ENID. (*Drains her cup and passes it to Jane*) He was taken off with chicken pox, wasn't he?

JANE. Chicken pox? Now who told you that?

LADY ENID. No one told me. I was just supposing.

JANE. If Lord Edgar told you it was chicken pox, then chicken pox it was. We'd better leave it at chicken pox.

LADY ENID. No, really, he didn't tell me anything. The chicken pox was pure conjecture.

JANE. It's understandable that he didn't go into it. It's not an easy subject to talk about. Here's your toddy.

LADY ENID. Thanks.

JANE. And here's one for me.

LADY ENID. I'd like to know the true history, if you don't mind relating it.

JANE. (*The toddy loosening her tongue*) One clear winter day Victor and the boy went out to the heath to play in the new fallen snow. The wolf came back without the boy. We waited. We watched. We called ourselves hoarse. And at dusk we found him in the mill run, dead. His throat had been torn apart.

LADY ENID. Horrible.

JANE. Lord Edgar wanted Victor destroyed. But Lady Irma fought against it. She said it wasn't Vic had done it.

LADY ENID. Perhaps it wasn't.

JANE. His throat was torn. What else could it have been? They fought bitterly over it. He said she loved the wolf more than her own child. But I think it was the double loss she dreaded, for when Victor was gone she'd have nothing, you see. When the Master came to shoot Victor, Lady Irma turned him loose upon the heath and

drove him away with stones, crying run, Vic, run, and never come back! I don't think the poor beast understood what happened because he still comes back to this day, looking for Lady Irma.

LADY ENID. Poor Victor. Poor boy. Poor Irma.

JANE. Poor Lord Edgar.

LADY ENID. Yes, poor poor Lord Edgar!

JANE. But here's the strangest part of all.

LADY ENID. Yes?

JANE. The fresh snow is like a map. I traced their tracks meself. Victor's trail turned off. The boy was killed by a wolf that left human tracks in the snow.

LADY ENID. Human? You mean the boy was murdered?

JANE. But that takes us to the subject of werewolves.

LADY ENID. Werewolves?

JANE. Humans who take the form of a wolf at night.

LADY ENID. But that's just superstition.

JANE. Yes, superstition, the realm beyond the explainable where science is powerless. Of course everything pointed to Victor. The boy fell down and skinned his knee. He let the loving beast lick his wound. He tasted blood. The killer was aroused. He turned on the child and sank his fangs into its tender neck. A perfectly logical explanation. But then there were those tracks in the snow. Wouldn't it be convenient for a werewolf to have a real wolf to blame it on?

LADY ENID. Didn't you show them to anyone? The tracks, I mean.

JANE. Ah, they wouldn't listen. They said they were my tracks. That I'd made them meself. I didn't push it, Miss, or they'd have packed me off to Dottyville. It's hard to convince people of the supernatural. Most people have enough trouble believing in the natural.

LADY ENID. Of course you're right. But those footprints.

JANE. I wish I had 'em here as evidence. But where are the snows of yesteryear? And that's the werewolf's greatest alibi—people don't believe in him. Well Miss, I must be gettin' meself to bed. My rheumatism is starting to act up again.

LADY ENID. Leave the light, Jane. I think I'll stay up and read a while.

JANE. Here's a good book for you. It's the master's treatise on ancient Egyptian mythology.

LADY ENID. Thanks!

JANE. Don't stay up too late now. We're having kippers and kidneys for breakfast and I know you wouldn't want to miss that.

LADY ENID. Jane, what was the boy's name?

JANE. Didn't you know? That was Victor too. Goodnight, Lady Enid. (*Exits*)

LADY ENID. (*Sits in chair with her back to the glass doors and reads. The shadow of the stranger can be seen through the sheer organdy curtains illuminated intermittently by flashes of lightning. A boney almost skeletal hand feels for a latch. It drums its fingernails against the windowpane.*) What—what was it? Real or a delusion? Oh God, what was it?

(*Suddenly a single pane of the French door shatters. The boney hand reaches in through the curtains and opens the latch. A gaunt figure enters the room slowly. A ray of light strikes the pallid face. He fixes her with a stare.*)

LADY ENID. Who are you? What do you want?

(*The clock chimes one.*
The intruder emits a hissing sound.)

LADY ENID. What do you want? Oh God, what do you want of me?

(*She tries to run to the door but the intruder catches her by her long hair and, winding it around his boney fingers, drags her back toward the mantel. She takes roses from the vase and presses their thorns into his eyes. The intruder groans and releases her. She runs across the room. He follows her. She stabs him with scissors from Jane's sewing basket. Intruder staggers back and falls through open door down right. Lady Enid crosses to the mantle and tries to get control of herself. She sighs with relief. Intruder reenters and clapping his hand over her mouth drags her to the door, locks it, then crosses up center to the double doors where shriek follows strangled shriek as he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth and a hideous sucking noise follows. Lady Enid emits a high-pitched scream made at the back of the throat by drawing the breath in. Running footsteps are heard Off.*)

LORD EDGAR. (*Off right*) Did you hear a scream, Jane?

JANE. (*Off right*) I did. Where was it?

LORD EDGAR. (*Off*) God knows. It sounded so near yet far away. I got up and got dressed as soon as I heard it.

JANE. (*Off. No pause*) All is still now.

LORD EDGAR. (*Off*) Yes, but unless I was dreaming there was a scream.

JANE. We couldn't both have dreamed it.

LORD EDGAR. Where's Lady Enid?

JANE. Isn't she with you?

(*Lady Enid emits another high-pitched scream.*)

LORD EDGAR. There it is again. Search the house! Search the house. Where did it come from? Can you tell?

(*Lady Enid screams again as before.*)

LORD EDGAR. Good God! There it is again! (*He tries the door from offstage right. But it will not open.*)

LORD EDGAR. Enid! Enid! Are you in there? Speak for heaven's sake! Speak! Good God we must force the door. (*They beat on the door.*)

LORD EDGAR. Get the crowbar.

JANE. Where is it?

LORD EDGAR. In the cellar. Hurry! Hurry! Run! Run! Enid! Oh Enid!

JANE. Here it is. (*They force the door open and Lord Edgar bursts into the room.*)

NICODEMUS. (*Voice Off, up center*) Lady Enid! Lady Enid! Oh God no! Lady Enid! (*Nicodemus enters carrying the limp body of Lady Enid. Her long hair hangs down covering her face. There are several drops of blood on her nightgown.*) Help oh help oh heaven oh help! (*He carries her body out the door stage right.*) Now where the blue hell am I bringing her, beyond the veil?

LORD EDGAR. (*Following them*) What is it? What's happened? Who's done this thing to you?

NICODEMUS. (*Reentering*) Who or what? I saw something moving in the heath.

LORD EDGAR. Something? What kind of something?

NICODEMUS. Dog's skull. Dog's body. Its glazing eyes staring out of death candle to shake and bend my soul.

(*Suddenly something with a horrible face appears at the window. It lets out a frightening earsplitting sound and then, laughing, bangs against the windowpanes.*)

NICODEMUS. (*Growling in a hoarsened raspy voice*) There! There it is.

(*The thing emits a shrill laugh like the sound of electronic feedback.*)

LORD EDGAR. Lord help us!

NICODEMUS. Be it whatever thing it may—I'll follow it!

LORD EDGAR. No! No! Do not!

NICODEMUS. I must! I will!

LORD EDGAR. Not without a gun! Don't be a fool!

NICODEMUS. Let whoever will come with me—I'll follow this dread form! (*Exits*)

LORD EDGAR. Wait for me you fool! (*Takes a gun from off the wall.*)

NICODEMUS. (*Voice Off*) I see it! I see it! It goes down the wall and through the wisterias.

LORD EDGAR. It's dark down there. There isn't any moon.

(*There are animal sounds; the sounds of a struggle and then a few agonized cries. The doors fly open and a human leg, one that had formerly belonged to Nicodemus, is thrown in.*)

LORD EDGAR. Great Scott! (*He rushes out. And is heard calling Off.*) Which way? Which way?

NICODEMUS. (*Voice Off*) Over here. Help! Oh help me!

(*There is the sound of shots Off.*)

JANE. (*Entering from stage right*) Was them shots I heard?

LADY ENID. (*Sticking her head in through the door stage right*) Jane. Jane.

JANE. Yes Lady Enid.

LADY ENID. Come. I need you. I'm afraid to be alone. (*Withdraws*)

JANE. I'll come and I'll bring the ghost candle to light your agony. It's the curse of the Druids that's what it is. The Druidy Druids. (*Withdraws*)

(*Footsteps and the sound of something dragging.*)

NICODEMUS. (*Entering up center*) I saw it. I touched it. I struggled with it. It was cold and clammy like a corpse. It can't be human.

LORD EDGAR. (*Entering under Nicodemus' arm*) Not human? No, of course not human. You said it was a dog.

NICODEMUS. Then it looked like a wolf, then it looked like a woman! It tore off me leg and started chewing on it.

LORD EDGAR. Great Scott! It can't be.

NICODEMUS. If it hadn't been wood I swear it would have eaten it.

LORD EDGAR. No!

NICODEMUS. Yes! Yes! Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! And all the while it made this disgusting sucking sound. It sucked the very marrow from me bones. I can feel it now. It's very near. Bride bed. Child bed. Bed of death! She comes, pale vampire, through storm her eyes, her batsails bloodying the seas! Mouth to her mouth's kiss! Her eyes on me to strike me down. I felt the green fairy's fang.

(*Howling Off.*)

LORD EDGAR. What was that?

NICODEMUS. Just a wolf.

LORD EDGAR: No! It's Victor! Victor come back to haunt me! (*Starts out*) Give me that pistol there. This time I'll get him! (*Fur at the door*) Look! There it is now! It won't escape this time.

NICODEMUS. (*Clinging to his leg*) No! Master, do not go! There is no help for it!

(*Keening lament is heard on the wind.*)

LORD EDGAR. Let go of my leg. Goblin damned, I'll send your soul to hell! (*Exits*)

NICODEMUS. No! Master! Master! It's Irma, Irma Vep! A ghostwoman with ashes on her breath, alone, crying in the rain.

(*Shots, running footsteps, and howling heard Off.*)

JANE. (*Rushing in*) What's all this yelling? You'll wake the dead.

NICODEMUS. The master's at it again — hunting.

JANE. Is it wolves again?

NICODEMUS. This time he's sure it's Victor.

JANE. Victor?

NICODEMUS. That's what he says!

JANE. Well, don't just stand there gawking! Go after him! Be some help!

NICODEMUS. Oh no. Not me! There's something on that heath that would make your blood run cold.

JANE. Ah, you big sissy. If you don't go to his aid I'll go meself.

NICODEMUS. Oh, very well, woman. Wait until I screw in me leg. [*He goes off, screws it in noisily, returns*]

JANE. It seems that more than your leg got bitten off.

JANE. Let go! Let go! Get out of my way. Lord Edgar needs me.

(*The gun goes off and the bullet hits the painting. The painting bleeds.*)

NICODEMUS. Now see what you've done. You've shot Lady Irma. The painting is bleeding! (*Wrests the gun from her grasp and exits in the same direction as Lord Edgar.*) Lord Edgar!

JANE. (*Calling after him*) Down past the mill run and out onto the moors. The other way, Nicodemus! The other way! Take the short cut through the cedar grove. Faster. Faster, Nicodemus! Faster!

LADY ENID. (*Enters slowly*) Where is Lord Edgar?

JANE. He's searching the moors. He thinks he's seen Victor.

LADY ENID. The wolf or the boy?

JANE. Both.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE 3

It is nearly dawn of the same night. Lady Enid sits in a chair by the fire, Lord Edgar hovering near her.

LORD EDGAR. Can you tell me how it happened, Enid dearest?

LADY ENID. Jane and I sat up late, she regaling me with tales of Mandacrest, its history, legends and such. As the hour grew late I prepared myself for bed as is my wont. When I had completed my beauty ritual I went straight to our bedchamber and discovered that

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