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Peter David Walther

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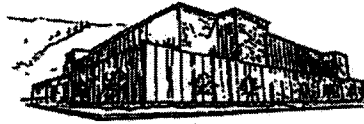
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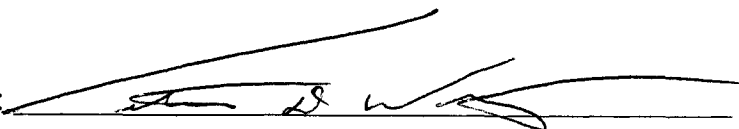
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Six Sixty-Minute Mystery Plays

By

Peter David Walther

B.A. Carroll College, 1984

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Arts

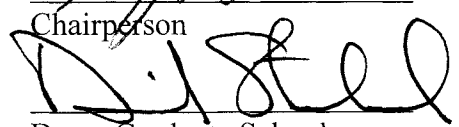
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Acknowledgements

It would be impossible to thank all the people who have been involved in the preparation of this document. Friends, actors, staff, The University of Montana's Department of Drama/Dance, the Graduate School office, and the Town of Virginia City. So I will wrap them all into one special person:

To Dottie Basile who, when raking leaves, always looks for Faeries at the bottom of her garden.

Foreword

When Peter Walther asked in the fall of 2005 if I would write an introduction for a collection of six of his mystery melodramas, I accepted with enthusiasm. I have seen all the plays Pete produced in Virginia City since my arrival in 1997; have commiserated with Pete during days while his conceptions were taking form; offered meals and moral support during the intense final hours of Pete's laboring over a script.

Though I greatly enjoyed the 6 plays in this collection, I have enjoyed my friendship and collegial relationship with this extraordinary actor, playwright, and public servant even more. My association with Peter over the past 7 years has, quite simply, enriched my life.

Most of the hours spent with Pete revolved around civic affairs. He was my predecessor as Mayor of Virginia City, served with me on the City Council for 4 years, and became my mentor in steering a steady course through a storm of conflicts in our tightly wound community. The day after Thanksgiving Day typed scripts of the six mysteries arrived at my door, and as I read them I realized how closely my appreciation of Pete's civic persona mirrored the principal characters one encounters in his plays.

Consider the following synopsis of the opening scenes from the six plays in this collection. The first play, "Edwin Drood," is an adaptation of Dickens' story; the others are original works. The plays open with the appearance of familiar characters. Some – like Watson and Holmes – invented by other authors; others are character types that have been a staple of English story telling since the beginning of our epic tradition.

From "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" by Charles Dickens, Adapted by Peter Walther (1999) the opening stage directions:

"A jagged spot illuminates the face of a man in a half awake, half dream state. As his murmurings become more apparent, a distant image appears... climaxing to reveal a cold London street and the insides of a closed and mean room. Besides himself, we find a haggard woman tending her pipes and other clients laid out on unseemly mattresses."

From “The Sign of the Four” (2000):

“Watson: Which is it today... morphine or cocaine?”

Holmes: My mind rebels against stagnation. Give me a problem, give me work....But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation.”

From “The Mystery of the Mummy’s Tomb” (2002):

“...desk clerk is pouring a glass of whiskey to a man seated, reading a newspaper, smoking a pipe, mostly obscure to the audience.”

From “The Zombies of Voodoo Island” (2003) Doctor Leland Watts, off stage as the curtain rises, is the subject of opening dialogue:

“Charlie: Oh, he’s a queer old bird.... Runs some kind of half-assed church and a half-assed hospital Turns out he’s the executor of the estate... but it sure seems that there’s a lot more here than just a sugar plantation.

Clyde:...And this Dr. Watts, he has the answers?

Charlie: I’m afraid so.”

From “The Wreck of the Myrtle Deem” (2004), opening stage directions describing Captain Peter Coffin:

“...a shadowy figure on the balcony observing a tremendous storm.... Thunder, lightening... The shadowy figure places a ... hand on the balcony as lights fade.”

From “Preston Scott: Murder in a Haunted Castle” (2004):

“Opening – a dark, brooding midnight... haunting sounds of bagpipes... A dark figure attempting to remove something from a safe...

Morrison: What’s that? Who’s there? I warn you...I’m armed!”

These chiaroscuro openings, which set the stage for action invariably culminating in the hero moving fully to the light, are the unmistakable art-imitating-life handiwork of Pete Walther. I do not see them as predictable melodrama but as works depicting “everyman” struggles in a harsh and uncertain world.

Reminded of when Sartre was lionized and Albert Camus gave us The Stranger, I experience Peter’s literary work as expressions of the existential hero. Confronted by a threatening universe, the characters in these plays are armed, indeed: with knowledge that experience takes its toll; with awareness that even the toughest souls are vulnerable; and with unflagging commitment to humanity.

Readers and theatergoers will enjoy these plays for their entertainment and instruction. Only cynics, tone deaf to the music of doing what is right in the face of danger and tragedy, will disparage the encouragement that shines in these six mysteries. The plots and settings in many aspects may appear familiar, but the message to commit oneself to honorable principles, notwithstanding the drumbeat of personal blows from a universe indifferent to personal integrity, marks these works, and their author, as authentic.

Colin D. Mathews
Virginia City, MT
November 28, 2005

Introduction

Virginia City, Montana is truly a unique place. Never a “Ghost Town,” Virginia City prides itself on having retained its incorporation since gold was discovered May 26, 1863. As you will read shortly, a new “Gold Rush,” tourism, buoyed Virginia City in the mid 1940’s through the preservation and restoration efforts of Bovey Restorations. In 1987, I was hired by the Bovey Company as an actor in their Opera House. A converted stone barn housing two hundred and forty-four seats, a small stage, an authentic silent movie theatre organ, a roll-drop system for scenery changes and the opportunity for pure theatre magic. I continued working for the Boveys through the summer of 1993 and then took a “break” for a few years performing Vaudeville shows and major musicals in other regional theatres. In 1997, the state buy-out of the Bovey properties opened up the need for individual concessionaires for the businesses once held under the “parent” company. The Opera House being one of them. Through quite a bit of local “persuasion”, I teamed up with a friend and local building contractor, John Benedict, and we successfully won the bid to operate the Illustrious Virginia City Players for seven years. During that time, we produced twenty-one plays and vaudeville shows hiring a diverse, talented and devoted staff of actors and technicians, many of whom have moved on to highly successful positions in our field. After the 2004 season, we agreed that it was time to “pass the torch” and allow the contract to open to new bidders. Seven years was enough. “Let’s call it a day before the magic dies.” A bittersweet decision but necessary.

Now to the task at hand. As I have said, during those seven years I successfully wrote and produced most all of the plays for the theatre. Audiences who have enjoyed the works have dubbed me a “writer”. It is a label I do not use for myself. I did not write for a personal need of expression but for commercial need. In 1998, I allowed friends to adapt and/or write scripts for me. When going in to production, I found I had to do a lot of cutting and reworking of theses scripts to make them work in my “space”. This caused embarrassment and hard feelings. I was altering someone else’s “work”. Therefore, it became easier, I thought, to write the needed material myself. I would brood for days, weeks, even months pondering over ideas in my head without ever putting anything on paper except, possibly, a basic road map of characters, situations and settings. After

working myself into a “state”, I would sequester with my typewriter and emerge eight hours later with a script.

All artists work in their own fashion. Now I am forced to arrange an anthology for publication. As I ponder over these scripts, I marvel at my own ability. Where did these words come from? Each one was written for a specific actor portraying a specific character at a specific time and place. I don’t know if I am ready to share them with the world in printed text. They were designed for performance. But I cannot be selfish. At this point I wish to share with you a brief History of Virginia City, as it applies to this document, compiled for me by my friend and local historian, John Ellingsen:

A Short History of the Boveys in Virginia City, the Virginia City Players, and the State of Montana purchase of the former Bovey Properties.

By

John D. Ellingsen

November 22, 2005

Charlie Bovey (born 1908) had an interest in history from his childhood. As a little boy, he collected obsolete carriages, and as a young man, he collected outdated fire equipment. In 1926, Charlie’s father, one of the partners of the Washburn Crosby Co. (makers of Gold Medal Flour) and the man who organized “General Mills,” gave his son Charlie the choice of attending college, or learning the milling trade. Charlie chose the milling trade, and he was sent to Great Falls, Montana to start at the bottom. After a few years, he thought it would be more fun to grow wheat rather than mill it, and went into wheat ranching. With his girl friend, Sue Ford (the daughter of the president of the Great Falls National Bank) he began wheat farming east of Great Falls. By the time of their marriage, Charlie had acquired both sheep and cattle ranches as well.

Since all good ranchers were supposed to need some horses, Charlie planned to attend a “great horse sale” in Fort Benton in the late fall of 1940. He never made it to the sale, but the day changed his life. He met the daughters of Joseph Sullivan, a famous old time saddler, who had died a year or so before; and he was so appreciative

of Sullivan's old saddle shop, the daughters gave it to him. But Fort Benton officials informed him the ancient building was condemned, and he would have to move it. He ended up taking it apart and rebuilding it inside a huge building at the Great Falls Fairgrounds. Soon other especially historic buildings were given to Charlie as well. He called the indoor town he built "Old Town." He founded an organization called the "Historic Landmark Society of Montana" to preserve historic buildings throughout the state.

It was not until 1944 that Charlie and Sue Bovey visited Virginia City. He was astounded with the number of historic buildings there, but equally as upset by the local lack of interest in their preservation. Returning a few weeks later, he found several already gone since his last visit. Though there was little interest in preservation from the local city government, Charlie found that he could buy many of the buildings personally, and soon owned the oldest and most historic part of town. Charlie and Sue began to collect antiques to display in the buildings. Charlie also had the innovative idea of transporting visitors back into time by having them "participate in history," for instance, by buying a drink in the restored Bale of Hay Saloon, staying in a hotel room furnished in Victorian style, or attending a 19th century theatre performance. His "businesses" were aimed far more at giving the visitor authentic experiences and providing them with services (such as a comfortable hotel and good food) than they were at making a profit.

One of the most popular Bovey attractions was the Opera House, where an audience, then used only to movies and increasingly to TV, could see actual live stage melodramas followed by authentic Vaudeville acts. Founded by Larry and Dori Barsness in 1949, the "Illustrious Virginia City Players" have been a favorite ever since.

In 1959, Charlie was asked to remove the "Old Town" exhibit from the Great Falls Fairgrounds. To preserve the very historic buildings he had moved there, he disassembled them a second time and rebuilt them again in Nevada City, Virginia City's 1863 sister town which had nearly become a ghost town by the 1870's. There a stage station hotel and sod roofed cabins provided accommodations, and visitors could explore (at first) about 20 restored and furnished buildings. Bovey's music

machine collections in the Bale of Hay Saloon and Nevada City Music Hall brought the melodies of the past to life. In 1964, Charlie Bovey added a railroad museum and operating steam train engine between the two towns.

John Ellingsen, a visitor to “Old Town” since age 2 ½ and to Virginia City since age six, began working full time for Boveys in 1972 at age 24. Charlie, John, and their carpentry and house-moving crew doubled the number of buildings in Nevada City in the next few years, and furnished many new exhibits. John studied the history of Alder Gulch, the life styles of its pioneers, and the construction and furnishing of its buildings. He thoroughly embraced the philosophy of the Boveys, and carried it on in every detail.

Charlie and Sue Bovey dedicated the rest of their lives to the preservation of Virginia and Nevada Cities. After Charlie died in 1978, Sue carried on for the next decade. While Virginia and Nevada Cities were not as central to his life, their son Ford respected their work. After Sue’s death, it looked as if the fabulous and unique collections Boveys had assembled at Virginia and Nevada Cities would have to be auctioned off. Antique dealers hounded Ford and promoters of theme parks tried to persuade him to sell so they could build reproductions of the famous towns in Arizona or even Japan. But Ford held out trying to find a way to preserve the historic sites.

Unsuccessful at finding a private buyer as dedicated as the Bovey family, the only alternative was to turn to the State of Montana. While there was little interest at first, citizens groups, preservationists, and leaders in tourism made the movement to save Virginia City gain momentum. The 1995 legislature included a bill to purchase Nevada City and the National Park Service considered buying the Bovey property in Virginia City. But the State bill failed by one vote, and the National Park Service portion was not successful as well. Ford allowed one more attempt at State Purchase in 1997. This time, the State of Montana voted to buy the Bovey properties for 6 ½ million dollars, and formed the Montana Heritage Commission.

Today, over eight years since the State Purchase, the Montana Heritage Commission operates the state-owned facilities at Virginia and Nevada Cities as the Nation’s most unique historic Western gold mining community, Montana’s premier

living history / open air museum, and home of the Alder Gulch Short Line Railroad (Montana's only working steam locomotive.)

The "Bovey Businesses" remain as a special part of the visitor experience. The hotels and sod-roofed cabins continue to provide comfortable accommodations, and the Bale of Hay continues to bring the visitor the experience of an old West saloon. A most important part of the atmosphere, the Opera House and the Virginia City Players were directed by Peter D. Walther from the 1998 through 2004 seasons. He and his enthusiastic actors carried on the half-century old tradition of the highest quality of enjoyable and memorable authentic entertainment.

The show windows of shops along the Virginia City boardwalk are truly "windows to the past." In Nevada City, over a hundred buildings, many fully furnished, await the most detailed exploration. Weathered wood and picturesque vistas invite creative photography. The organs in the Nevada City Music Hall still inspire children to spontaneously dance. The power of the steam locomotive is felt and its shrill whistle echoes in the gulch. And the Opera House continues to thrill audiences with authentic Melodrama and Vaudeville.

Now I wish to present for your approval Six Sixty-Minute Mystery Plays. Why "sixty minutes" you ask? I have found that the attention span of today's society has shortened. Each play was followed by an hour of variety acts. Put these together with an intermission and you have the perfect evening; two hours and fifteen minutes. Also be aware that these plays are "melodramas." Not "you pay the rent, Boo, Hiss." But plays accompanied by piano underscoring; adding a separate character all its own. Sit back, relax and enjoy.

P.D.W. – November 28, 2005

The Mystery of Edwin Drood was my first solo attempt at complete script writing. A familiar title, if not so familiar story line, would be good for the box office and the time period was correct. Taking the key chapters, characters and elements of the book and linking them together in logical fashion proved to be a rewarding adventure. The only problem ... how to end it? Charles Dickens died before he finished the book. The most common conclusion is, "Jasper did it." The opium addicted obsessed choirmaster. Some Dickensonians question this choice claiming that when Dickens' sister asked the author, "How will it end?" he replied, "That's why it's a mystery." For our simple little theatre, the choice was obvious. (For taking the easy way out, a friend from Idaho hasn't spoken to me since. C'est la vie.) But how to get there. In one of the last chapters of the incomplete novel, the Rev. Crisparkle goes for a swim in the river and finds Edwin's watch. The watch! The item of the watch haunted me for days until a light bulb went on. Trap Jasper in the tomb while he's trying to recover Edwin's watch from the secret grave to plant on Neville and there you have it. The novelty of the last line was a scary proposition. "Where does this take us? ... To the end of the Mystery of Edwin Drood." I knew the audience would applaud but the question would be, "Why?" Because they liked the play or because it was over. I am happy to report it was the former. For a tight little authentic Victorian melodrama, you can't go wrong with this one. Dark and gloomy. The only humor is in the character of Durdles, the gravedigger. A neat challenge for competent actors and relatively simple set requirements; a couple of nice parlors, an opium den, a creepy graveyard and an equally creepy crypt. Enjoy The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

By

Charles Dickens

Adapted by

Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

June 1999

Cast of Characters

Princess Puffer: an opium woman

John Jasper: Choirmaster at Cloisterham; uncle to Edwin Drood

Miss Twinkleton: mistress of a boarding school for ladies

Rev. Septimus Crisparkle: Minor Canon of Cloisterham Cathedral

Edwin Drood: a young man orphaned at a young age and now studying engineering

Rosa Bud: an orphan betrothed to Edwin Drood

Durdles: a stonemason, chiefly in the monumental line

Deputy: a young imp employed by Durdles

Neville Landless: a pupil of the Rev. Crisparkle

Helena Landless: Neville's sister; pupil of Miss Twinkleton

Opening: **A jagged spot illuminates the face of a man in a half awake, half dream state, as his murmurings become more apparent, a distant image of an Eastern temple appears in red light and smoke climaxing to reveal a cold London street and the insides of a closed and mean room. Besides himself, we find a haggard woman tending her pipes and other clients laid out on unseemly mattresses.**

Jasper: *(Murmuring)* Tower...Cathedral tower. How can that be here? No. It must be the tower of some Sultan's palace. Cymbals crash for the long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight as ten thousand dancing girls strew flowers along the path. The colors. The gorgeous colors. White, red, roses, Rosa! Rosa ... Rosa ... No! Ned! Ned! No Rosa! No...Ned!

Princess: Another? Have another, dearie. Ye've smoked as many as five since ye come in at midnight. Here, this'll make it six.

Jasper: *(shaking ...a muttering client)* What's that? What did you say? Unintelligible. *(falling back on own mat)*

Princess: O me, my lungs is weak *(blowing on a pipe)*. It's nearly ready for ye, dearie. Poor me, me poor hands shake like to drop off. I see ye coming-to and I ses to me poor self, I'll have another ready for him, and he'll bear in mind the market price of opium and pay accordingly. *(Jasper begins to pull himself together, searching for his hat and scarf, etc.)*

Jasper: Do you ever understand what they say in their dreams Your patrons?

Princess: Nary a word, sir. Them dreams is sacred. Here, have another. Remember, three and sixpence a thimble full. That's what it costs me. Three and six a thimble full.

Jasper: Here. *(Throwing a handful of coins on a table.)*

Princess: *(as he exits)* Here...there's barely five bob here! Three and six a thimble full...that's what it costs me...*(hollering after him)* Some gentleman ye are.

(Lights)

Scene 2: **A stone wall outside the Cathedral**

(The Reverend Crisparkle, in surplus, etc...paces as the bells chime. Enter Miss Twinkleton.)

Twinkleton: My dear Reverend Crisparkle, the bells are tolling, we don't wish to be late do we?

Crisparkle: Ah, Miss Twinkleton. I was just waiting on our choirmaster. He has been taken poorly lately and, well, what does a few minutes matter? I'm sure the Lord will forgive us.

Twinkleton: Mr. Jasper!...Poorly?!

Crisparkle: Mr. Jasper has been going up to London twice a week for treatments, I'm afraid, but he insists that it's nothing serious.

Twinkleton: Indeed, I trust not.

Crisparkle: But as you're here, Miss Twinkleton, tomorrow our new charges arrive from the Haven of Philanthropy offices in London. A Mr. and Miss Landless. Brother and sister. They have just recently arrived from Ceylon and are being forwarded here directly. As Miss Landless will be under your supervision at your Seminary for young ladies at the Old Nuns' House, Mr. Landless, of course, will be under my guidance and will subsequently be staying with me. Therefore, I propose a small gathering of welcome, a reception if you like, at my home tomorrow evening.

Twinkleton: An excellent idea, Reverend! Now, we must go in.

Crisparkle: I'll follow you directly... Ah, here comes Jasper now.

(Enter Jasper, in surplus and scarf, hurriedly)

Jasper: I'm sorry I'm late Reverend. But ...

Crisparkle: No need for explanation Jasper, you're here now.

Twinkleton: Sorry to hear you have not been well, Mr. Jasper.

Jasper: Oh, it was nothing ... nothing.

Twinkleton: You look a little worn.

Jasper: Do I? Oh, I don't think so. What is better, I don't feel so.

Crisparkle: You best go in now, Miss Twinkleton. And tell the organist to play one more verse and chorus. We'll be right behind you.

(Twinkleton exits)

Crisparkle: I'm so glad you're feeling better, Jack. You had me worried there for a moment.

Jasper: Thank you, Reverend. I do feel much better. And my Nephew, Edwin, is due any minute.

Crisparkle: Ah! He will do more good than a doctor, Jasper.

Jasper: More good than a dozen doctors. For I love him dearly and I don't love doctors... or doctor's stuff.

Crisparkle: *(Laughing together)* Shall we?

(They both exit into the Church. Jasper coughing slightly as lights fade...)

(Note: A nice Episcopalian hymn to cover scene change into Jaspers' parlor.)

Scene 3: Jasper's Parlor

(Jasper paces, has a small "attack" but recovers in time for Edwin to enter.)

Jasper: My dear Edwin!

Edwin: My dear Jack! So glad to see you!

Jasper: Get off your great coat, bright boy, and sit down here in your own corner. Your feet are not wet? Pull your boots off. Do pull your boots off.

Edwin: My dear Uncle, I am as dry as a bone.

Jasper: You forget, Ned, that "Uncle" and Nephew" are words prohibited here by common consent and express agreement.

Edwin: All right. Tell me Jack, do you really and truly feel as if the mention of our relationship divides us at all? I don't.

Jasper: Uncles as a rule, Ned, are so much older than their nephews that I have that feeling instinctively.

Edwin: As a rule, maybe! But what is a difference in age of half a dozen years or so? And some uncles, in large families, are even younger than their nephews. Halloa, Jack! Don't drink!

Jasper: Why not?

Edwin: I must propose a toast.

Jasper: A toast to what?

Edwin: What a jolly old Jack it is! Look here Jack, tell me, whose birthday is it?

Jasper: Not yours, I know.

Edwin: Not mine, you know? No, not mine. It's Rosa's. *(Gestures to painting)*
To Miss Rosa Bud on her birthday. Many happy returns.

(They drink Jasper somewhat reluctantly.)

Edwin: You know, this portrait of Rosa is not one of my better efforts. Yet, you choose to hang it here. In heavens name, why?

Jasper: Because it reminds me of you, Ned. And of the happiness I wish you and Rosa.

Edwin: Oh, I'm sure we'll be quite happy ... though our courtship suffers from an unavoidable flatness, owing to the fact that my dead and gone father and her dead and gone father had good as married us at birth. Why the devil couldn't they have left us alone?

Jasper: Tut, tut, dear boy ---

Edwin: Tut, tut? Yes, Jack, it's all very well for you. Your life has not been laid down to scale for you. Lined and dotted like a surveyors plans. You have the freedom to love whomsoever you choose. *(Edwin stops himself ... alarmed by something he sees in Jasper's face.)*

Jasper: Don't stop, dear fellow, go on.

Edwin: Have I hurt your feelings, Jack?

Jasper: How could you have hurt my feelings? *(He staggers.)*

Edwin: Good heavens, Jack, you look frightfully ill! There's a strange film come over your eyes.

Jasper: I ... I have been taking ... medicine for pain ... an agony that overcomes me. I've been forced of late to seek ... treatment in London for my condition. The effects of the ... medicine ... steal over me like a blight or a cloud, and pass. Fear not, it will soon be gone.

Edwin: I do hope so, Jack.

Jasper: You were going to say what a quiet life mine is. No whirl and uproar around me, no distracting commerce or calculation, no risk, no change of place, myself devoted to the art I pursue ... my business ... my pleasure.

Edwin: I really was going to say something of the kind, Jack; but you see, you, speaking of yourself, almost necessarily leave out much that I should have put in. For instance, I should have put in the foreground your being so much respected as Lay Precentor, or Lay Clark, or whatever you call it, of this Cathedral; you're enjoying the reputation of having done such wonders with the choir; your choosing your society, and holding such an independent position in this queer old place; your gift of teaching and your connection.

Jasper: Yes; I saw what you were tending to. I hate it.

Edwin: Hate it, Jack? (*Much bewildered*)

Jasper: I hate it. The cramped monotony of my existence grinds me away by the grain. How does our service sound to you?

Edwin: Beautiful! Quite celestial.

Jasper: It often sounds to me quite devilish. I am so weary of it. The echoes of my own voice among the arches seem to mock me with my daily drudging round. No wretched monk who droned his life away in that gloomy place, before me can have been more tired of it than I am. He could take relief, and did take, to carving demons cut of the stalls and seats and desks. What shall I do? Must I take to carving them out of my heart?

Edwin: I thought you had so exactly found your niche in life, Jack? (*Astonished laying a sympathetic hand on his knee.*)

Jasper: I know you thought so. They all think so.

Edwin: Well, I suppose they do. Rosa thinks so.

Jasper: When did she tell you that?

Edwin: The last time I was here. You remember when. Three months ago.

Jasper: How did she phrase it?

Edwin: Oh, she only said that she had become your pupil and that you were made for your vocation. (*The younger man glances at the portrait. The elder sees it in him.*)

Jasper: Anyhow, my dear Ned (*as he shakes his head with a grave cheerfulness*), I must subdue myself to my vocation; which is much the same thing outwardly. It's too late to find another now. This is a confidence between us.

Edwin: It shall be sacredly preserved, Jack.

Jasper: I have reposed it in you, because ...

Edwin: I feel it, I assure you because we are fast friends and because you love and trust me, as I love and trust you.

Jasper: You know now, don't you, that even a poor monotonous chorister and grinder of music – in his niche – may be troubled with some stray sort of ambition, aspiration, restlessness, dissatisfaction, what shall we call it?

Edwin: Yes, dear Jack.

Jasper: And you will remember?

(By this time they have embraced ... right hands held, left hands on shoulders.)

Edwin: My dear Jack, I only ask you, am I likely to forget what you have said with so much feeling?

Jasper: Take it as a warning then. (*Slapping him on the back and changing the solemn mood.*) Shall we go for a walk in the churchyard?

Edwin: You go Jack. You wouldn't mind my slipping off to the Nuns' House? I have a present for Rosa. It must be presented tonight, or the poetry is gone. It's against the regulations for me to call at night, but not to leave a packet. Well?

Jasper: Nothing half so sweet in life, Ned. Come.

(They exit together ... the mood now jovial.)

(Lights)

Scene 4: Cemetery

(Stony and stoned, Durdles leans against a tombstone while a hideous boy in rags hurls stones at him.)

Jasper: What are you doing to the man?

Deputy: Making a cockshy of him.

Jasper: Give me those stones in your hand.

Deputy: Yes, I'll give 'em down your throat. I'll smash your eye if you don't look out!

Jasper: Baby-devil that you are. What has the man done to you?

Deputy: He won't go home.

Jasper: What is that to you?

Deputy: He gives me há-penny to pelt him home if I ketches him out too late...*(chanting)* Widdy widdy wen! I-ket-ches-im-out-ar-ter-ten.

(With a comprehensive sweep on the last word and one more delivery to Durdles, he runs off.)

Jasper: Durdles ... Durdles, do you know this thing ... this child?

Durdles: Deputy?

Jasper: Is that its ... his ... name?

Durdles: Deputy. He's man-servant up at Travellers' Two-penny in Gas Works Garding.

Deputy: *(Watching from afar.)* All us man-servants at Travellers' Lodgings is named Deputy.

Durdles: You never cried, "Widdy warning," before you begun tonight.

Deputy: Yer lie, I did. *(Taking aim)*

Jasper: Hold your hand and don't throw while I stand so near him or I'll kill you! *(Deputy runs off.)* Come, Durdles, let me walk home with you tonight. Shall I carry your bundle?

Durdles: Not on any account! *(gathering tools and placing in sack)* Durdles was making his reflections here when you come up, sir, surrounded by his works, like a popular author. I've just finished taking care of the late Mrs. Sapsea. Of course she lies under the Cathedral being departed of His Lord High Mayor. But, all safe and sound, sir, and all Durdles work. Of the common folk, that is merely bundled up in turf and brambles, the less said the better. A poor lot, soon forgot.

Jasper: This creature, Deputy; is he to follow us?

Durdles: Never mind him, sir. I gives him an object in life.

Jasper: At which he takes aim?

Durdles: That's it sir!

Jasper: Yours is a curious existence, Durdles.

Durdles: Yours is another. (*gruffly*)

Jasper: Well, inasmuch as my lot is cast in the same old earthly, chilly, never changing place, yes. But there is much more mystery and interest in your connection with the Cathedral than in mine. Indeed, I am beginning to have some idea of asking you to let me go about with you sometimes, and see some of these old nooks in which you pass your days.

Durdles: All right.

Jasper: What I dwell upon most is the remarkable accuracy with which you would find out where people are buried.

Durdles: Everybody knows where to find Durdles, when he's wanted.

Deputy: (*from distance*) Widdy-widdy-warning.

Durdles: You best be on your way now, sir. Durdles will find his way.

Jasper: All right, and thank you. Good night. (*They part.*)

Deputy: Me thinks that Mr. Jarspers the one that needs watching.

(*Lights*)

Scene 5: Minor Canon Corner

(*Entering the drawing room following dinner.*)

Jasper: Thank you, for that delightful supper.

Twinkleton: Yes, thank you, Reverend.

Crisparkle: You're more than kind.

(*Rosa and Neville step to the side while Edwin is admiring Helena.*)

Rosa: I love your sister, Mr. Landless.

Neville: I've never been jealous of my sister until this minute, Miss Bud.

Rosa: I hope you'll both be happy here?

Neville: You doubt it?

Rosa: Cloisterham must seem so cooped-up and musty after Ceylon. What's it like?

Neville: Ceylon ... Ceylon is ... Hell. England, if people like you live in it, must be Heaven.

Edwin: *(Who has been watching uncomfortably.)* Rosa!

(Edwin goes to Rosa as Neville goes to Crisparkle, whispers to him and they go to side stage as center dims.)

(Crisparkle and Neville)

Neville: I thank you again sir, for leaving your party to speak with me. You'll find that I am a man of impulse and must speak when aroused.

Crisparkle: Go ahead, Mr. Neville.

Neville: You know that we, my sister and I, come from Ceylon.

Crisparkle: Yes.

Neville: We lived with a stepfather there. Our mother died there when we were little children. We have had a wretched existence. She made him our guardian and he was a miserly wretch who grudged us food to eat and clothes to wear. It is well he died when he did, or I might have killed him. I surprise your sir?

Crisparkle: You shock me; unspeakably shock me.

Neville: You never saw him beat your sister, I have seen him beat mine, more than once ... or twice, and I never forgot it.

Crisparkle: Nothing, not even a beloved and beautiful sister's tears under dastardly ill-usage, could justify those horrible expressions that you used.

Neville: I am sorry that I used them, and especially to you, sir. I beg to recall them. But permit me to set you right on one point. You spoke of my sister's tears. My sister would have let me tear her to pieces before she would have let him believe that he could make her shed a tear. *(controlling himself)* Perhaps you will think it strange, sir, that I should so soon ask you to allow me to confide in you?

Crisparkle: Quite the contrary. I invite your confidence.

Neville: You have invited it, sir, without knowing it. The truth is, we came here, my sister and I, to quarrel with you, and affront you and break away again.

Crisparkle: Really?

Neville: You see. We could not know what you were beforehand, sir. Could we?

Crisparkle: Clearly not.

Neville: And having liked no one else with whom we have ever been brought into contact, we had made up our minds not to like you.

Crisparkle: Really?

Neville: But we do like you, sir. You are kind and I am grateful to you. And I ask you to please help me subdue my passions and that which is tigerish in my blood.

Crisparkle: Of that, Mr. Neville, you may be sure. I don't preach more than I can help, and I will not repay your confidence with a sermon. But I entreat you to bear in mind, very seriously and steadily, that if I am to do you any good, it can only be with your own assistance; and that you can only render that, efficiently, by seeking the aid of Heaven.

Neville: I will try to do my part, sir.

Crisparkle: And, Mr. Neville, I will try to do mine. Here is my hand on it. May God bless our endeavors!

Neville: Thank you, sir. *(as they turn to go in)* One more question, please, before we go in? This Mr. Edwin Drood, sir; I think that's the name?

Crisparkle: Quite correct, D-r-double-o-d.

Neville: Does he – or did he – read with you, sir?

Crisparkle: Never, Mr. Neville. He comes here visiting his relation, Mr. Jasper.

Neville: Is Miss Bud his relation too, sir?

Crisparkle: No, they are engaged to be married.

Neville: Oh.

Crisparkle: They were both orphaned very early in life and their fathers, being best of friends, made all the arrangements. Betrothed at birth, you might say.

Neville: Oh! That's it, is it. *(some what aside)* I understand his air of proprietorship now.

(They return to the party. Rosa is singing with Jasper looking on intently. As the song continues, Rosa becomes obviously more nervous and unsteady until she finally breaks down.)

Rosa: I can't bear this! I am frightened! Take me away!

(Helena takes her to a sofa.)

Helena: It's nothing; it's all over; don't speak to her for one minute and she is well.

Edwin: Rosa's not used to an audience; that's the fact. She got nervous and couldn't hold out. Besides, Jack, you are such a conscientious master, and require so much, that I believe you make her afraid of you. No wonder.

Helena: No wonder.

Edwin: There, Jack, you hear. You would be afraid of him, under similar circumstances, wouldn't you, Miss Landless?

Helena: Not under any circumstances.

(Jasper exits.)

Edwin: Jack's gone, Rosa. I am more than half afraid he didn't like to be charged with being the monster who had frightened you.

Twinkleton: Well, look at the time. It is indeed late hours for finding ourselves outside the walls of the Nun's house, Mr. Crisparkle.

Crisparkle: Yes, of course. I will see you ladies to your gate. Gentlemen, please accept my comforts for a few moments while I walk these ladies across the courtyard.

Ed/Neville: Of course. Ladies. Goodnight, etc...

Neville: Do you stay here long, Mr. Drood?

Edwin: Not this time. I leave for London tomorrow. But I shall be here off and on until next mid-summer. Then I shall take my leave of Cloisterham and England for many a long day.

Neville: Are you going abroad?

Edwin: Going to wake up Egypt a little.

Neville: Are you reading?

Edwin: Reading? (*with contempt*) No. Doing, working, engineering. My small patrimony was left a part of the capital of the Firm I am with, by my father, a former partner; and I am a charge upon the Firm until I come of age. And then I step into my modest share in the concern. Jack – you met him at dinner – is, until then, my guardian and trustee.

Neville: I heard from Mr. Crisparkle of your other good fortune.

Edwin: What do you mean by my other good fortune?

Neville: I hope there is no offense, Mr. Drood, in my innocently referring to your betrothal.

Edwin: By George! Everybody in this chattering old Cloisterham refers to it. I wonder no public-house has been set up, with my portrait for the sign of “The Betrothed’s Head.”

Neville: I am not accountable for Mr. Crisparkle’s mentioning the matter to me, quite openly.

Edwin: No. That’s true. You are not.

Neville: But, I am accountable for mentioning it to you. And I did so, on the supposition that you could not fail to be highly proud of it.

Edwin: I don’t know, Mr. Neville, that what people are proudest of, they usually talk most about; I don’t know either, that what they are proudest of, they most like other people to talk about. But I live a busy life, and I speak under correction by you “readers”, who ought to know everything, and I daresay do.

Neville: It does not seem to me very civil in you to reflect upon a stranger who comes here, not having your advantages, to try to make up for lost time. But, to be sure, I was not brought up in “busy life”, and my ideas of civility were formed among Heathens.

(tension building)

Edwin: Perhaps the best civility, whatever kind of people we are brought up among, is to mind our own business. If you will set me that example, I promise to follow it.

Neville: Do you know that you take a great deal too much upon yourself? And in that part of the world I come from, you would be called to account for it.

Edwin: By whom for instance?

Jasper: *(re-entering)* Ned, Ned, Ned! We must have no more of this. I don't like this. I have overheard high words between you two. Remember, my dear boy, you are almost in a position of host tonight. And Mr. Neville, you will pardon me; but I appeal to you to govern your temper as well. Now, what is amiss? Let there be nothing amiss and the question is superfluous.

Edwin: So far as I'm concerned, Jack, there is no anger in me.

Neville: Nor in me Mr. Jasper.

Jasper: All over, then! Now, my bachelor gatehouse is not a stones throw from Minor Canon Corner, and the heater is on the fire, and the wine and glasses are on the table. Ned, we will carry Mr. Neville in with us, to take a stirring cup.

Edwin: With all my heart, Jack.

Neville: And with all mine, Mr. Jasper.

(They exit.)

(Lights)

Scene 6: Dressing room

(Rosa and Helena preparing for bed.)

Rosa: I'm feeling much better now, thank you.

Helena: It is I who should be thanking you.

Rosa: Me, why?

Helena: You will be a friend to me, won't you?

Rosa: Of course. *(They embrace.)* And you will be a friend to me.

Helena: *(smiles and nods)* But, everyone seems to admire you. And Mr. Drood?

Rosa: Oh, Eddy.

Helena: Why, surely he must love you with all his heart.

Rosa: Oh, well, I suppose he does. I am sure I have no right to say he doesn't. Perhaps it's my fault. It's so ridiculous.

Helena: What is?

Rosa: We are, a ridiculous couple and always quarreling.

Helena: Why?

Rosa: Because we both know we are ridiculous, my dear. *(They laugh.)*

Helena: Who is Mr. Jasper?

Rosa: Eddy's uncle and my music master.

Helena: You do not love him?

Rosa: Ugh! *(with horror)*

Helena: You know that he loves you?

Rosa: Oh, don't, don't, don't! Don't tell me of it! He terrifies me. He haunts my thoughts like a dreadful ghost. I feel that I am never safe from him. I feel as if he could pass through the wall when spoken of.

Helena: Tell me more.

Rosa: Yes, I will. But hold me the while, and stay with me afterwards.

(Lights)

Scene 7: Jasper's Parlor

(Edwin and Neville are finishing goblets of wine while Jasper prepares more ...)

Jasper: You recognize that picture, Mr. Neville?

Neville: I recognize it, but it is far from flattering the original.

Jasper: Oh, you are hard upon it! It was done by Ned who made me a present of it.

Neville: I am sorry for that, Mr. Drood. If I had known I was in the artist's presence ...

Edwin: Oh, a joke, sir, a mere joke. A little humoring of Rosa's points. I'm going to paint her gravely, one of these days, if she's good.

(Edwin yawns as Neville becomes excited. Jasper looks observantly from one to the other, slightly smiles, and goes back to mixing his jug of mulled wine. It seems to take a lot of mixing and compounding.)

Edwin: I suppose, Mr. Neville, ... I suppose that if you painted a picture of your lady love

Neville: I can't paint.

Edwin: That's your misfortune.

Jasper: Come, we are to drink to my nephew ... Ned. As it is his boot that is in the stirrup ... metaphorically ... our stirrup cup is to be devoted to him.

(They drink ... Jasper sets the example by nearly emptying his cup. The other two follow suit.)

Edwin: Thank you both, very much. But it may not be as easy as all that. *(to portrait)* We've got to hit it off yet. *(snaps fingers)* Haven't we, Rosa?

Neville: It might have been better for Mr. Drood to have known some hardships?

Edwin: Pray, why might it have been better for Mr. Drood to have known some hardships?

Jasper: Ay, let us know why.

Neville: Because they might have made him more sensible of good fortune.

Edwin: Have you known hardships, may I ask?

Neville: I have.

Edwin: And what have they made you sensible of?

Neville: I have told you once before tonight.

Edwin: You have done nothing of the sort.

Neville: I tell you I have. That you take a great too much upon yourself.

Edwin: You added something else to that, if I remember?

Neville: Yes, I did say something else.

Edwin: Say it again.

Neville: I said that in the part of the world that I come from, you would be called to account for it.

Edwin: Only there?

Neville: Say here then, say anywhere. Your vanity is intolerable; your conceit is beyond endurance. You talk as if you were some rare and precious prize, instead of a common boaster. You don't deserve a ... (*referring to portrait*)

Edwin: So, that's what it is? Well, we English do not encourage foreign fellows with dark skins to admire our girls! (*Edwin attacks Neville who retaliates by grabbing ornamental dagger.*)

Jasper: Ned, my dear fellow! I entreat you, I command you, be still. Mr. Neville (*who is in a state of shock*) ... for shame.

(*Neville drops dagger and rushes out.*)

Edwin: Jack! (*Who has staggered.*)

Jasper: Oh, Edwin. (*touching his face*) He meant murder!

Edwin: No, Jack.

Jasper: Murder!

(*Lights*)

Scene 8: Rev. Crisparkle's Study

(Crisparkle and Miss Twinkleton)

Twinkleton: I must say, Reverend, this news is most distressing.

Crisparkle: You must calm yourself, Miss Twinkleton.

Twinkleton: Calm myself! With a murderous Heathen in our midst.

Crisparkle: It is merely the case of two young men letting their passions take the better of them. Mr. Landless is very repentant and Mr. Drood has returned to London.

Twinkleton: But what is to happen when those two meet up again? I'm only thinking of the welfare of Miss Bud.

Crisparkle: Of course you are, Miss Twinkleton.

Twinkleton: And the young man in question's sister ... of course.

Crisparkle: Of course, Miss Twinkleton. But now, please, I must excuse myself.

Twinkleton: Of course, Mr. Crisparkle. I will heed your advise ... until the next time.
(She exits)

(Neville enters ... Crisparkle goes to him.)

Crisparkle: Neville, clearing your name so early upon your arrival in Cloisterham is not what I had in mind when I took you in as a pupil.

Neville: I am sorry to disappoint you, sir, but it would be far worse to deceive you; I admire Miss Bud, sir, so very much, that I cannot bear her being treated with conceit or indifference; and even if I did not feel that I had an injury against young Drood on my account, I should feel that I had an injury against him on hers.

Crisparkle: The young lady of whom you speak is, as you know, shortly to be married; therefore your admiration is outrageously misplaced. Moreover, it is monstrous that you should take upon yourself to be the young lady's champion against her chosen husband.

Neville: I love Rosa, sir. I love her with all my heart!

Crisparkle: Neville! You must learn to fight down this sudden infatuation!

Neville: But ...

Crisparkle: Neville!

Neville: I'm sorry.

Crisparkle: All right, but it's no use being sorry if you don't learn to control your temper. You go on now; I'll speak to Mr. Jasper.

(Lights)

Scene 9: Jasper's Parlor

(Jasper laid out in a not so comfortable looking way.)

Jasper: *(crying out)* What is the matter? Who did it?

Crisparkle: It is only I, Jasper. I am sorry to have disturbed you.

Jasper: *(recovering)* I was dreaming at a great rate, and am glad to be disturbed from an indigestive after-dinner sleep. Not to mention that you are always welcome.

Crisparkle: Thank you. I am not confident that my subject will at first sight be quite as welcome as myself; but I am a minister of peace and, in a word, Jasper, I want to establish peace between these two young fellows.

Jasper: *(perplexed after a silence)* How?

Crisparkle: For the "How" I come to you. I want to ask you to do me the great favor and service of interposing with your nephew. I have already done so with Mr. Neville, and getting him to agree to shake hands. I know what a good-natured fellow he is and what influence you have on him.

(Jasper turns perplexed to the fire. Crisparkle looks on also perplexed for he denotes in Jasper, which could hardly be, some close internal calculation.)

Crisparkle: I know that you are not prepossessed in Mr. Neville's favor

Jasper: You have cause to say so. I am indeed not!

Crisparkle: Undoubtedly; but I have exacted a very solemn promise from him as to his future demeanor toward your nephew, and I'm sure he will keep it.

Jasper: You are always responsible and trustworthy, Mr. Crisparkle. Do you really feel sure that you can answer for him so confidently?

Crisparkle: I do.

Jasper: Then you relieve my mind of a great dread and a heavy weight. I will do it. I will do it. Do you keep a diary?

Crisparkle: A line for a day, not more.

Jasper: Let me read you something. *(Takes out book. Reads from diary.)* " Past midnight – After what I have just now seen, I have a morbid dread upon me for some horrible consequences resulting to my dear boy, that I cannot reason with or in any way contend against. All my efforts are in vain. The demoniacal passion of this Neville Landless, his strength in his fury, and his savage rage for the destruction of its object, appall me. So profound is the impression, that twice since I have gone to my dear boy's room to assure myself of his sleeping safely, and not lying dead in his blood." *(end reading)*

Crisparkle: My!

Jasper: Again and again I have relapsed into these moods. But I have now your assurance at my back and will make it an anecdote to my black humors. I'll invite both boys to dinner on Christmas Eve, what better day, and let there be only we three, and I'll let us shake hands all around and say no more about it.

Crisparkle: You may expect Mr. Neville then.

Jasper: I count upon his coming.

(Lights)

Scene 10: Garden

(Rosa and Edwin)

Rosa: My dear Eddy. I want to say something very serious to you. I've been thinking about it for a long, long time.

Edwin: I want to be serious with you, Rosa. Serious and earnest, I mean.

Rosa: Thank you Eddy. And you will not think me unkind because I begin, will you?

Edwin: I hope I am not ungenerous to you, Rosa.

Rosa: And there is no fear of our quarreling, is there? Because, Eddy, we have so much reason to be very lenient with each other.

Edwin: We will be, Rosa.

Rosa: That's good. Eddy, let us be courageous. Let us change to brother and sister from this day forth.

Edwin: Never be husband and wife?

Rosa: Never.

Edwin: Of course I know that this has been in both our minds, Rosa, and of course I am in honor bound to confess freely that it does not originate with you.

Rosa: Nor with you, Dear.

Edwin: Well, that's settled. Ha, Ha. I feel like the weight of the world has just lifted from my shoulders.

Rosa: And I as well, Eddy. Hurrah!

Edwin: Hurrah! Sister.

Rosa: Hurrah! Brother. *(They both laugh.)*

Edwin: Well, what do we do now? If only we'd known yesterday.

Rosa: But we did know yesterday, and so many yesterdays.

Edwin: I'll have to break the news to Jack. He'll be disappointed.

Rosa: No, Eddy! Not right now. Let it wait. We don't want to spoil his Christmas.

Edwin: Right you are, Rosa. *(They embrace unaware that they are being watched by Jasper and Neville from different view points.)*

(Lights)

Scene 11: Cemetery – “Durdles and the Crypts”

Jasper: Durdles.

Durdles: Who've you come to bury, Mr. Choirmaster? *(Sharpening chisel with file.)*

Jasper: Don't you remember Durdles, you promised to take me 'round to the crypts by moonlight?

Durdles: It's a wonder to Durdles you ain't tired of the Cathedral.

Jasper: I've a mind to see the spirits at midnight.

Durdles: You bring the spirits and Durdles will show ye around.

Jasper: I noticed it was a cold night. *(producing bottle)*

Durdles: It's always a cold night to Durdles. *(takes sip)* Ooh, we'll take them spirits. Come on.

Deputy: Widdy widdy warning ... widdy widdy warning.

Durdles: Away with ye now. Durdles has a reason to be out arter ten tonight. This way, Mr. Jasper.

(They exit ... Deputy thinks about leaving but then follows.)

(Lights)

Scene 12: Into the Crypt

Durdles: *(Opening gate and entering crypt.)* Here we are. Beware that lime, Mr. Jasper.

Jasper: What they call quick lime?

Durdles: Quick enough to eat your bones.

Jasper: Is there anything new down here, Durdles?

Durdles: Anything old, I thinks ye mean. This ain't a place for novelty. Thars an old-un *(motioning to a tomb - producing hammer)* Now, lookee here. You pitch a note when you sing, don't you? So, Durdles sounds his note. *(begins tapping)* Empty...solid...still solid...*(to crypt on floor)* empty.

Jasper: Come on, Durdles. We'll freeze here.

Durdles: Oh, Durdles won't freeze. *(Taking another swig, he staggers and sits, promptly passing out. Jasper quickly takes Durdles' keys and removes one. Makes wax impression. Then, replaces Durdles' bottle with an identical one form his pocket.)*

Deputy: Widdy widdy warning. *(from distance)*

Jasper: Durdles ... Durdles wake up. It's past one o'clock.

Durdles: What ... nothing like this has ever happened to Durdles before.

Jasper: Come, let's go. It's late.

Durdles: Right, sir. *(Durdles searches for keys, confused that he's missed one.)*
What the ... ahh there you are. *(They pass through and Durdles locks the gate.)*

(As they exit, Deputy appears as if he's been watching the whole time.)

(Lights)

Scene 13: Street – “Edwin and Princess Puffer”

(Edwin comes upon the opium woman in a heap in a doorway.)

Edwin: Are you ill?

Princess: No dearie.

Edwin: What is the matter that you stay here in the cold so long?

Princess: I came looking for someone ... but I ain't found him yet.

Edwin: This is no time to look for anyone. There's a storm brewing. You best go home and get warm.

Princess: I need three and sixpence to get home. I came here from London looking for a needle in a haystack and I ain't found it. Look'ee here, dearie; give me three and sixpence, and don't be afeard of me. I'll get back to London and trouble no one. Only three and six pence. *(Gives her the money.)*
Bless ye! Bless ye! Hark'ee, what's your Christian name?

Edwin: Edwin.

Princess: Edwin, Edwin, Edwin ... is the short of that name Eddy?

Edwin: It is sometimes called so.

Princess: Just be thankful that it ain't “Ned.”

Edwin: Why?

Princess: Because it's a bad name to have just now.

Edwin: How a bad name?

Princess: A threatened name, a dangerous name.

Edwin: The proverb says that threatened men live long.

Princess: Then Ned is so threatened he'll live forever.

(Edwin exits bewildered.)

(Lights)

Scene 14: Jasper's Parlor

(Jasper enters. The two young men are waiting and are obviously on good terms.)

Neville: Ah, Jack.

Jasper: Sorry I'm late, boys. Christmas Eve services, you know. I see you've made yourselves to home.

Edwin: Of course, Jack.

Neville: Thank you very much, Mr. Jasper.

Jasper: Is everything ... all right.

Edwin: Couldn't be better. *(Neville agrees.)*

Jasper: My, what a heavy stick.

Neville: I'm leaving tomorrow for a walking tour.

Jasper: Alone?

Neville: Yes.

Jasper: And when do you return?

Neville: A fortnight ... I think.

Jasper: Well, I hope this storm doesn't interfere with what looks like a promising adventure.

Edwin: And what a great storm it is. I must go down to the river weir to see this fit of nature unchecked. You don't mind ... do you Jack?

Jasper: No, I don't mind. I'll have a hot drink waiting for you upon your return.

Edwin: Come on, Neville.

Neville: Goodnight, Mr. Jasper.

Edwin: Come on!

Jasper: Be careful! And mind the riverbank. *(Calling after them.)*

(Lights)

Scene 15: STORM – Reported by Deputy

Deputy: Not such power of wind has blown for many a winter night. It stormed ... it stormed for hours; uprooted trees, shrubs and flowers. Chimneys topple in the streets, and people hold to posts and corners, and to one another, to keep themselves upon their feet. All through the night, the wind blows, and abates not. But early in the morning, when there is barely enough light in the east to dim the stars, it begins to lull. And at full daylight it is dead.

(Lights)

Scene 16: On Street

Jasper: Crisparkle! Crisparkle! Where is my nephew?

Crisparkle: He has not been here. Is he not with you?

Jasper: No. He went down to the river last night with Neville Landless to look at the storm and he has not come back. Call Mr. Neville.

Crisparkle: He left this morning early.

Jasper: Left this morning?

Crisparkle: Wait! Here he comes now.

(Neville enters.)

Jasper: What are you doing here? *(shocked)*

Neville: I got detained so I returned to share breakfast with you, Mr. Crisparkle.

Jasper: *(composed)* Where is my nephew?

Neville: Where is your nephew? Why do you ask me?

Jasper: You left with him last night.

Neville: Undoubtedly, to see the action of the wind and the river!

Crisparkle: What followed? How long did you stay there?

Neville: About ten minutes. We then walked together to your house and he left me at the door.

Jasper: Did he say he was going back to the river?

Neville: No. He said he was going straight back to your house, Mr. Jasper.
(tension)

Crisparkle: I think the first thing we ought to do is organize a search ... before we start throwing around accusations.

(Lights)

Scene 17: The Search – Reported by Deputy

Deputy: All the livelong day, the search went on; upon the river, with barge and pole, and drag and net; upon the muddy and rushy shore with jackboots, hatchet, spade, and dogs. Even at night, the river was speckled with lanterns and lurid with fires. Far off creeks, into which the tide washed as it changed, had their knots of watchers. But no trace of Edwin Drood revisited the light of the sun.

(Lights)

Scene 18: Rev. Crisparkle's Study

Neville: But I don't understand.

Crisparkle: Mr. Neville you must listen to me. Without any physical evidence, there can be no formal charges against you; this is true. But the unseen charges, the accusations and prejudices can be just as real and damaging. For your own safety as well as that of your sister, I beg of you, please do as I say.
(Neville bows in consent.) I have made arrangements for you in an apartment in London. You will be able to carry on your studies and your

Crisp. (Cont): sister and I will visit you on a regular basis. God willing this whole matter will pass.

Neville: Do you believe in me, Reverend Crisparkle?

Crisparkle: *(pause)* Yes, Neville, I do.

(Lights)

Scene 19: Garden - "Spot on the Sundial"

(Jasper has come upon Rosa ... reading in the garden.)

Jasper: I have been waiting for some time to be summoned back to my duty near you.

Rosa: Duty, Mr. Jasper?

Jasper: The duty of teaching you music.

Rosa: I have left off that study.

Jasper: Not left off ... but discontinued.

Rosa: I am resolved to leave off!

Jasper: Dearest Rosa ... Charming Rosa ...

Rosa: I do not wish to hear you.

Jasper: We cannot always do as we wish, without harming others. *(takes her arm, she stiffens, he seats her)* Please. I do not forget how many windows command a view of us. I will not touch you again. Sit down; my beloved; and there will be no mighty wonder in your music master's leaning idly on the sundial and talking to you. Rosa, even when my dear Edwin was affianced to you, I loved you. In the distasteful work of the day, in the wakeful misery of the night, I loved you madly. Had the ties between me and my dear boy been less strong, I might have swept even him from your side.

Rosa: What do you mean?

Jasper: Judge for yourself whether I should allow another man to love you. I have devoted myself to discovering Edwin's murderer. I have worked patiently to wind a net around him. It is slowly winding as I speak.

Rosa: I know Mr. Landless is innocent.

Jasper: Circumstantial evidence may accumulate so strongly, even against an innocent man, that it may slay him.

Rosa: Oh!

Jasper: So, you care enough. Rosa, I give you my fidelity to my dear, dead, boy; I give you my vengeance, my pleas, my despair; if only you would give me yourself and in exchange I give you Neville Landless' life; because I love you, I love you, I love you ...

Rosa: No! No! No! *(runs in desperation)*

(Lights)

Scene 20: Rev. Crisparkle's Study

(Crisparkle, Helena, and Rosa)

Rosa: Mr. Crisparkle! Mr. Crisparkle!

Crisparkle: Miss Bud! You're trembling.

Rosa: I'm afraid.

Crisparkle: But who's frightened you like this?

Rosa: Jasper says that if I refuse his love, he'll send Neville to the gallows.

Crisparkle: Helena, send for your brother immediately! But, remind him to let caution be his guide.

Helena: Yes, sir.

Crisparkle: Now, Rosa. *(comforting her)* It's time we set a trap for Mr. Jasper.

(Lights)

Scene 21: The Crypt

(We return to the crypt and find Jasper leaning over grave (pit) with pole and brings up Edwin's watch.)

Jasper: Carefully placed ... this will secure your fate, Neville Landless.

(As he laughs with glee at the prospect of “planting” it on Neville, all enter from different places surrounding him.)

Neville: *(with gun)* Stop right there!

Rosa: *(rushing to grave)* Edwin!?!

Jasper: *(Jasper grabs Rosa and pulls gun trying to escape through gate.)*
Everybody stay back. *(He inches towards the gate entrance with Rosa)*

Neville: Rosa!

(She breaks away ... Neville shoots and hits Jasper. He reels, shoots into the air and falls.)

(Neville and Rosa embrace and Reverend Crisparkle looks into grave and exclaims)

Crisparkle: And where does this all bring us?

Deputy: *(looks to audience with devilish grin and responds)* It brings us to the end of ... the Mystery of Edwin Drood.

(Lights)

Finis!

P.D.W.

The chance to write an adaptation of A. Conan Doyle's The Sign of Four was too rich to pass up. This would be the second adventure of Sherlock Holmes and his trusty sidekick, Watson, following A Study in Scarlet, and my personal favorite. The great detective had not appeared on the Virginia City stage since 1991, when I played "Watson" to my friend, Brian King's "Holmes" in The Hound of the Baskervilles. Everybody loves Sherlock Holmes and the time was right so I gladly donned my tan suit and Homberg hat and followed the talented actor, Russell Lewis, as he picked up the magnifying glass and pipe to decipher The Sign of Four.

This project proved extremely challenging because of the intense exposition. Long descriptive passages had to be whittled down for time and interest sake. But all material came directly from the text including the most often used and famous opening scenes of Holmes examining Watson's watch.

The controversial topic of Holmes' "addiction" was something that had to be dealt with delicately. I chose to have him step behind a dressing screen, although, I have seen productions, both stage and screen, where he will "shoot-up" right in front of the audience. I thought this an adequate compromise. Only a few quipped, "You made Sherlock Holmes look like a drug addict." The obvious answer, "read the book." The action and dialogue came straight from the original text and to eliminate that element of Holmes' character would be, I felt, an insult to the author.

I did take one liberty, though, and that was at the end. In the original, Jonathan Small throws the whole treasure in the river. I had him hold a portion back, hidden in his wooden leg, as "eye candy" for the audience and one extra "boost" to the detective's skill. Purists, please forgive me.

The Sign of Four

By

A. Conan Doyle

Adapted by

Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

June 2000

Cast of Characters

Sherlock Holmes

Dr. Watson

Mrs. Hudson

Miss Mary Morstan

Thaddeus Sholto

Bartholomew Sholto

Athelney Jones

Wiggins

Mrs. Smith

Jonathan Small

Tonga

Note: 221-B Baker Street. The lodgings of the great detective, Sherlock Holmes, and his ever present biographer and friend, Dr. Watson, have so often been portrayed in word, on stage, and in film that a detailed description is unnecessary. How elaborate, or sparse, can be left to the individual designer. I would, however, emphasize an overstuffed chair on one side of the stage for Mr. Holmes and a writing desk opposite for Dr. Watson.

Baker Street

(As lights rise, we hear the drone of a bow being lazily drawn across a single violin string. The figure of the Great Detective is slumped in his chair performing this act. Dr. Watson is at his desk attempting to write. Annoyed, he slams down a paperweight jarring Holmes who, glaring, rises, throws down his instrument and begins to pace. With a distinct visual interaction between the two, Holmes goes to bookshelf, retrieves syringe and disappears behind dressing screen. Dr. Watson, with head in hands, delivers his first line. A moment later, Holmes reappears, somewhat refreshed, and the dialogue continues.)

Watson: Which is it today ... morphine or cocaine?

Holmes: *(re-emerging)* It is cocaine. A seven-percent solution. Would you care to try it?

Watson: No, indeed. My constitution has not got over the Afghan campaign yet. I cannot afford to throw any extra strain upon it.

Holmes: Perhaps you are right, Watson. I suppose that its influence is physically a bad one. I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment.

Watson: But consider! Count the cost. Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited but it is a pathological and morbid process which involves increased tissue-change and may at least leave a permanent weakness. You know, too, what a black reaction comes over you. Surely, the game is hardly worth the candle. Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed? Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable.

Holmes: My mind rebels against stagnation. Give me a problem, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather, created it, for I am the only one in the world.

Watson: The only unofficial detective?

Holmes: The only unofficial consulting detective.

- Watson: You speak of observation and deduction. Surely, the one to some extent implies the other?
- Holmes: Why hardly. For example, observation shows me that you have been to the Wigmore Street Post Office this morning, but deduction lets me know that when there, you dispatched a telegram.
- Watson: Right. Right on both points! But I confess that I don't see how you arrived at it. It was a sudden impulse upon my part and I have mentioned it to no one.
- Holmes: It is simplicity itself; so absurdly simple that an explanation is superfluous; and yet it may serve to define the limits of observation and of deduction. Observation tells me that you have a little reddish mold adhering to your instep. Just opposite the Wigmore Street Post Office they have taken up the pavement and thrown up some earth which lies in such a way that it is difficult to avoid treading in it in entering. The earth is of this particular reddish tint which is found, as far as I know, nowhere else in the neighborhood. So much is observation. The rest is deduction.
- Watson: How, then, did you deduce the telegram?
- Holmes: Why, of course, I knew that you had not written a letter, since I sat opposite you all morning. I see also in your open desk there that you have a sheet of stamps and a thick bundle of postcards. What could you go into the post office for, then, but to send a wire? Eliminate all the factors, and the one which remains must be the truth.
- Watson: In this case it certainly is so. Would you think me impertinent if I was to put your theories to a more severe test?
- Holmes: On the contrary, it would prevent me from taking a second dose of cocaine.
- Watson: I have heard you say that it is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the impress of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it. Now, I have here a watch which has recently come into my possession. Would you have the kindness to let me have an opinion upon the character or habits of the late owner?
- Holmes: *(Accepts watch and quickly examines with glass pulled from pocket of dressing gown.)* There are hardly any data. The watch has been recently cleaned, which robs me of my most suggestive facts.
- Watson: You are right. It was cleaned before being sent to me.

Holmes: Though unsatisfactory, my research has not been entirely barren. Subject to your correction, I should judge that the watch belonged to your elder brother, who inherited it from your father.

Watson: That you gather from the H.W. upon the back?

Holmes: Quite so. The “W” suggests your own name. The date of the watch is nearly fifty years back, and the initials are as old as the watch; so it was made for the last generation. Jewelry usually descends to the eldest son and he is most likely to have the same name as the father. Your father has, if I remember right, been dead many years. It has, therefore, been in the hands of your eldest brother.

Watson: Right so far. Anything else?

Holmes: *(very clinical)* He was a man of untidy habits ... very untidy and careless. He was left with good prospects, but he threw away his chances, lived for some time in poverty with occasional short intervals of prosperity, and finally, taking to drink, he died. That is all I can gather.

Watson: *(excited)* This is unworthy of you, Holmes. I could not have believed that you would descend to this. You have made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother and now pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way. You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch.

Holmes: My dear, Doctor, pray accept my apologies. Viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you. I assure you that I never even knew that you had a brother until you handed me the watch.

Watson: Then, how in the name of all that is wonderful did you get these facts? *(resolved)* They are absolutely correct in every particular.

Holmes: Ah, that is good luck. I could only say what was the balance of probability. I did not at all expect to be so accurate.

Watson: But it was not mere guess work?

Holmes: *(becoming increasingly excited/agitated as the “deduction” unravels)* I never guess! It is a shocking habit ... destructive to the logical faculty. I began by stating that your brother was careless. When you observe the lower part of the watch case, you notice that it is not only dented in two places but it is cut and marked all over from the habit of keeping other hard objects such as coins or keys, in the same pocket. Surely, it is no great feat to assume that a man who treats a fifty-guinea watch so

Holmes (Cont): cavalierly must be a careless man. Neither is it a very far-fetched inference that a man who inherits one article of such value is pretty well provided for in other respects. It is customary for pawnbrokers in England, when they take a watch, to scratch the numbers of the ticket with a pinpoint upon the inside of the case. It is more handy than a label as there is no risk of the number being lost or transposed. There are no less than four such numbers visible to my lens on the inside of this case. Inference ... that your brother was often at low water. Secondary inference ... that he had occasional bursts of prosperity, or he could not have redeemed the pledge. Finally, I ask you to look at the inner plate, which contains the keyhole. Look at the thousands of scratches all around the hole ... marks where the key has slipped. What sober man's key could have scored those marks? But you will never see a drunkard's watch without them. He winds it at night and leaves these traces of his unsteady hand. *(slaps watch into Watson's hand and collapses)* Where is the mystery in all this?

Watson: It is clear as daylight. I regret the injustice which I did you. *(returns to desk)* May I ask whether you have any professional inquiry on foot at present?

Holmes: None. Hence the cocaine. I cannot live without brainwork. What else is there to live for? Stand at the window here. Was there ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world? *(deep in melancholy)*

Mrs. H.: *(entering with card on salver)* A young lady for you, sir.

Holmes: *(taking card)* Miss Mary Morstan. Hum, I have no recollection of the name. *(looks to Watson who shrugs)* Ask the young lady to step up, Mrs. Hudson. Don't go, Doctor. I should prefer that you remain.

(Enter Mary)

Miss Morstan, I am Sherlock Holmes ... and this is my good friend and colleague, Dr. Watson. Please be seated.

Mary: I have come to you, Mr. Holmes, because you once enabled my employer, Mrs. Cecil Forrester, to unravel a little domestic complication. She was much impressed by your kindness and skill.

Holmes: Mrs. Cecil Forrester? I believe that I was of some slight service to her. The case, however, as I remember it, was a very simple one.

Mary: She did not think so. But at least you cannot say the same of mine. I can hardly imagine anything more strange, more utterly inexplicable, than the situation in which I find myself.

Holmes: State your case.

Mary: Briefly the facts are these. My father was an officer in an Indian regiment, who sent me home when I was quite a child. My mother was dead, and I had no relative in England. I was placed, however, in a comfortable boarding establishment in Edinburgh, and there I remained until I was seventeen years of age. In the year, 1878, my father, who was senior captain of his regiment, obtained a twelve months' leave and came home. He telegraphed to me from London that he had arrived all safe and directed me to come down at once, giving the Langham Hotel as his address. His message, as I remember, was full of kindness and love. On reaching London, I drove to the Langham and was informed that Captain Morstan was staying there, but that he had gone out the night before and had not returned. I waited all day without news of him. That night, on the advise of the manager of the Hotel, I communicated with the police, and next morning we advertised in all the papers. Our inquiries led to no result; and from that day to this no word has ever been heard of my unfortunate father. He came home with his heart full of hope to find some peace, some comfort, and instead ... *(overcome with emotion)*

Holmes: *(quickly)* The date?

Mary: *(recovering)* He disappeared upon the third of December 1878 ... nearly ten years ago.

Holmes: His luggage?

Mary: Remained at the hotel. There was nothing in it to suggest a clue ... come clothes, some books, and a considerable number of curiosities from the Andaman Islands. He had been one of the officers in charge of the convict-guard there.

Holmes: Had he any friends in town?

Mary: Only one that we know of ... Major Sholto, of his own regiment, the Thirty-fourth Bombay Infantry. The major had retired some little time before and lived in Upper Norwood. We communicated with him, of course, but he did not even know that his brother officer was in England.

Holmes: A singular case.

Mary: I have not yet described to you the most singular part. About six years ago to be exact, upon the fourth of May 1882, an advertisement appeared in the Times asking for the address of Miss Mary Morstan and stating that it would be to her advantage to come forward. There was no name or address appended. I had at the time just entered the family of Mrs. Cecil

Mary (Cont.) Forrester in the capacity of governess. By her advise, I published my address in the advertisement column. The same day there arrived through the post a small cardboard box addressed to me, which I found to contain a very large and lustrous pearl. No word of writing was enclosed. Since then every year upon the same date there always appears a similar box, containing a similar pearl, without any clue to the sender. They have been pronounced by an expert to be of a rare variety and of considerable value. You can see for yourself that they are very handsome. (*Producing box of pearls. Holmes takes one and holds to the light.*)

Holmes: Your statement is most interesting. Has anything else occurred to you?

Mary: Yes, and not later than today. That is why I have come to you. This morning, I received this letter, which you will perhaps read for yourself.

Holmes: Thank you. The envelope too, please. Postmark London, S.W., Date July 7. Hum ... man's thumbprint in corner ... probably postman. Best quality paper. Envelopes at sixpence a packet. Particular man in his stationary. No address. Watson? (*hand to Watson to read*)

Watson: "Be at the third pillar from the left outside the Lyceum Theatre tonight at seven o'clock. A carriage will meet you. If you are distrustful, bring two friends. You are a wronged woman and shall have justice. Do not bring police. If you do, all will be in vain. Your unknown friend."

Holmes: Well, really, this is a very pretty little mystery! What do you intend to do, Miss Morstan?

Mary: That is exactly what I want to ask you.

Holmes: Then we shall most certainly go ... you and I and ... yes, why Dr. Watson is the very man. Your correspondent says two friends.

Mary: But would he come?

Watson: I shall be proud and happy if I can be of any service.

Mary: You are both very kind. I have led a retired life and have no friends whom I could appeal to. If I am here at six it will do, I suppose?

Holmes: You must not be later.

Mary: Oh, Mr. Holmes. A curious paper was found among my father's belongings. I don't suppose it is of the slightest importance but I thought you might care to see it. (*produces paper*)

Holmes: It is a paper of native Indian manufacturer. It has at some time been pinned to a board. The diagram upon it appears to be a plan of part of a large building with numerous halls, corridors, and passages. At one point is a small cross done in red ink, and above it is "3.37 from left", in faded pencil writing. In the left hand corner is a curious hieroglyphic like four crosses in a line with their arms touching. Beside it is written in very rough and course characters, "The sign of the four ... Jonathan Small, Mahomat Singh, Abdullah Khan, Dost Akbar." No, I confess that I do not see how this bears upon the matter. Yet it is evidently a document of importance. It has been kept carefully in a pocketbook, for the one side is as clean as the other.

Mary: It was in his pocketbook that we found it.

Holmes: Preserve it carefully, then, Miss Morstan, for it may prove to be of use to us. We shall look for you at six.

Mary: Goodbye ... and thank you. (*exits*)

Watson: What a very attractive woman.

Holmes: Is she? I did not observe.

(Lights)

Taddeus Sholto Apartment

(Ornately furnished with Eastern design; vases, animal skins, a hooka, etc.)

Thadd: Come in, please. You are Miss Morstan, of course. And these gentlemen ...

Mary: This is Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and this, Dr. Watson.

Thadd: Your servant, Miss Morstan ... your servant, gentlemen. I am Thaddeus Sholto.

Mary: You will excuse me, Mr. Sholto, but I am here at your request to learn something which you desire to tell me. It is very late, and I should desire the interview to be as short as possible.

Thadd: At the best it must take some time for we shall certainly have to go to Norwood and see my brother Bartholomew. We shall all go and see if we can get the better of brother Bartholomew.

Watson: If we are to go to Norwood, it would perhaps be as well to start at once.

Thadd: No. I must prepare you by showing you how we all stand to each other. There are several points in the story of which I am myself ignorant. I can only lay the facts before you as I know them myself. My father was, as you may have guessed, Major John Sholto. He retired some eleven years ago and came to live at Pondicherry Lodge in Upper Norwood. He had prospered in India and brought back with him a considerable sum of money, a large collection of valuable curiosities and a staff of native servants. With these advantages he bought himself a house and lived in great luxury. We did know, however, that some mystery, some positive danger overhung our father. He was fearful of going out alone and he always employed two prize-fighters to act as porters at Pondicherry Lodge. Our father would never tell us what he feared, but he had a most marked aversion to men with wooden legs. On one occasion he actually fired a revolver at a wooden legged man, who proved to be a harmless tradesman. We had to pay a great sum to hush the matter up. Early in 1882, my father received a letter from India which was a great shock to him and from that day forward, he sickened to his death. On the night he died, he called me and by brother to his bedside and made a most remarkable confession. While in India, my father and Captain Morstan came into possession of a large treasure. When Captain Morstan returned from India, they quarreled and Captain Morstan was seized with an attack and died.

Mary: My father did suffer from a weak heart.

Thadd: I am sorry, Miss Morstan.

Mary: I knew in my heart that he was dead ... please ... continue.

Thadd: My father confessed of his own greed and wished for us to make restitution to you, Miss Morstan when suddenly a horrible change came over him and his eyes stared wildly at the window and he yelled in a voice I'll never forget, "Keep him out! For Christ's sake keep him out." And in an instant his pulse stopped beating. We searched the garden but could find no signs of an intruder. But the next morning, we found pinned to his chest, this torn piece of paper. (*handing to Holmes*)

Holmes: "The sign of the four" ... continue.

Thadd: We could only imagine the splendor of the treasure by a pearl chapelet my father had taken out but the whereabouts of the whole remained a mystery. We searched and dug but could never find it. We often discussed our father's desire to aid Miss Morstan but I must tell you, my brother shares my father's fault. I finally persuaded him to allow me to send her a

Thadd (Cont): detached pearl at regular intervals so that at least she might never feel destitute.

Mary: It was a kindly thought ... it was extremely good of you.

Thadd: It was my duty. Now, yesterday an event of extreme importance has occurred. The treasure has been discovered. Bartholomew is very clever. By measuring the entire house, he discovered a false ceiling in the upstairs garret. We tore away the lath and plaster and there was the box ... lying between two rafters. Now, all that remains is to drive to Norwood and demand our share. I explained my views last night so we shall be expected, if not welcome, visitors.

Holmes: You have done well, sir, from first to last; but it is late and we had best put the matter through with out delay.

(Lights)

Garrett Laboratory ... Pondicherry Lodge

(Small laboratory with expected aperitif and glassware. A ladder in the middle of room. Bartholomew "frozen" in chair)

Thadd: *(from outside)* Bartholomew ... Battholomew!

Watson: This is terrible. What's to de done?

Holmes: The door must come down.

(breaking into room ... all agast)

You see *(noting paper)* ... "the sign of the four."

Watson: In God's name, what does it all mean?

Holmes: It means murder. Look here.

Watson: It looks like a thorn.

Holmes: It is a thorn. Be careful, for it is poisoned.

Watson: This is all an insoluble mystery to me. It grows darker instead of clearer.

Holmes: On the contrary, it clears every instant. I only require a few missing links to have an entirely connected case.

Thadd: The treasure! It's gone! There is the hole through which we lowered it. *(in sudden reflection)* I was the last person who saw him. I left him here last night ... I heard him lock the door.

Holmes: What time was that?

Thadd: Ten o'clock. What will the police think?

Holmes: You have no reason to fear, Mr. Sholto, take my advice and drive down to the station to report the matter to the police. Offer to assist them in any way. Miss Marston, please inform the housekeeper. Your comfort may be of great assistance. We shall wait here until your return. *(they leave)* Now, Watson, we have a little time to ourselves, let us make good use of it. Now to work. In the first place, how did these folks come and how did they go? The door has not been opened since last night. How of the window? Locked from the inside. *(opening window)* No water pipe near. Roof quite out of reach. Yet a man has mounted by the window. Here is the print of a muddy boot upon the sill. And here on the floor ... and here a circular muddy mark.

Watson: That is not a footmark.

Holmes: It is something of much more value to us. It is the impression of a wooden stump.

Watson: It is the wooden-legged man.

Holmes: Quite so. But there has been someone else ... a very able and efficient ally. Could you scale that wall Doctor?

Watson: *(looking out window)* It is absolutely impossible.

Holmes: Without aid it is so. But suppose you had a friend up here who lowers you this good stout rope. *(finding rope)* Then I think if you were an active man, you might swarm up, wooden leg and all. You would depart, of course, in the same fashion; your ally would draw up the rope, fasten the window and depart in the way that he originally came.

Watson: This is all very well but how about this mysterious ally? How came he into the room?

Holmes: Yes, the ally. He lifts this case from the regions of the commonplace.

Watson: The chimney?

Holmes: The grate is much too small ... I had already considered that. (*Climbing the ladder*) Aha! There is a trapdoor in the roof! (*following path down across floor*) Watson look! We are certainly in luck. We ought to have very little trouble now. Number one has had the misfortune to tread in the creosote from this leaking carboy. You can see the outline of his small foot.

Watson: You mean a child has done this horrid thing?

Holmes: Rest assured, good Doctor.

Watson: What then?

Holmes: Why, we have got him, that's all. But, hallo ... I hear the heavy tread of the accredited representatives of the law. Before they come just put your hand here on the poor fellow's arm. What do you feel?

Watson: The muscles are as hard as a board. They are in a state of extreme contraction, far exceeding the usual rigor mortis.

Holmes: What conclusion would you suggest?

Watson: Death from some strong vegetable alkaloid, some strychnine-like substance that would produce tetanus.

Holmes: Now examine this thorn. Is that an English thorn?

Watson: No, it certainly is not.

Holmes: With all these data you should be able to draw some just inference. But here are the regulars, so the auxiliary forces may beat a retreat.

(*Wait out here until you're called for from the hall.*)

Jones: Here's a pretty business. Why, the house seems to be as full as a rabbit warren.

Holmes: I think you must recollect me, Mr. Athelney Jones.

Jones: Why, of course I do! It's Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the theorist. I'll never forget how you lectured us all on causes and inferences and effects in the Bishopgate jewel case. It's true you set us on the right track; but you'll own now that it was more by good luck than good guidance.

Holmes: It was a piece of very small reasoning.

Jones: Oh come now come. Never be ashamed to own up. But, what is all this? Bad business ... bad business. Stern facts here ... no room for theories. How lucky that I happened to be in Norwood over another case. I was at the station when the message arrived. What d'you think the man died of?

Holmes: Oh, this is hardly a case for me to theorize over.

Jones: No, no. Still, we can't deny that you hit the nail on the head sometimes. Dear me. Door locked, I understand. Jewels worth half a million missing. How was the window?

Holmes: Fastened, but there are steps on the sill.

Jones: Well, if it was fastened, the steps could have nothing to do with the matter. That's common sense. Man might have died in a fit, but then the jewels are missing. Ha! I have a theory. These flashes come upon me at times. What do you think of this, Holmes? Sholto was, on his own confession, with his brother last night. The brother died in a fit, on which Sholto walked off with the treasure. How's that?

Holmes: On which the dead man very considerably got up and locked the door on the inside.

Jones: Hum ... there's a flaw there. Let us apply common sense to the matter. This Thaddeus Sholto was with his brother. There was a quarrel, so much we know. The brother is dead and the jewels are gone. So much we also know. You see that I'm weaving my web. The net begins to close.

Holmes: You are not quite in possession of the facts yet. This splinter of wood, (*Jones pick it up*) which I have every reason to believe to be poisoned, was in the man's scalp where you still see the mark. This card, inscribed as you see it, "the Sign of the Four," was on the table, and beside it lay this rather curious stone-headed instrument. How does all that fit in to your theory?

Jones: Confirms it in every respect. House is full of Indian curiosities. The card is some hocus-pocus, a blind as like as not. The only question is how did he depart? Ah, of course, here is a hole in the roof. (*on ladder*)

Holmes: He can find something.

Jones: Mr. Sholto, it is my duty to inform you that anything which you may say will be used against you. I arrest you in the Queen's name as being concerned in the death of your brother.

Thadd: But I ...

Holmes: Don't trouble yourself about it, Mr. Sholto. I think that I can engage to clear you of the charge.

Jones: Don't promise too much, Mr. Theorist. Don't promise too much! You may find it a harder matter than you think.

Holmes: Not only will I clear him, Mr. Jones, but I will make you a free present of the name and description of one of the two people who were in this room last night. His name, I have every reason to believe, is Jonathan Small. He is a poorly educated man, small, active, with his right leg off, and wearing a wooden stump. His left boot has a course, square-toed sole, with an iron band round the heel. He is a middle-aged man; much sunburned, and has been a convict. The other man ...

Jones: Ah! The other man?

Holmes: It's a rather curious person. I hope before very long to be able to introduce you to the pair of them.

Jones: We shall see, Mr. Holmes. We shall see. *(exits)*

Holmes: Watson! You are to escort Miss Morstan home at once. Then proceed to No. 3 Pinchin Lane, down near the water's edge near Lambeth. The third house on the right-hand side is a bird-stuffers; Sherman is the name. Knock old Sherman up and tell him, with my compliments, that I want Toby at once.

Watson: Toby?

Holmes: Yes, Toby. Right now I would rather have Toby's help than that of the whole detective force of London.

(Lights)

Garden ... Pondicherry Lodge

Watson: *(Watson enters with dog)* Holmes.

Holmes: Ah, Watson ... and good old Toby. I was able to follow our mysterious little fellow's path along the roofline and then down a water pipe. Along the way I found where he had dropped this. *(produces small pouch of darts)* It confirms my diagnosis, as you doctors express it.

Watson: They are hellish things.

Holmes: Look out that you don't prick yourself. Well, are you game for a six mile trudge, Watson?

Watson: Certainly.

Holmes: Here you are, doggy! Good old Toby! Smell it Toby, sell it! Quick Watson, the games afoot.

(Search through audience bringing us to the waterfront.)

Holmes: We are out of luck. They have taken a boat here.

(Under the sign of "Mordecai Smith, Boats to hire by the hour or day")

Smith: You come back and be washed, Jack. Come back you young imp. If your father comes home and finds you like that he'll let us hear of it.

Holmes: Ah, Mrs. Smith. Is Mr. Smith about?

Smith: Sorry, sir, but he's away.

Holmes: Away, is he.

Smith: He's been away since yesterday mornin', sir, and truth to tell I am beginnin' to feel frightened about him. But if it was a boat, sir, maybe I could serve as well.

Holmes: I wanted to hire his steam launch.

Smith: Why, bless you, sir, it is in the steam launch that he has gone.

Holmes: I am sorry, Mrs. Smith, for I wanted a steam launch, and I have heard good reports of the ... let me see, what is her name?

Smith: The "Aurora", sir.

Holmes: Ah! She's not that old green launch with the yellow line, very broad in the beam?

Smith: No, indeed. She's as trim a little thing as any on the river. She's been fresh painted, black with two red streaks.

Holmes: Thanks. I hope that you will hear soon from Mr. Smith. I am going down the river, and if I should see anything of the "Aurora" I shall let him know that you are uneasy. A black funnel, you say?

Smith: No, sir. Black with a white band.

Holmes: Ah, of course. It was the sides which were black. Good morning, Mrs. Smith. *(she exits)*

The main thing with people of that sort is never to let them think that their information can be of the slightest importance to you. If you do, they will instantly shut up like an oyster. If you listen to them under protest, as it were, you are very likely to get what you want.

Watson: Our course now seems pretty clear.

Holmes: What would you do then?

Watson: I would engage a launch and go down river on the track of the "Aurora."

Holmes: My dear fellow, it would be a colossal task. She may have touched at any wharf on either side of the stream between here and Greenwich. Below the bridge there is a perfect labyrinth of landing places for miles. It would take days and days to exhaust them.

Watson: Employ the police then?

Holmes: No. I will engage the Baker Street division of the detective police force ... the irregulars.

(Lights)

Baker Street

Mrs. H.: *(alarm in the hall)* Ahhhh ... Mr. Holmes ... Mr. Holmes!!

Watson: By heavens, Holmes.

Holmes: Ah, that would be Wiggins.

Wiggins: *(rushing in)* Got your message, sir, and brought 'em on sharp. One dozen including myself. Three bob and a tanner for tickets.

Holmes: Here you are. *(handing coins)* I want to find the whereabouts of a steam launch called "Aurora," owner Mordecai Smith, black with two red streaks, funnel black with a white band. She is down the river somewhere. I want one boy to be at Mordecai Smith's landing stage opposite Millbank to say if the boat comes back. You must divide it out among yourselves and do both banks thoroughly. Let me know the moment you have news. Is that clear?

Wiggins: Yes, Guv'nor.

Holmes: The old scale of pay, and a guinea to the boy who find the boat. Here's a day in advance. Now off you go. (*exits*) If the boat is above water, they will find her. Now back to business. If ever a man had an easy task, this of course ought to be. Wooden-legged men are not so common, but the other man must, I should think, be absolutely unique. (*taking book from shelf*)

Watson: The other man again.

Holmes: (*reads as Watson takes notes*) "Andaman Islands situated 340 miles to the north of Sumatra, in the Bay of Bengal." Hum. Hum ... Ah, here we are. "The aborigines of the Andaman Islands may perhaps claim the distinction of being the smallest race upon this earth. They are a fierce, morose and intractable people, though capable of forming most devoted friendships when their confidence has been gained."

Mark that, Watson.

"They have always been a terror to shipwrecked crews, braining them with their stone clubs or shooting them with their poisoned arrows. These massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast."

Watson: Nice, amiable people.

Holmes: Now, Watson, I suggest we rest. I expect a report back from Wiggins at any time.

(*Lights*)

Baker Street

Watson: (*entering*) I suppose that Mr. Holmes has gone out, Mrs. Hudson.

Mrs. H.: No, sir. He has gone to his room, sir. Do you know, sir, I'm afraid for his health?

Watson: Why so?

Mrs. H.: Well, he's that strange, sir. After you was gone he walked and he walked, up and down and up and down, until I was weary of the sound of his footsteps. Then I heard him talking to himself and muttering, and every time the bell rang out he came on the stair head, with "What is that Mrs. Hudson?" And now he has slammed off to his room. I hope he's not going to be ill, sir. I ventured to say something to him about cooling

Mrs. H. (Cont): medicine, but he turned on me, sir, with such a look that I don't know how ever I got out of the room.

Watson: I don't think that you have any cause to be uneasy, Mrs. Hudson. I have seen him like this before. He has some small matter upon his mind which makes him restless.

Holmes: *(entering harried)* This infernal problem is consuming me. It is too much to be balked by so petty an obstacle, when all else has been overcome. I know the men, the launch, everything; and yet I can get no news. I am off down the river, Watson. I have been turning it over in my mind, and I can see only one way out of it. It is worth trying, at all events.

(Lights)

Baker Street

Mrs. H.: A mister Jones to see you, sir.

Watson: Thank you, Mrs. Hudson. Show him in.

Jones: Good-day, sir; good-day. Mr. Sherlock Holmes out I understand?

Watson: Yes, and I cannot be sure when he will be back.

Jones: I have a wire from him this morning. *(handing to Watson)*

Watson: *(reading)* "Go to Baker Street at once. If I have not returned, wait for me. I am close on the track of the Sholto gang. You can come with us tonight if you want to be in on the finish!"

This sounds well. He has evidently picked up the scent again. Take that chair and try one of these cigars.

Jones: Thank you. Don't mind if I do.

Watson: And a whiskey and soda?

Jones: Well, half a glass. It is very hot for this time of year. Your friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, is a wonderful man, sir. He is irregular in his methods and a little quick perhaps in jumping at theories, but on the whole, I think he would have made a most promising officer and I don't care who knows it.

Watson: *(Holmes enters in disguise.)* What is it my man?

Holmes: Is Mr. Sherlock Holmes here?

Watson: No, but I am acting for him. You can tell me any message you have for him.

Holmes: It was to him himself I was to tell it.

Watson: But I tell you that I am acting for him. Was it about Mordecai Smith's boat?

Holmes: Yes, I knows well where it is. An' I knows where the men he is after are. An' I knows where the treasure is. I knows all about it.

Watson: Then tell me, and I shall let him know.

Holmes: It was to him I was to tell it.

Watson: Well, you must wait for him.

Holmes: No, no. I ain't goin' to lose a whole day to please no one. Besides, I don't care about the look of either of you, and I won't tell a word.

Jones: Wait a bit, my friend. You have important information, and you must not walk off. We shall keep you, whether you like it or not.

Holmes: Pretty sort of treatment this is! I think that you might offer me a cigar too. *(unveiling)*

Watson: Holmes!

Jones: Ah, you rogue. You would have made an actor and a rare one. You had the proper workhouse cough, and those weak legs of yours are worth ten pound a week. I thought I knew the glint of your eye, though.

Holmes: *(Watson prepares Holmes a whiskey)* I have been working in this getup all day. Watson, I found the "Aurora!" They had her hid in a repair yard. No sooner had Wiggins and I made the discovery but who should appear but Mordecai Smith bellowing, "I want her tonight at eight o'clock. Eight o'clock sharp, mind, for I have two gentlemen who won't be kept waiting." Jones, I'll need a police boat, a steam launch, the fastest you have, to be at the Westminster Stairs at seven o'clock. Watson, bring your revolver. One bumper to the success of our little expedition. *(all drink)* And now it is high time we were off.

(Lights)

Boat Chase

(Behind scrim and in fog we see the bow of a police boat.)

Holmes: Wiggins will give us the signal when she takes off. But do I see a handkerchief? Surely, there's a white flutter over yonder.

Watson: Yes, it is our boy. I can see him plainly.

Holmes: And there is the "Aurora" and going like the devil! Full speed ahead engineer. Make after that launch with the yellow light. By heaven, I shall never forgive myself if she proves to have the heels of us.

Watson: She is very fast.

Holmes: We must catch her. Heap it on, stokers! Make her do all she can! If we burn the boat, we must have them.

Jones: We're gaining on her.

(Stern of "Aurora" comes into view. Yelling, grunting, etc. Tonga raises his blowpipe. Watson fires and kills him. They overpower the boat.)

(Lights)

On the Dock

Holmes: Well, Jonathan Small, I am sorry that it has come to this.

Small: And so am I, sir. I give you my word on the book that I never raised hand against young Sholto. It was that little hellhound Tonga, who shot one of his cursed darts into him. Now, if it had been that old major, I would have swung for him with a light heart.

Holmes: You are under the charge of Mr. Athelney Jones, of Scotland Yard. He is going to bring you to my rooms and I shall ask you for a true account of the matter. You must make a clean breast of it, for if you do, I may be of use to you.

(Lights)

Baker Street – Conclusion

(Holmes, Watson, Jones, Miss Morstan, Sholto and Small seated center, handcuffed with stump on treasure box.)

Holmes: And now, Mr. Small, it's time for us to hear your story.

Small: Well, sir, you have been very fair-spoken to me, though I can see that I have you to thank that I have these bracelets upon my wrists. Still, I bear no grudge for that. It is all fair and above board. If you want to hear my story, I have no wish to hold it back. What I say to you is God's truth, every word of it. *(Holmes hands him whiskey)* Thank you, you can put the glass beside me here, and I'll put my lips to it if I am dry. When I was eighteen, I took up the Queen's shilling and joined the Third Buff's, just starting for India. I wasn't destined to do much soldiering though; I had just learned how to handle a musket when a crocodile took off my leg while bathing in the Ganges. So there I was in India and a cripple though not yet in my twenties. I got a job as an overseer on an indigo plantation, being on horseback all day the leg didn't seem to bother. Well, I was never in lucks way long. Suddenly, without a note of warning, the great mutiny broke upon us. I returned to the plantation house to find my master and family slaughtered. I made it as fast as I could to the protection of the fort at Agra. Because of my military training, I was put in charge of one of the gates in the old section, a strange labyrinth of corridors and passages. There I kept watch with my two Pujabees, Mohomet Singh and Abdullah Kahn. On the third night of our watch, I suddenly found a knife at my throat and Abdullah Kahn whispering in my ear, "You must either be with us or silenced forever." I said, "You've joined the rebels?" And his reply was, "The fort is safe but you can be rich." He then told me of a Rajah who had turned but wanted to hedge this bets. He sent a trusted servant to Agra with a chest of jewels. If the rebels, won he would have his land and gold but if the Company conquered, he'd still have his jewels. This messenger was being escorted by no other than Abdulah Kahn's foster brother, Dost Akbar. Needless to say, he didn't make it far past the gate.

Holmes: Go on with your story. *(refilling glass)*

Small: We buried the body and hid the treasure drawing up four plans, one for each of us, and put the sign of the four at the bottom of each, for we had sworn that we should always act for all. Well, sir, the body was discovered and the next thing you know, we were sentenced for life to penal servitude in the Andaman Islands. After a while, I was given a job in the dispensary which brought me into contact with the Officers, namely Sholto and Morstan. Here I saw my chance. I confided in them my secret and offered a fifth share to them for recovering the treasure and providing us four with a boat and a chance to escape. They agreed and swore a most solemn oath. The villain, Sholto, went off to India, but he never came back again. From that I lived only for vengeance. Luck finally came my way when an Islander was brought into the dispensary. I nursed him to health and he became very attached to me. Tonga, *(to Watson)* for that

Small (Cont): was his name, Tonga had a stout canoe and there I saw my chance for escape. After ten days, we were picked up by a trader which was going from Singapore to Jiddah with a cargo of Malay pilgrims. Ten months later, we found ourselves in England.

Holmes: A very remarkable account. Now I think it's time to have a look at this "Great Agra Treasure" ... Watson. (*handing him poker*)

Watson: (*prying open box*) Why! It's empty!

Jones: This is your doing, Small!

Small: Yes, I have put it away where you shall never lay hand upon it. I tell you that no living man has any right to it, unless it is three men who are in the Andaman convict-barracks and myself. It's been the sign of four with us always. You'll find the treasure where the key is and where little Tonga is. There are no rupees for you this journey.

Jones: You're deceiving us, Small. If you had wished to throw the treasure into the Thames, it would have been easier for you to have thrown box and all.

Small: Easier for me to throw and easier for you to recover. The man that was clever enough to hunt me down is clever enough to pick an iron box from the bottom of a river.

Jones: This is a very serious matter, Small. If you had helped justice instead of thwarting it in this way, you would have had a better chance at your trial.

Small: Justice! A pretty justice! Whose loot is this if it is not ours?

Holmes: You have proved to me to be a man of great honor as well as of perseverance, Mr. Small. But I also gather one of need. Watson! (*Watson holds Small back while Holmes opens false bottom of leg. Out falls a handful of jewels.*) You say yourself that you are entitled to your share of the treasure without compromise to your friends for whom you can give no help. Therefore, it would be unlikely that you should give up all in its entirety without one last hope, especially, after such an incredible journey and at such a price.

Small: I was right before, you are indeed a clever man, sir.

Holmes: Thank you.

Jones: Well, Holmes, you are a man to be humored and we all know that you are a connoisseur of crime, but duty is duty. I shall feel more at ease when we have our storyteller here under lock and key. We'll need these as

Jones (Cont): evidence, of course. *(takes jewels)* Much obliged for your assistance. See you at the trial. Gentlemen ... Miss ... you first Small. *(they exit)*

Mary: I don't quite know how to thank you ... thank you both.

Thadd: Nor I.

Watson: I'm afraid the fate of the remaining treasure rests now with the courts.

Mary: I now know the fate of my poor father ... and that is reward enough for me.

Thadd: My father, for all his faults, has left me a very wealthy man by his own rights. I assure you, Miss Morstan will want for nothing.

Holmes: And there is the end of our little drama. I am weary. I shall be as limp as a rag for a week. Good-day to you both. *(plops on chair dismissing them)*

Mary: Good-night, Mr. Holmes ... Dr. Watson.

Thadd: Good-night.

Watson: The division seems rather unfair. You have done all the work in this business. This young couple have the opportunity of dividing what's left of the treasure, I, of course, will get the honor of writing up the account, Jones gets all the credit, pray what remains for you?

Holmes: For me, there still remains the needle.

(Lights)

FINIS

P.D.W.

One drawback to announcing a season, complete with dates and titles of plays, by the first of March is the first of May. Here's the title ... what is it about? The Zombies of Voodoo Island sounds great, but ...? The first step always seems to be to find a location. The Pioneer Bar has the most useful tool tucked along the back shelf, a road atlas. I started along Louisiana ... too many islands ... rounded the corner and came to Savannah, Georgia. Wasn't Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil set in Savannah? It had Voodoo. And look at the outer islands. Bingo!

Next, the characters. Just as though it was planned, I walked local geologist, Clyde Boyer. Boyer! That's almost French. Before I knew it, I had a whole list of characters; all with names from somewhere in the near or distant past. Madam Bosch, our "Mrs. Danvers-ish" housekeeper; my high school French teacher. Kathy Elser, our "fiancée," has lived with Clyde for fifteen years. Capt. Dezell, my high school band director and avid boater. Charbonneau, our version of "Peter Lorre," a ladies boutique in Bozeman. And my favorite, Dr. Leland Watts, an ophthalmologist and my neighbor as a child. I don't see anything wrong in personalizing a script with familiar names as long as they don't distract from the story itself. Inside jokes most often backfire but in a small community, a little fun can go a long way.

The most difficult part was creating a plausible story line; three cousins, all orphaned, come to an island they were removed from as children for the reading of an Uncle's will. Seemed impossible. But I was wrong. I somehow was able to create a family history, chronologically feasible, complete with Zombies and Voodoo that made perfect sense. Of course when writing it, I never thought about the fact that I would have to memorize it all. But it worked and is considered by some to be the best of this collection. Complex, humorous and, of course, scary. Zombie anyone?

The Zombies of Voodoo Island

By

Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

June 2003

Dramatis Personae

Madam Bosch

Jackson

Charlie Boyer

Capt. Dezell

Clyde Boyer

Dr. Leland Watts

Paulette Boyer

Holly Day

Charbonneau

Kathryn Elser

Mammy Pleasant

Setting: Savery Island – Somewhere off the coast of Georgia – Early summer, 1905.

(Please note the running gag of the pronunciation of the surname: Boyer. The islanders use the French, Boyér, while the three cousins insist on Boyer with a hard “r”.)

Savery Island – Somewhere off the coast of Georgia – Early summer 1905.

(Early morning – dim light – Madam Bosch preparing morning trays, coffee, tea etc. on one side of room. Bar tray near safe on opposite side of room. Deliberately fills creamer with rum from special bottle.)

Jackson: Good morning, Madam Bosch.

Madam: Jackson.

Jackson: Monsieur Claude will be arriving today?

Madam: Yes. Capt. Dezell will be bringing him over in the steam launch I should imagine.

Jackson: Yes. Should I wait at the dock for him?

Madam: No. Tend to the fields first. The Capt. will bring him to the house. After the boat docks. Inform the Doctor and then you may come up.

Jackson: Yes, Madam.

Madam: Oh, Jackson. Have there been any more disturbances?

Jackson: No, Madam. Not since the funeral.

Madam: Good, we don't want to give the heirs the wrong impression ... do we?

Jackson: No, Madam. And the other one ... Monsieur Charles ... does he ...

Madam: He suspects nothing. And we shall keep it that way. He only knows what the doctor has told him ... nothing more ... do you understand?

Jackson: Yes Madam. But he was in the village again last night ... you don't suppose ...

Madam: No! I do not suppose ... and neither should you.

Jackson: Yes, Madam.

Madam: But, still the same ... keep your eyes and ears open. He shall be rising late again. Strange to think he is of the same bloodline as Monsieur Maxwell. Hmm. Perhaps the other two will prove more promising.

Jackson: *(snicker)*

Madam: Quiet! Now go. Don't forget to inform the Doctor the minute the boat lands.

Jackson: Yes, Madam.

Madam: And I shall see that all is prepared for Monsieur Claude.

(Both exit. Charlie enters, hung over, looks around and goes directly to safe and tries to open. Note – Bar tray should be placed next to safe or, as in our case, on top.)

Madam: *(entering quietly)* May I help you, Monsieur Boyér?

Charlie: What! Oh, no thank you, Madam Bosch. I was just getting some ... uh ... juice ... yes.

Madam: Very good, Monsieur Boyér.

Charlie: Uh ... Boyer.

Madam: What?

Charlie: It's pronounced Boyer.

Madam: Boyer. *(awkwardly)*

Charlie: Yes, Boyer.

Both: Boyer ...

Charlie: Yes

Madam: Forgive me, Monsieur. Old habits are sometimes hard to break.

Both: Yes

Madam: Your cousin will be arriving today.

Charlie: Which one?

Madam: Your cousin, Claude, from New York.

Charlie: Clyde.

Madam: What?

Charlie: Clyde ... he goes by Clyde.

Madam: Oh, yes, of course. There is coffee and tea here and if you wish ...

Charlie: Yes, it's in the creamer. The Doctor showed me.

Madam: If that will be all ...

Charlie: Yes, that will be all ...

Madam: I shall make sure that Monsieur Clau ... Clyde's room is prepared ... if you should need anything ...

Charlie: I will ring ... thank you ... Madam Bosch ...

Madam: The ...

Charlie: Thank you! ... Madam Bosch.

Madam: Hmmff. *(exits)*

(Charlie shivers ... goes back to work on safe.)

Jackson: Can I help you Sir?

Charlie: Ah! No ... thank you ... I was just getting some ... juice.

Jackson: The steam launch is about to land. Would you like to meet it?

Charlie: No ... thank you ... Jackson. I'll wait here. Best clean up, eh?

Jackson: Of course, sir. *(exits)*

(Charlie shivers ... exits up stairs)

Capt.: *(more Southern than French)* Here you are Monsieur Boyér. I'll have the rest of your baggage sent up.

Clyde: Thank you, Captain. Oh, and it's Boyer.

Capt.: What's that?

Clyde: Boyer. It's pronounced Boyer ... Clyde Boyer.

Capt.: I beg your pardon, Sir. But I was told ...

Clyde: That's all right, Captain, a common mistake. That was quite the crossing.

Capt.: Yes, Sir. The launch can seem a bit unsteady but she's totally safe. We have two larger vessels but I only run them twice a week. To bring supplies to the Island and carry the finished products back to the mainland.

Clyde: Products? You'll have to forgive me, Captain. You see my cousins and I were sent away from the Island when we were children and most of the family business has been kept a mystery to us.

Capt.: Of course. Well, Dr. Watts will explain it all to you, I'm sure.

Clyde: Dr. Watts?

Capt.: Yes, Dr. Leland Watts ... he will explain it all. I'll see to your bags.

Clyde: Thank you ... Captain. *(Captain exits. Clyde examines room.)*

Madam: Good day to you Monsieur Boyér.

Clyde: Boyer!

Madam: Boyer ... yes of course. I am Madam Bosch, the housekeeper. When you are ready, I will show you to your room. If you care for refreshments, you will find them here and here. *(gestures to teacart and bar)* Please, make yourself at home. *(exits unnoticed)*

Clyde: Thank you ... Madam Bosch. Has either of my cousins arrived ... yet ... Madam Bosch ... Madam Bosch ...

Charlie: *(Charlie enters sportily dressed)* Well, if it isn't the whiz kid of New York, Clyde Boyer. Why I haven't seen you since your father's funeral. Or was it my father's funeral? It's so hard to keep track ... so many damn funerals.

Clyde: Charlie! Charlie Boyer. I don't suppose you've let the grass grow under your feet?

Charlie: Oh, no, son, always one-step ahead of the bill collectors ... or the hangman. Here, let me fix you a refreshment; you'll love it, an Island favorite, it's called a zombie.

Clyde: Zombie?

Charlie: Yep, too many of these and you'll become ...

Clyde: No, thank you.

Charlie: Come now. It's only a mixture of fruit juices and some of Uncle Maxwell's finest package goods. You know they've got a distillery right there in the sugar refinery. Finest rum available but only for "special occasions and a few privileged clients on the mainland," according to Dr. Watts.

Clyde: No, thank you, please.

Charlie: Now don't tell me you don't drink?

Clyde: No, I don't.

Charlie: Ever? *(Clyde shakes head)* Well, I'll be damned.

Clyde: Paulette?

Charlie: Oh, she'll be coming tomorrow, I think, on the supply ship.

Clyde: I was brought over in the steam launch.

Charlie: Damn near twenty miles in the steam launch. That must of shaken you up a bit.

Clyde: It did. Charlie, what did you mean when you called that drink a ... a ...

Charlie: Zombie?

Clyde: Yes.

Charlie: Don't they teach you anything in those fancy New York schools? *(Clyde shrugs)* Well, to be honest with you, I've only heard of it a few times, when I was in New Orleans, and then this fellow in the village brought it up when he made me this drink. I'm not quite sure what it means but I wouldn't be surprised if Dr. Watts couldn't enlighten us on the subject.

Clyde: Dr. Watts. The Captain mentioned him ... who is he?

Charlie: Oh, he's a queer old bird. Came to the Island right after we left. Runs some kind of half-assed church and a half-assed hospital. But you better be nice to him. Turns out he's the executor of the estate. I don't know why we were sent away from here ... or why we were never allowed to return 'til now ... but it sure seems that there's a lot more here than just a sugar plantation.

Clyde: I've often wondered. And this, Dr. Watts, he has the answers?

Charlie: I'm afraid so. And all I can get out of him, except for the amount of annual rainfall and the ratio of raw sugar cane to tons of refined sugar, is "wait 'til all are assembled."

Clyde: And how long have you been here, Charlie?

Charlie: Oh, a couple of days. I took a ship from New Orleans to Savannah and then Captain Dezell brought me over.

Clyde: And the fellow in the village?

Charlie: Charbonneau his name is. That's all, Charbonneau. Runs a café and market. He's another one. Says just enough to pique your interest and then shuts up like an oyster. And whatever you do don't mention his name in front of Dr. Watts.

Clyde: Why?

Charlie: He thinks ...

(Enter Doctor ... jovial with a certain, strange, air of command. Carries a small valise which he sets down.)

Doctor: Hello, hello ...

Charlie: Speak of the devil.

Doctor: Ah, ... this must be Mr. Boyer? *(totally at ease with the "Americanization" of the names)*

Clyde: Yes, Clyde Boyer.

Doctor: Clyde, of course.

Clyde: And you must be Dr. Watts?

Doctor: Yes, Leland Watts, at your service. I trust your crossing was satisfactory.

Clyde: Well, actually

Doctor: Good, good.

Charlie: Some tea, Doctor?

Doctor: Oh, thank you, don't mind if I do. And the ...

Charlie: Right here, Doctor, in the creamer.

Doctor: Ah, thank you. A minor indulgence, I assure you. But one your Uncle Maxwell all but insisted on, I'm afraid.

Clyde: Of course, Doctor, be my guest.

Doctor: Thank you. Jackson will be up directly with your bags.

Clyde: Jackson?

Charlie: Oh, the deck keeps getting fuller.

Jackson: Good day, gentlemen. Monsieur Boyer ...

Charlie/Clyde: BOYER!

Jackson: Yes ... Boyer? (*looks to Doctor for reassurance*) I have brought your bags from the dock. If there is anything else you need ...

Clyde: I don't believe we've actually met. I'm Clyde Boyer.

Jackson: And I am Abraham Andrew Lincoln Jackson. Quite the handle, eh. But you may call me Jackson.

Clyde: Thank you, Jackson.

Doctor: Jackson is overseer of the plantation including the fields, mill and refinery. A most useful man.

Jackson: Thank you, Doctor. (*to Charlie and Clyde*) But I must be off. Please do not hesitate to call. (*exits*)

Charlie: He seems awfully young for such responsibility.

Doctor: Oh, he was born into it. As was his father and his father before him. You must understand that much of this operation has been passed from generation to generation. Like Captain Dezell who brought you here.

Clyde: Then why were we sent away?

Doctor: Please, I will answer your questions but we must wait 'til all are assembled. (*Charlie lip syncs with Doctor*)

Clyde: Yes, Doctor. Pardon my impatience but it's been twenty years and so much remains unanswered ... so much forgotten.

Doctor: Perhaps you would like a small tour before you're settled?

Clyde: Yes! I'd very much like to see the village. Charlie met a man there ...

Doctor: What?

Clyde: What did you say his name was?

Charlie: Charbonneau. *(sheepishly)*

Clyde: That's it, Charbonneau. Runs a market ...

Doctor: Black market if you ask me.

Clyde: What?

Charlie: Dr. Watts is convinced that this Charbonneau is an escaped prisoner from French Guyana. Isn't that right Doctor?

Doctor: Nobody knows where he came from or what he's doing here. *(getting excited)* Charbonneau, what kind of a name is that? There is a lot to be said for privatization. I don't blame your grandfather for opening things up for enterprising individuals but look what has happened. I ... I ... *(catching himself)* I am afraid I am getting ahead of myself. All will be revealed when "all are assembled." *(all together)* Yes. *(rings bell)* Madam Bosch. I am going to take these gentlemen on a short walk. Please see that Mr. Boyer's luggage is brought in and his room is prepared. We won't be long.

Madam: Yes, Doctor.

Doctor: Oh, I almost forgot. The will. *(retrieves case)* It came over with you on the steam launch. You didn't know you were sitting on such valuable cargo I'll be bound. *(places in safe)* There. Safe and sound until your cousin Paulette arrives. Come, gentlemen. We'll go by way of the Church. I think you will find St. Pierre's most interesting ... *(the three exit)*

(Jackson and Madam Bosch enter obviously watching preceding)

Jackson: Shall I follow them?

Madam: No, the Doctor knows what he's doing. Come. Bring those bags in. The third heir arrives tomorrow. You must keep your men posted in the fields again tonight. Nothing can happen to arouse suspicion. Doctor's orders.

Jackson: Yes, Madam Bosch.

Madam: Nothing! Do you understand?

Jackson: Yes ... Madam Bosch.

Madam: And you might drop down into the village and have a word with Charbonneau. I don't trust him. He must stay clear until this is settled ... or he'll answer to Dr. Watts. *(Jackson nods)* Go.

(Lights)

Next morning – same as first – Madam Bosch setting trays and exits.

(Lights change and figures appear at terrace door)

Charbonneau: This way ladies ... watch your step. This is the home of the late Maxwell Boyér.

Holly: Oh, isn't it marvelous, dear? Simply enchanting.

Paulette: Yes, but ...

Holly: Oh, and look at the view. Breathtaking.

Paulette: Holly, we ...

Holly: Oh, sir. We are forever in your debt, simply forever. Whatever would we have done on that dreadful pier without your kind assistance.

Charbonneau: Well, I ...

Holly: I must say again ... we are forever in your debt, Mr. ...

Charbonneau: Charbon ...

Holly: Oh, look, drinks. They must have known we were coming. Hah! Rum! *(in creamer)* I knew this tropical vacation was too good to be true.

Madam: Mademoiselle Paulette, I am Madam Bosch, the housekeeper.

Holly: Oh, I am enchanted to make your acquaintance.

Madam: Your room has been prepared. If you will follow me ...

Holly: Ahhh ...

Paulette: Hold it! Holly sit down.

Holly: But ...

Paulette: Sit! Madam Bosch, is it? I am Paulette Boyer. And this brainless twit is my assistant, Miss Holly Day.

Holly: Enchanted to ...

Paulette: *(silencing Holly with a glare)* This gentleman was kind enough to escort us from the dock but I'm afraid that the bulk of our luggage remains with the ship.

Madam: I will see that it is brought up, Mademoiselle, and that a second room is prepared for Miss Day.

Paulette: Thank you.

Madam: You may wish to refresh yourselves. We have coffee, tea and fresh juice. Charbonneau, will you please serve the ladies. As long as you're here, you might make yourself useful. And I assure you that the Doctor will hear of this.

Charbonneau: What was I to do? Two beautiful ladies stranded on a foreign shore. It was my duty, no?

Jackson: *(rushing in)* Madam Bosch, the ship has landed but no sign of ...

Madam: Jackson, may I introduce Mademoiselle Boyer and her friend Miss Day.

Jackson: I ... uh ...

Madam: And of course, you know Monsieur Charbonneau. Go back and bring the ladies luggage here.

Jackson: Yes, Madam. *(he obeys)*

Madam: And now Monsieur Charbonneau, I thank you for your assistance but you may go.

Charbonneau: Oh, but I think I would like to stay and visit with these charming ladies, if it would not offend.

Paulette: It's all right. Please stay and have a cup of coffee at least for your trouble.

Charbonneau: Merci.

Paulette: Thank you, Madam Bosch, we can handle ourselves here. Please call us when the rooms are ready.

Madam: As you wish. (*she exits*)

Holly: Well I never. You treated that poor woman as if she was your servant.

Paulette: She is my servant, Holly.

Charbonneau: If I may be so bold, Mademoiselle, what brings you to Savery Island?

Paulette: I might as well tell you. It will all come out in the end. I am here for the reading of my uncle's will. Myself and my two cousins were sent north when we were children, twenty years ago. And although we received generous allowances, we were forbidden to return to the Island or even ask questions.

Charbonneau: Ah, I see. I have met your cousin, Charles. He seems like a fine gentleman.

Paulette: What! Charlie Boyer. Ha. He is a snake in the grass. Squandered his money on wine, women and song. The only time I hear from him is when he needs a handout. I put my money to good use. I have several prominent ladies' boutiques in the Chicago area and wasn't even going to bother myself coming here if it wasn't for my friend, Holly, the one with the continental airs. She has never been farther than Joliet. And that was to visit her brother. So we took the train to Philadelphia and then down the coast to Savannah. Then that miserable cargo ship out here. Look mister, I left here when I was six years old and as far as I'm concerned I might as well just stay gone.

Holly: Paulette! You don't have to be so brutal to the kind man.

Paulette: I'm sorry, Mr. Charbonneau. I do tend to go on sometimes. And you sir, what brings you to the old family homestead?

Charbonneau: Alas, nothing as interesting as your story. I came up from Venezuela and eke out a meager living with my modest café and market. You have another cousin, do you not?

Paulette: Yes ... Clyde. He's a different one. A scholar. Went to the finest schools in New York and now works at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Not as a teacher though, he's a ... oh what is it?

Holly: A research chemist.

Paulette: Yes, that's it ... a research chemist. Can you imagine?

Charbonneau: Quite the diverse family.

(off stage)

Doctor: Are you sure?

Jackson: Yes, I saw him myself.

Charbonneau: And now if you ladies will excuse me, I'll show myself out. 'Til we meet again. *(exits abruptly)*

Holly: What a delightful little man.

Paulette: A weird little man, you mean.

(Doctor enters followed by Jackson, a bit harried)

Doctor: Ah, Miss Boyer. Here you are. You gave us quite a scare.

Paulette: I beg your pardon, then. And whom do I have the pleasure of addressing?

Doctor: Dr. Watts. Dr. Leland Watts. I was the one who wrote to you.

Paulette: Then you're the one I have to thank for this miserable trip.

Doctor: But I ...

Paulette: Look, Doctor. I mean no offense. But I am doing quite well on my own and have no desire to be part of an antiquated old sugar plantation; especially one twenty miles off the coast of Georgia in the middle of nowhere.

Doctor: Miss Boyer, it is I who wish not to offend, but I think you do not quite understand the full impact of what is going on here. This plantation, mill and refinery are by no means antiquated. Your family does not only hold the largest land rights to this island but the sugar produced and exported makes this the most lucrative operation of it's kind in the entire southern United States.

Holly: Oh, Paulette!

Doctor: Please, forgive me, but if you will just keep an open mind for the next few days, I think you will be pleasantly surprised.

Paulette: Thank you, Doctor. It is I who should apologize. I have a tendency to speak out. It is my weakness.

Doctor: No, my dear. In one so young and lovely, I think it proves an asset. Until tonight. Madam Bosch will see to your needs.

Paulette: Thank you, Doctor. Until tonight.

Doctor: Miss Day.

Holly: You see, he seems nice enough.

Paulette: Holly, they're weirdos. All of them.

Madam: *(entering)* Your rooms are prepared, Mademoiselle Boyér.

Paulette: Boyer!

Madam: Boyer, of course. This way please.

(Following up stairs Paulette turns and makes a funny face to Holly.)

Madam: I saw that.

(Lights)

That evening – after dinner.

(Charlie, Paulette and Clyde)

Charlie: ... Then the proctologist said, "There's room enough for two". Ha, ha, ha.

Paulette: Charlie, that is the most juvenile thing I've ever heard.

Charlie: Aw, come on, Paulette. Can't ya take a joke?

Paulette: A joke, yes. Vulgar anecdotes, no.

Charlie: Ooohhhh.

Doctor: *(entering from dining room)* That was a lovely dinner, Madam Bosch. You may bring in the sherry now.

Madam: Yes, Doctor.

Doctor: And now that we're all settled I think it is time to read the first part of the will.

Charlie: First part?

Doctor: Yes. It was your Uncle Maxwell's desire that the reading should take place over several days to impress upon you the seriousness of the value of the estate.

Charlie: Now that sounds promising.

Paulette: Charlie, please.

Clyde: Yes, Doctor, please continue.

Doctor: The envelopes have been sealed for some years and been kept in a safe deposit box on the mainland. As you know, Captain Dezell retrieved these envelopes yesterday and delivered them to me. Whereupon, I placed them in that safe. Here is the first of the envelopes. *(producing it from coat pocket)*

Holly: Oh, this is so exciting.

Paulette: Shut up, Holly. Doctor.

Doctor: Yes ... now ...

Capt.: *(appears at door)* Doctor.

Doctor: Yes ...

Kathryn: Excuse me, is this the right place?

Doctor: Of course, my dear, come in.

Clyde: Kathryn!

Kathryn: Clyde!

Clyde: I don't understand.

Kathryn: Neither do I, actually.

Charbonneau: This must be my lucky day. Beautiful women spilling out all over the docks.

Doctor: What are you doing here?

Charbonneau: Helping the young lady, of course.

Clyde: Everyone, this is my fiancée. Miss Kathryn Elser. But ...

Kathryn: I received this letter with instructions and tickets from Ithaca to Savannah where I met this nice man ... where did he go? He brought me over from the mainland.

Doctor: Captain Dezell returned to his vessel, no doubt. Welcome to Savery Island, Miss Elser. I trust your journey was a pleasant one?

Kathryn: Yes, thank you. But, darling, the letter was addressed by you.

Clyde: But I ...

Doctor: If you will forgive me ... I took the liberty of inviting Miss Elser. I thought it best.

Clyde: Yes, well, I would have liked to have been consulted ...

Doctor: Of course, but I think you will find it all for the best. And now, Monsieur Charbonneau, I think your services are no longer needed if you will excuse us, we have some personal business to discuss.

Charbonneau: Oh, don't mind me.

Holly: Oh, let him stay, doctor. He's kind of cute.

Paulette: Yes, Doctor. I have a feeling nothing is kept secret from Monsieur Charbonneau for very long. Let him stay.

Charbonneau: Thank you Mademoiselle Boyér.

All: Boyer!

Paulette: We Americanized our name when we went north.

Charbonneau: Yes, of course, Mademoiselle Boyer. (*awkward*)

Doctor: Well, if there are no objections. Hmm, hmm ... *(reading)* "I, Maxwell Boyér, being of sound mind and body and in the presence of these witnesses do hereby lay my hand to this my last will and testament, so help me God and keep me steadfast. My heirs consist of the children of my late brothers; Jean Paul, Maurice and Claude II. I hope this reading finds them all present and in good health. The division of property will be stated at the end of the communications. Our family history must be plainly understood before any execution can take place. I leave this in the hands of my friend and confessor, Dr. Leland Watts. Any misfortune that may befall our lineage during this time, the division will reflect accordingly. Signed this 13th day of February 1900. Maxwell Boyér. Witnessed by Dr. Leland Watts and Madam Ernestine Bosch." *(ends reading)*

Is everyone with me so far? Good.

It is my duty to relay to you the history of the Boyér family as it has been presented to me. The first of your ancestors to inhabit these Islands was your great, great grandfather, Jean Claude Boyér, who apprenticed himself as a privateer during the American Revolutionary War. The sea Islands and these outer reef Islands were indispensable for smuggling, running blockades and as base ports when raiding, looting and sinking enemy ships.

Charlie: Great Grandpa a pirate! How exciting.

Paulette: You would think so. Please continue.

Doctor: During the war of 1812, your great grandfather, Jean Maurice, followed in the same footsteps and following the war, in 1815, laid claim to this Island, Savery, as a spoil of war. Being twenty miles from shore and unpopulated with no visible sign of worth, no objection was made. But Jean Maurice had an uncanny interest in botany. He discovered that with the warm gulf stream of the Gulf of Mexico and the waters of the Caribbean meeting with the cool Atlantic a curious climate existed. Rich volcanic soil combined with coral reefs made an ideal situation for the growing of sugar cane. Along with his son, Claude I, they built this plantation. Now comes the subject of manpower. Luck would have it that a slave ship, heading north from the West Indies, stopped here to refresh itself. Jean Maurice bought the ship, its cargo and hired the sailing master to transport the raw sugar cane to the mainland. Captain Dezell, who brought you here is a direct descendent of this first sailing master. The next crucial time to affect Savery Island was during the Civil War. Blockades were formed to strangle the South and all these Islands became vulnerable. In a shocking display, Claude Boyér, your grandfather, armed his slaves and promised them freedom and land shares if they would

Dr. (Cont): defend the Island against any intruder. He succeeded. After the war, these new citizens proved exceptionally loyal and so a mill and refinery were built and instead of exporting raw cane, they exported sugar, molasses and rum. During this time of prosperity, your fathers were born. They subsequently married and you three were born. Things flourished until 1885 when an influenza epidemic swept across the Island. Your mothers died and so did many of the now-called natives. That is when the “Dark Shadow” appeared. The original slaves came from the West Indies and brought with them their own religion. It was ignored and tolerated by your ancestors for years but with epidemic they fell back upon it as a savior from the Angel of Death.

Clyde: Religion, what kind of religion?

Doctor: Voodoo my boy, Voodoo.

Paulette: Voodoo? I never heard of it. What does it mean?

Doctor: All will be revealed in time. So it was decided that your fathers should take you north to protect you from this evil. Maxwell, a bachelor, stayed to protect the family interests. I was sent for and built the church and adjoining hospital. You see. I am not just a doctor of divinity but a surgeon as well. The plague passed and things went back to normal or so it seemed. In the years that followed, your fathers were able to live on the dividends of this plantation. Maurice took Charles to St. Louis, Jean Paul took Paulette to Chicago and Claude II took Claude III to New York. As you well know, in the past ten years each has died from a congenital heart failure. With Maxwell being the last, three weeks ago.

Clyde: Doctor, when you say congenital, do you mean that we are all subject to the same fate?

Doctor: I’m afraid so. But with proper care and monitoring, there is no reason that you cannot live a long and happy life.

Paulette: Wait a minute, Doctor. This is all too much. Pirates, slaves, epidemic, and now you tell us that we’re going to die. And what is this “Voodoo”?

Charbonneau: I find it all very interesting.

Paulette: Shut up, you!

Doctor: First off, I did not say that you are going to die, only that you may be susceptible to a weak heart. And as for Voodoo, well ... I’m afraid we’ll have to save that until tomorrow.

All: What!

Doctor: It is the dictates of the will. I will now bid you a good night. *(with polite gesture, exits)*

Charlie: Well, how do you like that?

Paulette: Good night? How are we supposed to sleep after that?

Clyde: I find it all kind of interesting.

Charlie: You would.

Madam: *(entering)* Monsieur Clyde. The Mademoiselle's room is prepared.

Clyde: Thank you, Madam Bosch. Will you be all right dear?

Kathryn: I think so. That is a lot to take in.

Paulette: Yeah, too much for me. Come on Holly.

Holly: Good night, Monsieur Charbonneau. Until tomorrow?

Charbonneau: I wouldn't miss it for the world. Bon Soir, Miss Day. Holly Day ... holiday. You would make someone a wonderful present.

Holly: Ooohhh.

Paulette: Yeah, right. *(ladies exit)*

Charbonneau: Well, gentlemen. I also bid you a good night. Until the morrow. *(exits)*

Charlie: Well, Clyde, what do you really think?

Clyde: I don't know, Charlie. I really don't know.

(Lights)

Late at night – gunshots in distance.

(Madam Bosch opens French doors as Jackson and Doctor enter armed)

Doctor: Jackson, what is it?

Jackson: We found two in the cemetery. One escaped into the cane field the other one ... *(slaps shotgun)*

Doctor: Two more were brought to the Hospital. I don't know how far gone they are. Both are sedated.

Jackson: What does this mean, Doctor?

Doctor: Without Maxwell to keep them in check, the evil priests are building their forces. We must keep on guard. Madam Bosch, watch our guests closely. Don't let anyone leave the house. We'll reconvene at twelve noon.

Madam: Yes, Doctor. Doctor ... may God be with you.

Doctor: I hope he is Madam. I hope he is.

(Lights)

Next day ...

Charlie: Here we are, waiting all morning. When's he going to show?

Madam: Soon, Monsieur, soon.

Clyde: Have patience, Charlie.

Holly: Well, I don't have much patience. That cute Mr. Charbonneau promised to take me shopping.

Paulette: Holly ...

Holly: What?

Charlie: It's almost noon. If he's not here by then I'll take you shopping myself.

Holly: Ohhh. Mr. Boyer.

Doctor: Good morning everyone.

Charlie: Morning ... it almost isn't.

Doctor: So sorry. Rounds at the hospital you know.

Charlie: Yeah.

Clyde: Speaking of the hospital ... what kind of patients do you treat there?

Doctor: That, unfortunately, will come out of today's topic.

Paulette: Isn't today's "topic" Voodoo?

Doctor: Yes.

Charlie: And Doctor, I'm sure I heard gunshots in the middle of the night. How do you explain that?

Doctor: Poachers in the cane fields. Jackson's men sometimes have to use force.

Charlie: I guess that leaves out midnight walks, Miss Day.

Doctor: Now ... we should begin with the root origins themselves ...

Charbonneau: I hope I'm not late.

Doctor: Monsieur Charbonneau. (*obviously annoyed*) You have the uncanny ability to show up right at the appropriate time. Sit down.

Charbonneau: Excuse me ... excuse me.

Doctor: Now, as I was saying. The roots of Voodoo, as far as we know, stems from West Africa and came to the Americas with the slave trade. Originally a religion of nature; earth, fire, water and so on, it evolved into a religion involving sacrifice to improve hard conditions; first animals and then advancing to human sacrifice to make a stronger magic. When transported to the West Indies, Voodoo became intertwined with Catholicism and practitioners could not make a distinction between Pagan and Christian rites. You must remember that the original slaves bought by Jean Maurice Boyer came from the West Indies and brought this "religion" with them. Though passive at first it grew in strength during hard times.

Paulette: You mean they offered human sacrifices right here?

Holly: Ohhh.

Charlie: Hey, Doc ... I think we got a candidate for ya ...

Doctor: This is not a laughing matter. Those that die are the lucky ones.

Clyde: Explain yourself, Doctor.

Doctor: The worst curse of all ... is the curse of the Zombie.

Charlie: Like the drink?

Charbonneau: Ssshhh.

Doctor: To become a zombie is to become one of the truly “living dead”. We don’t know all there is to it. Even though we have tried to infiltrate its ranks, practitioners keep close to themselves for fear of falling under the wrath of the High Priest or Priestess. It seems almost impossible but true. Even on a small Island like this.

Charlie: Well, I don’t believe it. Living dead ... it’s fantastical.

Doctor: Wait, there’s more ... much more. This should be of great interest to you, young Clyde. It seems the process of creating a zombie comes from a chemical compound. The priest will blow this chemical into the face of his victim. Through absorption or inhalation, I’m not sure which; the poor devil takes on the composure of a corpse. Heart rate, breathing, all bodily functions slows to an undetectable level. In extreme cases, the victim is actually buried in a grave. When exhumed from the earth, or comes back from this false death, they are inevitably mad. Through a continuation of drugs, they are kept at a controlled level and are completely devoted to their masters.

Paulette: How awful. And they really don’t know what they’re doing?

Doctor: That I am not sure. I do know that in the early days, practitioners created zombies to work their fields for them. That way they could sleep all day and have their “slaves” work the fields by night. Bringing in their quotas without any physical labor. Your Uncle became aware of this and that is the real reason he sent for me.

Charlie: Again, I say, this is fantastical. I don’t believe it.

Doctor: But you must believe it. The Church was built to try and bring the true Christianity to the people of Savery Island. The hospital ... to treat the victims of this horrific crime.

Clyde: You mean your hospital is filled with zombies?

Doctor: I have not yet found a way to completely bring them out of their affliction but as I said, they become extremely devoted to anyone who will show them the least bit of kindness.

Charlie: Great! We’ve just inherited Zombie Island.

Doctor: Your Uncle felt it was important for you all to know the truth before I open the third envelope. (*produces envelope from pocket*) You now know how this Island was founded, how your wealth was established and why you were sent away. Any questions?

Clyde: No, Doctor. I think we are ready. Kathryn?

Kathryn: I'm all right. Go ahead.

Clyde: Paulette?

Paulette: Yeah, go ahead.

Clyde: Charlie?

Charlie: I still say it's a lot of hogwash.

Clyde: Doctor.

Doctor: (*opens envelope and reads*) "The previous conditions having been met, I, Maxwell Boyér, do bequeath the family estate as follows: To my nephew Claude Boyér III, I leave the cane fields, mills, refinery and all lands held by our family on Savery Island with the following exceptions; to my niece, Paulette, who has proved herself industrious and self sufficient, she will receive one third the annual revenues of the Boyér Sugar Company. One third shall remain in the custody of Dr. Leland Watts to continue our work in the Church of St. Pierre sur la Mer and the adjoining hospital. The remaining third shall be used by Claude to live a comfortable lifestyle and support the operations of the Company. To my nephew, Charles, who has led a shameful life, he shall remain receiving the annual allowance that he has so easily squandered these many years past." (*ends reading*) That is all.

Charlie: Why that dirty, rotten old ...

Clyde: Charlie! Doctor, I can use my share in any manner I choose so long as the company does not suffer, am I right?

Doctor: Yes.

Clyde: Then, Charlie, you will want for nothing. My needs are simple. I will share all I have with you. That's all right, isn't it Kathryn?

Kathryn: That is why I love you.

Paulette: Well, I think you're all crazy. Just send my share to Chicago. *(rises to go upstairs)* Come on Holly, let's pack. Time to go home.

Charbonneau: But ladies ...

Paulette: Back off buster. I was well off before I came here and I'm going home even better. The one thing I don't need is a gold-digger following me. Come on Holly. *(exits)*

Holly: Sorry. Goodbye everyone. *(follows)*

Clyde: Doctor, you know I can't stay here. I have my research and we're to be married in the fall.

Doctor: I know there's a lot to absorb. Get a good night's rest and we'll talk about it tomorrow.

Clyde: Good night, Doctor.

Kathryn: Yes, good night.

Doctor: Good night. Until tomorrow. *(exits)*

Clyde: Charlie, are you coming up?

Charlie: No, I think I'll stay up a little while.

Clyde: I meant what I said.

Charlie: I know. Just a lot to absorb. That's all. Get some sleep; I'll see you tomorrow.

Clyde: All right. *(exits upstairs with Kathryn)*

Charlie: Left everything to Clyde, that dirty, rotten old son of a ...

Charbonneau: Monsieur Boyer.

Charlie: What do you want?

Charbonneau: I may be of assistance to you.

Charlie: You? Go away.

Charbonneau: But Monsieur.

Charlie: Go away.

Charbonneau: You despise me, don't you? That's all right. Everyone despises me. But I can be of assistance to you.

Charlie: How?

Charbonneau: If you can become the sole heir then everything passes to you, am I right?

Charlie: Go on.

Charbonneau: And I feel there is no love loss between you and your cousins.

Charlie: Not when there's money involved.

Charbonneau: Just as I thought. Those things the doctor spoke of ... they are true. And I know how to get my hands on them.

Charlie: Keep talking.

Charbonneau: For a small percentage, I would be willing to associate you with the necessary articles to accomplish your goal.

Charlie: How small?

Charbonneau: Oh, very small, hardly noticeable. Meet me tonight at midnight in the old part of the cemetery. I will have what you need.

Charlie: Midnight? Charbonneau, I do despise you. Maybe that's why I trust you.

(Lights)

Cemetery

(very creepy with several large trees)

Charlie: Charbonneau ... Charbonneau.

Charbonneau: Over here, Monsieur.

Charlie: Have you got it?

Charbonneau: Not quite yet. Follow me.

Charlie: Where?

Charbonneau: To see Mammy Pleasant.

Charlie: Mammy Pleasant?

Charbonneau: She has what you need. Come. There she is.

Mammy: Who comes here?

Charbonneau: It is I, Charbonneau, with Charles Boyér, heir to the plantation.

Mammy: You mean heir passed over.

Charbonneau: Yes, Mammy, you are right.

Mammy: Hold out your hand ... this is what you need.

Charlie: And what do I owe you for this kindness, Mammy Pleasant?

Mammy: When you achieve your goal ... do not forget this favor done you.

Charlie: I won't.

Mammy: Now go ... the night moves fast.

Charbonneau: Come ... leave us go.

Charlie: Right. *(exiting as girls enter)*

Paulette: They came this way ...

Holly: What are we doing out here?

Paulette: I don't trust that Charlie Boyer or that creepy little Charbonneau. They're up to something ... I'm sure of it.

Holly: Talk of creepy ... this place gives me the creeps. What if there are zombies out here?

Paulette: Oh, keep quiet. That's a lot of superstition. The living dead. Ha. It's the plain old living that we should be scared of. Look, there they are ... hide. *(They hide behind one of the trees.)*

Charbonneau: Here, this way will take you back to the house.

Charlie: Hold up, Charbonneau, I need to rest a minute.

Charbonneau: No time for rest. You can't tell what might be out here.

Charlie: Just for a minute. Besides, I want to pay you.

Charbonneau: Pay me later, when it's over.

Charlie: No, really, I want to pay you now. I have it right here in my pocket.

Charbonneau: What is it?

Charlie: This! *(pulls pistol and shoots)* You're right, Charbonneau. I guess I don't trust you. *(exits)*

Paulette: *(emerging carefully)* Did you see that? We've got to get back. Holly, do you hear me?

(Holly becomes entangled with snakes falling from tree.)

Paulette: I said, "Did you hear me"? Holly, you ninny, where are you? *(Looks back and sees Holly being strangled by serpents.)* I ... I ... Iyyyyy. *(heart attack)*

(Jackson and Doctor enter both armed)

Jackson: This way, Doctor.

Doctor: Who is it?

Jackson: It's Miss Paulette and Miss Day.

Doctor: Both of them? And over there ...

Jackson: Charbonneau *(examines body)* ... I think he's been shot.

Doctor: Let's get them to the hospital. Little good it will do. I didn't think it would start so soon.

(Lights)

Morning – Madam Bosch doing routine –

Clyde: *(feeling rather perky)* Madam Bosch, have you seen Paulette or Miss Day this morning?

Madam: No, Monsieur, I have not.

Clyde: That's strange.

Madam: Dr. Watts is coming over to see you. He has important information.

Clyde: It must be, to call this early in the morning. No more ghost stories, I hope.

Madam: Yes, Monsieur.

Kathryn: Morning, darling.

Clyde: Ah, morning. And how'd you sleep my beloved.

Kathryn: Like an angel.

Clyde: No nightmares then?

Kathryn: No, and you?

Clyde: No, I only dreamed of you.

(snuggle)

Doctor: *(entering)* Ahem.

Clyde: Oh, good morning, Doctor. Tea?

Doctor: No, thank you.

Clyde: Why the long face?

Doctor: Clyde, I would like you to come to the hospital with me.

Clyde: Why?

Doctor: I'd rather explain on the way.

Clyde: But I ...

Doctor: Please.

Clyde: All right. Will you be all right here by yourself?

Kathryn: Of course, and I'm not alone, Madam Bosch is here and Charlie, and I'm sure the girls will show up any time.

Clyde: I'll be back soon. *(they exit)*

(Kathryn begins fixing coffee.)

Charlie: *(enters rather slimy)* So, Prince Charming ran off and left you here, all alone.

Kathryn: Oh, I'm not alone. You're here.

Charlie: A comforting thought.

Kathryn: Coffee?

Charlie: No, I think I'll try something a little stronger. *(goes to bar tray)* So, you're not frightened by the little tales the good doctor told last night?

Kathryn: No, not really. I suppose there is some truth in them but, well, others have survived. Besides, we're not going to be here much longer.

Charlie: You can say that again.

Kathryn: What do you mean? *(rises with teacup)*

Charlie: I mean. If Clyde were to somehow ... disappear ... and I was to inherit all of this, would you stay with me?

Kathryn: I don't understand.

Charlie: What's there to understand? *(taking her)*

Kathryn: Go away, you're hurting me. Stop ... Stop! *(throws hot water in his face)*

Charlie: Agggghh. You little ...

Kathryn: *(running up stairs)* Go away, go away! Clyde ... Madam Bosch!

(Charlie hears noise approaching – runs up other stairs)

Clyde: *(entering in a rush)* I don't believe it. I'm sure Charlie was here all night.

Doctor: But you didn't see him?

Clyde: No, but ...

Doctor: Miss Day died from strangulation by a large serpent. Your cousin, from a heart attack, brought on by a great shock, possibly that of seeing her friend killed, but Charbonneau was killed by gunshot. No way can that be confused with natural causes.

Clyde: But, Doctor ...

Kathryn: *(rushing in)* Clyde, Clyde!

Clyde: Kathryn, what is it?

Kathryn: It's Charlie. He's gone crazy. He tried to ... *(falls crying into Clyde's arms)*

Clyde: Doctor, we must search the house. I'm still not convinced Charlie is a murderer but ... let's go.

Doctor: *(to Kathryn)* Be careful, my dear. I fear there's a storm brewing; outside as well as in.

(Lights)

Later that night – house is dark – storm is under way –

(Madam Bosch crosses with lamp – Kathryn enters with lamp)

Kathryn: Clyde, Clyde ... is that you?

Charlie: No, Kathryn, it's me ... surprised?

Kathryn: Get out of here ... get out or I'll scream.

Charlie: Scream if you like ... it'll go well with the storm.

Kathryn: Clyde! Clyde! *(Charlie slips out as Clyde enters)*

Clyde: Kathryn, what is it?

Kathryn: He was here ... he was here. What's that?

Clyde: What?

Kathryn: There! Out there ... on the terrace. *(strange forms are seen outside the French doors)* They're looking in the windows.

Clyde: Kathryn ... Kathryn.

(Door blows open – lone figure enters)

Kathryn: Ahhh, help! Help!

Doctor: *(uncovering self)* It's all right my dear ... it's all right.

Kathryn: But out there ... I see them ... I see them!

Doctor: It's all right ... they are here to protect you.

Kathryn: But they are Zombies!

Doctor: Of course. But these Zombies belong to me.

(Lights)

Later –

Doctor: I'm afraid she has suffered a total nervous breakdown. She'll need to be transported to the mainland at first light.

Clyde: Yes, Doctor, but ...

Doctor: I'm sorry, Clyde. Do you wish to go with her?

Clyde: That I do, Doctor. But there is something I must finish first. Go stay with her until the boat arrives, please.

Doctor: Of course.

(Doctor exits. Clyde goes to bar as if to fix a drink.)

Charlie: Hello, Clyde.

Clyde: Charlie.

Charlie: What happened to your pretty little fiancée? The thought of all that wealth too much for her?

Clyde: It's more than that and you know it. What happened to you, Charlie? You could have shared in all of it.

Charlie: Share? That's such a juvenile concept ... when you can have it all. Here Clyde, I have something for you. *(Blows powder in his face – Clyde collapses)*

(Charlie starts laughing slowly and goes to bar and pours himself a drink – continues laughing and drinks – grabs throat and gags)

(Lights)

Next morning –

- Doctor: Kathryn is safely on her way. Are you sure you don't wish to join her, especially on the journey North?
- Clyde: *(rather stoic)* No, thank you, Doctor. There's not much I can do for her. I've decided to stay here for a while ... to help you with your research.
- Doctor: Clyde!? *(confused)*
- Clyde: Please, I think I would enjoy being called Claude. Claude Boyér. At least while I'm staying here. It would be good for the natives, I think.
- Doctor: Yes, of course.
- Clyde: My research at home was of the mundane; just continued repetition of somebody else's work. But here. What a better place to examine the strange compounds that actually control a man's soul. Did I tell you that I came across a packet of these powders right here in this house?
- Doctor: No.
- Clyde: Yes. I found them while we were searching for Charlie. I, of course, removed the powder and replaced it with an inert material. I do believe, though, that these powders can be diluted in a tincture and taken orally; producing the same effects. We'll need more research, I dare say.
- Doctor: Of course ... and your cousin, Charlie?
- Clyde: Oh, he's staying on too. But in a slightly different capacity, *(rings bell – Charlie enters with tray – “zombied.” Clyde takes two glasses and offers)* Zombie, Doctor?

(Lights)

Finis

P.D.W.

In 2002, Mummies were big! Owing, in no little part, to the success of the films The Mummy and The Mummy Returns. So, with a couple of reference books, an encyclopedia, a map and a few tattered old National Geographics, we're off to Egypt and checked-in to the Hotel Luxor.

Once again, I wanted a story that was all my own and, as luck would have it, I found it in the fact that the Tomb of Ahmosis, the first Pharaoh of the eighteenth Dynasty, had not (and as of this writing has not) been discovered. Voila! We have our mummy ... but what to do with him. A group of American archeologists seemed logical, if not a bit cliché, armed with all the necessary facts ... except one. Where to get the missing information? Why from an old, famous and now somewhat recluse archeologist of course. Enter Preston Scott. A cross between Stewart Granger and Indiana Jones; complete with white suit, pith helmet, pipe, pistol and, yes, a bullwhip. Preston Scott is probably my favorite creation. Mysterious, brooding, the keeper of all the great mysteries as he holds court in the protection of his hotel. A "Sherlock Holmes of the desert," so to speak. Once the facts were given and the characters established, the rest was easy. Send them on their way and see who gets killed. As to the end? Well, there's the mystery.

A brief note about the set. The Hotel Luxor was simple yet effective. A main entrance up-center with beaded curtain and a check-in desk to the side were mounted on a rolling platform. A transom read "Hotel Luxor." Down-right, a small sitting room. Down-left, in darkness until needed, Prof. Scott's office. To transform the hotel to the tomb, the platform would shift up-stage, a roll-drop of the tomb wall masked the exchange of another casted platform holding the sarcophagus. After the explosion, we enter the tomb and it stays in place until after Shaw's death. A simple curtain down-stage during office scenes made the transformations easy.

The popularity of Preston Scott and his niece, Victoria, led us, two years later, to bring them back on another adventure, this time to Scotland, in Murder in a Haunted Castle.

The Mystery of The Mummy's Tomb

By

Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

August 2002

Cast of Characters

Preston Scott ... a legendary archeologist

Hassan Askim ... Hotel keeper

Salima Askim ... his wife

Dr. Randolph Shaw ... an archaeologist

Andrea Shaw ... his daughter

William Thompson ... his assistant

Nicholas Price ... joining the adventure

Nora Price ... his sister

Victoria Scott ... Scott's niece

Abys-mal ... laborer

Ahkmed ... his cousin

Setting: Valley of the Kings - Luxor, Egypt - 1905

Opening: Lobby of the Hotel Luxor

(Waiter/desk clerk is pouring a glass of whiskey to a man seated, reading a newspaper, smoking a pipe, mostly obscure to the audience.)

(Enter Doctor Shaw – rings call bell)

Doctor: Ahem ... ahemm ... excuse me, please.

(Hassan finishes tending to the mysterious man before responding.)

Hassan: Yes, sir. How can I be of service?

Doctor: I am looking for one ... let me see here, Ah ... Hassan Askim. *(labored pronunciation)*

Hassan: Hassan Askim.

Doctor: Ask who?

Hassan: No, I am Hassan Askim.

Doctor: Fine, fine ... I am Doctor ...

Hassan: Dr. Randolph Shaw.

Doctor: Yes ...

Hassan: Of the University of Chicago ...

Doctor: Yes, and I would ...

Hassan: Now stationed at the American University at Cairo.

Doctor: Of course.

Hassan: Welcome to the Hotel Luxor, Dr. Shaw. My wife, Salima, is preparing your rooms even as we speak.

Doctor: Excellent, then you got my telegram?

Hassan: But of course, Doctor. And the rest of your party?

Doctor: My daughter, Andrea, and my assistant, Mr. Thompson. They'll be along directly. Oh, did you get the second telegram about the extra rooms?

Hassan: Extra rooms?

Doctor: Yes, for a fellow named Price. Traveling with his sister. Met him in Cairo. Don't know much about his credentials but he seemed eager enough. And the more hands the better on the dig, eh?

Hassan: Yes, of course, Doctor. I did receive your telegram. All will be in order for you. Sign please.

Doctor: Of course.

(Enter William and Andrea)

Doctor: Ah, here we are, my assistant, Mr. William Thompson and my lovely daughter, Andrea. This is our host, Mr. Hassan Askim.

William: Ask him what?

Doctor: No, that's his name, my boy.

William: Oh.

Andrea: Pleased to meet you, Mr. Askim.

William: Yes, pleased to meet you.

Hassan: You are my guests. Call me simply Hassan. And this is my wife Salima. Salima, this is Dr. Shaw and his party.

Salima: Yes, of course, your rooms have been prepared for you. You will find fresh towels and water. I'm sure you will like to freshen up after your journey.

Doctor: Yes, thank you.

Hassan: I will have your luggage sent up. Then, when you're ready, I will prepare refreshments for you.

Doctor: Thank you very much. Such hospitality, I'm so excited I could begin right away.

Andrea: Calm down, father, there will be time.

William: Yes, we have a lot of preparations of our own to do before we can get started.

Doctor: Yes, yes ... I know.

Salima: You are the ones who are attempting to find the resting place of the great Pharaoh Ahmosis ...

Hassan: Ahem ...

Doctor: Yes, that's right. Word does travel fast, doesn't it?

Hassan: Salima will show you to your rooms now.

Salima: Follow me, please.

Doctor: I'll be right up. I have a few more details to arrange with Hassan.

Andrea: All right, father, but please come up. I think you should rest awhile.

Doctor: Yes, my dear, just a few words. Hassan, you seem like a right square gee, so I'm going to be honest with you. I have come looking for Ahmosis. The first Pharaoh of the eighteenth Dynasty and one of the few tombs not to be discovered in the Valley of the Kings.

Hassan: Some say there is a reason Ahmosis stays hidden beneath the sands. That he is protected.

Doctor: I know, I know, curses ... superstitions ... oh! No offense.

Hassan: None taken.

Doctor: I do respect your religious beliefs and your customs. But these tombs have been, pardon me, desecrated since, well, day one. Grave robbers, Roman invaders ... but today this is science. Research to educate and understand the history of your ancestors. And I assure you when I find Ahmosis nothing will be kept for personal gain. All will go to the museum at Cairo. I only wish to take away the satisfaction of finding it.

Hassan: You seem quite confident in your success ... and your moral convictions, Dr. Shaw.

Doctor: Thank you.

Hassan: But perhaps your daughter is right. Perhaps you should lie down for a while. You seem rather excited.

Doctor: Yes, thank you. I do tend to go on sometimes.

Hassan: Let me get you a glass of water.

Doctor: Thank you ... Hassan?

Hassan: Yes?

Doctor: There's something else I want to ask you. My colleagues tell me that this Hotel is the residence of Preston Scott?

Hassan: Professor Scott has kept rooms and offices in this hotel for many years.

Doctor: Then why doesn't he return my correspondence? I've been trying to get in touch with him for months ... years actually.

Hassan: Professor Scott sees no one.

Doctor: What?

(Man in corner taps pipe on ashtray)

Hassan: There is the rare occasion. *(Hassan takes decanter and refills whiskey glass of mystery man before resuming.)* I would suggest you try and set up an appointment with his secretary, his niece, Victoria. I will leave a message for her.

Doctor: Thank you ... oh and one more thing. I'll need a couple of bearers, ones that can be trusted, of course.

Hassan: Of course, I will make the arrangements.

Doctor: Thank you, again. And now I think I had better lie down.

Hassan: 'Til this evening, Dr. Shaw.

(Shaw exits. Enter Nick and Nora)

Nick: Ah, this must be the place.

Hassan: Mr. and Miss Price, I presume.

Nick: Yes ...

Hassan: I am Hassan. Welcome to the Hotel Luxor.

Nick: Thanks. Do you mind? *(to bar cart)*

Hassan: Not at all. Help yourself. My wife, Salima is preparing your rooms. I am sure you would wish to refresh yourselves after your journey.

Nora: You can say that again.

Hassan: I shall go make sure all is ready. Oh, would you mind signing the register?

Nick: Not at all, there you go.

Hassan: Nicholas and Nora Price, very good.

Nick: You did get the message about adjoining rooms, didn't you?

Hassan: But of course, Mr. Price, I shall not be long. *(exits)*

Nora: All right, Nicky, this had better work.

Nick: Calm down, Nora. Have a drink. *(she takes his and he makes another)* This will be the easiest scam we've ever done. If this old boy is right and old ... what's his name ... has never been discovered ... then there's bound to be a king's ransom in treasure. Literally. All we got to do is play along. Do a little digging and beat it with the goods when no one's looking. Get it?

Nora: Got it.

Nick: Good.

Nora: But crawling around in all those tunnels with all those mummy things. It gives me the willies. And what's it going to do to my nails?

Nick: Honey, when this is over, you can buy yourself a whole new set. *(giggle ... start to kiss)*

Hassan: *(entering)* All has been prepared. My wife, Salima.

Nick: Nick Price and this is my sister, Nora.

Salima: Follow me, please.
(moving upstairs)

Nick: What a charming hotel you have, Mrs. Askim.

Nora: Ask him what?

Nick: Move it.

(Hassan goes and fills mysterious man's glass and goes behind counter. Salima re-enters.)

Salima: What are we going to do?

Hassan: Keep your voice down.

Salima: But what if they find our Great Master Ahmosis?

Hassan: Others have tried ... all have failed.

Salima: But we've sworn to protect him.

Hassan: And so we shall. You go alert the others. I must find Abys-mal and Ahkmed. *(spit take)* Hurry back.

(They exit by different doors. Mysterious man rises, folds paper, gets hat from rack and saunters out main doors. Lights fade.)

Scene 2 – Lobby – Hassan serving drinks.

Nick: This is all very fascinating, Doctor. But how do you think you can find this tomb after so many others have failed?

Doctor: You see, my boy. I have devised a map. Showing all the tombs yet discovered.

Nick: But there's lots of maps ... I saw them in Cairo.

Doctor: Yes, but mine is different.

Nick: How different?

Doctor: You see. Pyramids were the tombs of choice for Pharaohs of Egypt's Old Kingdom whose political world was centered on Giza and the Nile delta region. So too was their gateway to the netherworld.

Nora: Oohhh! *(shudder)*

Andrea: Sshh.

Doctor: But Pharaohs of the Early New Kingdom traced their dynastic roots further south to Thebes, or, present day Luxor, and wanted their tombs built, well, closer to home, so to speak.

William: Between 1539 and 1078 B.C., practically all pharaohs, were buried in the Valley of the Kings.

Doctor: Starting with Ahmosis, in 1514 B.C. ...

Nora: But you said 1539 B.C. You mean they started building their tombs before they were even dead?

Doctor: Yes, of course.

Nora: Oohhh! (*shudder*)

Andrea: Ssshhh.

Nick: Why did they select this particular valley, Doctor?

Doctor: Because it's primary peak, en-Qurn, resembled a pyramid. This gave the new necropolis a powerful symbolic charge.

William: The site also seemed more secure. Sentries stationed at the valley's only entrance could discourage tomb robbers.

Andrea: Or, so they thought.

Doctor: Yes, by the time archeologists began excavating in the early 1800's most tombs had been ransacked.

Nora: How awful.

Nick: Yes, all that ... wealth ... of information destroyed.

Doctor: Not all of it. And we're going to find one of the greatest missing links ... the first. Ahmosis.

Nick: But how?

Doctor: There is a man. A Professor Prest ...

Victoria: (*entering*) Excuse me, Hassan.

Hassan: Yes, Miss Victoria?

Victoria: My uncle would like to have his meal sent to his room tonight.

Hassan: Yes, Miss Victoria.

Doctor: Excuse me, Miss.

Victoria: Yes.

Doctor: Am I to assume that you are Miss Victoria Scott?

Victoria: Yes, yes I am.

Doctor: I am Dr. Randolph Shaw, and this is my daughter, Andrea.

Andrea: How do you do?

Doctor: And my assistant, William Thompson.

William: How do you do!

Doctor: And Mr. and Miss Price.

Victoria: It certainly has been a pleasure to meet you all but I must ...

Doctor: Did your Uncle receive my note ... will he see me?

Victoria: He did receive your note but has not given me a response. I will certainly remind him of your request. Now, I really must go. Good night.

Doctor: Good night, Miss Scott.

William: Good night.

(Victoria exits upstairs)

Nora: Now who was that?

Doctor: That was the niece of Professor Preston Scott, one of the greatest archeologists of all time.

Nick: What's this about seeing or not seeing you ...

Doctor: Something happened a few years ago, I don't exactly know what, but it seems that Professor Scott has become somewhat of a recluse. If I could only talk to him, then the final pieces would fall into place.

Andrea: I'm sure now that you're here. He'll see you father. I'm sure.

Doctor: I hope so my dear. I hope so.

(Lights fade)

Scene 3 – Next Morning

(Mystery man is sitting, as before, smoking, reading, drinking coffee. Hassan attending.)

Doctor: *(reading as he enters)* This is absolutely fascinating, fascinating. Oh, do you mind? *(gestures to nearby seat)*

Scott: Not at all.

(Shaw sits)

Hassan: Coffee, Dr. Shaw?

Doctor: Oh, thank you Hassan. Shaw's the name. *(extends hand ... no response)* This is truly remarkable. It's all about Belzoni's discovery of Seti's tomb, 1815. "As Belzoni's flickering candle shone on Seti's sarcophagus, its translucent alabaster glowed in the gloom. Painted relics, drawings and hieroglyphs covered almost every wall, pillar and ceiling. In the burial chamber, Belzoni gazed up at a dark blue vaulted ceiling that glistened as if painted the day before."

Scott: You seem most interested.

Doctor: Oh, I am. I'm a professor of archeology at the University of Chicago assigned to the American University in Cairo. *(quietly)* Here on an extremely important mission.

Scott: And what kind of a mission could that be?

Doctor: Oh, nothing that would interest you, I'm sure.

Scott: Seti the First, died in June 1279 B.C., I do believe, father of Ramses the Second. Quite the funeral from what I've been told.

Doctor: Yes ... well. I might as well tell you. I'm here to see Preston Scott.

Scott: Preston Scott, eh.

Doctor: Yes, I have some information that I think he will find rather interesting.

Scott: Oh, you do, do you?

Doctor: Yes, I think I've found a way to figure the calculations to the location of the Tomb of Ahmosis.

Scott: Ahmosis.

Doctor: Yes, and when he learns of this, I'm sure he'll see me.

Scott: Let me give you a bit of advice, Dr. Shaw. Many have searched for the Tomb of Ahmosis and many have died. I would suggest you pack your bags and return to Chicago before something happens to you. *(rises to leave)* Good day. *(hands coffee cup to Hassan)*

Doctor: I don't believe I caught your name, Sir.

Scott: *(turns)* I don't believe I dropped it. *(exits up stairs)*

Doctor: The cheek of the man. Just who does he think he is?

Hassan: That, sir, is Preston Scott.

(Lights)

Scene 4 – Lobby

(Hassan with Abys-mal and Ahkmed)

Hassan: Do you understand?

Abys-mal: Yes, Hassan.

Hassan: Keep your eyes and ears open at all times. Get it?

Abys-mal: Got it.

Hassan: Good. And you, Ahkmed.

Ahkmed: *(nods)*

Hassan: Ahhh, good morning, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Price. Here are the two bearers I promised you. Fine diggers and notoriously trustworthy.

William: Ahh, good, we'll begin at once.

Abys-mal: I am Abys-mal, kind sir. And this is my cousin, Ahkmed. Allah has graced him with a strong back but a weak mind. He speaks but little. It is an honor to be working for such extinguished scientists such as yourselves.

William: Yes, well. Best be at it. We'll be taking the bulk of the gear to the staging area and then wait for Dr. Shaw. He'll be joining us later. Yesterday's surveying was a bit much on him. But he's confident.

Abys-mal: You mean you think you've found the hidden tomb?

William: Not quite ... but damn close. Come along. *(they exit)*

Hassan: And you, Mr. Price. How are you enjoying your stay?

Nick: Me? Oh, fascinating. I can't imagine how I've lived so long without riding a camel. *(exits)*

Andrea: *(entering from stairs with Nora)* I'm sure my father will be feeling better soon. These spells hit him sometimes. He has a tendency to overdo it you understand.

Nora: Of course. All great men do.

William: *(re-entering)* Ah, Andrea. Miss Price. We've got the extra men and are taking the rest of the gear out. No real need for you to come out. Perhaps you should stay close and check on your father. Nick and I can handle it.

Andrea: Thank you, Will, that probably would be best.

Nora: Yes, and it would give us some time to get to know each other better.

Andrea: Yes.

Nora: And God knows. I could use a shopping trip. I'll get my purse and meet you in a few minutes. *(goes back upstairs)*

Andrea: Will?

William: Yes?

Andrea: There's something about them that I don't trust. What do you think?

William: Oh, I think they're an all right sort. Just not used to this sort of thing. Your father seems to admire young Nick's enthusiasm. You just take care of the sister.

Andrea: All right. Will?

William: What?

Andrea: What are the chances of Professor Scott seeing my father? I mean ... what do you think?

William: I don't know. It appears he doesn't see anyone.

Andrea: It would mean so much to father. I'm sure that's part of what's troubling him.

William: I tell you what. Let me have a shot at it. I'll talk with that niece of his. She's his secretary, you know.

Andrea: Oh, could you, Will?

William: Couldn't hurt. See ya later. *(he exits)*

Nora: *(returning)* Oh, there you are. Come my dear ... some fresh air and a new frock will do you a world of good.

Andrea: Yes.

Nora: Some nice fresh air. *(Goes out door and immediately start coughing)*

(Lights)

Scene 5 – Office

(Victoria at the typewriter)

William: Ahem, excuse me.

Victoria: Oh, yes. Please come in. Mr. Thompson, isn't it?

William: Ahhh, yes, er ... William ... Will, if you like.

Victoria: And I am Victoria ... Vickie, if you like.

William: Oh, yes ... I would like ... I mean ...

Victoria: It's all right ... please.

William: Thank you.

Victoria: Now, what can I do for you Mr. ... I mean Will?

William: It's Dr. Shaw. He desperately wants to meet with your uncle. He feels that he is so close to his goal but a meeting with Prof. Scott would put all the final pieces together.

Victoria: I see.

William: Besides, I think he wants to know why the worlds leading archeologist would simply drop everything and shut the world out behind him.

Victoria: I'm afraid that's my fault.

William: Your fault?

Victoria: Or my father's ... I should say.

William: Please, go on, if you would.

Victoria: You see. My father had the same obsession as your Dr. Shaw, to find the missing Tomb of Ahmosis. He studied day and night. Spent years in the field following every clue, every superstition. One day, he went out to the digs, convinced he had finally located it, and never returned. Soon after, my mother fell ill with a strange condition that no one could explain ... and died.

William: I'm so sorry.

Victoria: The locals claimed it was the curse of Ahmosis, that my father had disturbed something sacred and that his family would bear the sacrifice. So my uncle sequestered me here under the guise that he was writing one last book and needed a secretary. But I know he'il never finish it.

William: But he's written so many wonderful books.

Victoria: I think he believes that if he finishes this book ... he too will be finished. It's kind of like the Ancients. They believed they could find spiritual immortality by taking their possessions with them onto the other side. And so my uncle is seeking immortality on earth by working on an unfinished document. And at the same time ... protecting me.

William: This may sound strange ... but I think I understand.

Victoria: Thank you.

Scott: *(intimate beat as Scott enters abruptly)* What's going on here?

Victoria: Uncle Preston!

Scott: Well?

Victoria: This is Mr. Thompson, Dr. Shaw's assistant.

Scott: I see.

William: Please, Professor Scott, wouldn't you meet with Dr. Shaw? Just for a few minutes. He is so confident that you hold the missing key to his ... obsession ... and I can tell you ... he won't stop until he finds the tomb ... or dies trying.

Scott: *(after a moment)* I will see him.

Victoria: Uncle Preston.

William: Oh, thank you sir, thank you. I'll tell him at once. *(exits)*

Victoria: Uncle ... I don't understand.

Scott: Perhaps the time has come to finally lay things to rest.

(Lights)

Scene 6 – Lobby

Salima: Hassan! Hassan!

Hassan: What is it?

Salima: Professor Scott ... he has sent for Dr. Shaw.

Hassan: What?

Salima: I think he's going to help him.

Hassan: Impossible.

Salima: Impossible maybe ... but true. What do we do?

Hassan: There's nothing we can do but wait ... simply wait.

(Lights)

Scene 7 - Office

Scott: And so you see ... my late brother's findings are almost identical to yours.

Doctor: Remarkable.

Scott: That is why I chose to see you. In a way, I am torn. Part of me wishes to find the tomb, to finish my brother's work and possibly find a logical answer to his fate. But the other half is compelled to warn you. There are more things between heaven and hell ... well you know the rest. And I can tell you ... I've seen both.

Doctor: But I must continue. I've come so far.

Scott: I know. My brother kept meticulous notes. We kept two copies, one for each of us in case something ... well ... here are my copies. You are welcome to them. I wish you luck in your venture, but remember ... danger lurks behind every corner.

Doctor: Thank you sir, thank you. But, won't you join us. From what you've told me, this discovery belongs to you more than anyone.

Scott: No! Excuse me but I've had my share of discoveries. I only hope you can help me close yet another chapter in my book. Goodbye. *(Shaw exits. Scott pulls gun from drawer, sits and ponders.)*

(Light fades on Scott and come up on Abys-mal and Ahkmed)

Ahkmed: What should we do?

Abys-mal: Nothing.

Ahkmed: But shouldn't we tell Hassan?

Abys-mal: Not yet.

Ahkmed: But what if he finds ...

Abys-mal: Then we tell. In the meantime, we're getting good wages for chasing geese. Come ... and keep quiet.

(Lights)

Scene 8 – Outside tomb

Doctor: If all our calculations coincide, then the tomb should lie just behind this wall.

William: Isn't this exciting Nick?

Nick: Yes, rather (*yawn*) Doctor, are you sure this is the spot? We must have seen a hundred walls just like this already.

Doctor: Look here. Here is the mark we've been looking for, the secret symbol of Ahmosis as recorded in Christoffer Scott's journal. Abys-mal, Ahkmed ... start preparations right here. Let us get the explosives ready.

Ahkmed: Now what do we do ... we must tell Hassan or (*draws knife across throat*) ... ourselves.

Abys-mal: No!

Ahkmed: What are you saying?

Abys-mal: There lies a fortune behind that wall ... and I want a piece of it. Keep quiet. We'll help enter the tomb ... take care of the good Doctor and the others ... take the fortune and be out of the country before anyone finds out ... shhhhh, quiet.

Doctor: Here, we must be very careful how we set the charges. We only wish to open the portal causing as little damage as possible ... there ... now back ... if all goes well in a few minutes we will solve the mystery of Ahmosis' Tomb.

(Explosion – lights go black – lights come up on burial chamber – sarcophagus center guarded by two mummy sentries)

William: Ahhh, look at it.

Nick: It's beautiful. Look at this.

Doctor: Don't touch anything. All must be catalogued and carefully recorded. We must send for Andrea and Nora.

(Ahkmed starts slipping things into his pockets.)

William: Sir, what about the sarcophagus?

Doctor: Yes, it is tempting. All right go ahead. Get the crowbars ... easy now ... be careful.

(As the lid opens out rushes clouds of smoke as rubble falls from the ceiling crushing Ahkmed)

Abys-mal: Ahkmed!

(Black Out)

Scene 9 – Office

Victoria: Uncle ... Uncle.

Scott: Yes, my dear.

Victoria: There are some men from the museum here ... wanting to know if you would speak to them.

Scott: No. I don't think so.

Victoria: They're moving the sarcophagus to Cairo tomorrow ... don't you think you should be there?

Scott: No ... I've moved enough heavy boxes in my day.

Victoria: Uncle, something's wrong, I know it.

Scott: I have a feeling this isn't over yet.

Victoria: But nothing has happened. One worker got killed but that was an accident. Nothing has happened.

Scott: That's just it. Nothing has happened.

(Lights)

Scene 10 – Tomb

(Several crates - lantern on one creating a makeshift desk)

Andrea: Father, please!

Doctor: Don't argue. I'm staying.

Andrea: But father, everything is boxed up and ready to be sent to the museum tomorrow. There's no reason to stay.

Doctor: I know. That's just it. I would like to spend one more night with Ahmosis ... here in his afterlife home. Don't worry. Nothing can happen. As you said, everything is boxed and ready and ... the entrance is heavily guarded. So you go back to the hotel and have a comfortable rest ... I'll be just fine.

Andrea: But father ...

Doctor: Now be a good girl and go ... before I have to spank you.

Andrea: Oh, father ... good night.

Doctor: Good night my dear. Now my old friend, what should we talk about? Here, let me read to you from Christoffer Scott's journal. You'd be amazed at the trouble you've caused over the years. What's this? *(a piece of parchment falls from book)* I don't remember seeing this before. *(starts to read as sarcophagus starts to open)* I'm going to have to translate it ... hold on. "He who dares disturb the resting place of the Great Pharaoh Ahmosis must be prepared to suffer the curse in this life as well as the next." Well, ... what do you think of that? *(Sees mummy of Ahmosis emerging from sarcophagus)* AAAAHHHHH.

(Black out)

Scene 11 – Office

Andrea: I begged him not to stay but he wouldn't listen.

Scott: There, there my dear. There's nothing you could have done.

William: It must have been his heart. He's had attacks before.

Scott: Sometimes, I think archeology itself is a disease. Now tell me again. All the jewels and artifacts were taken along with the mummy itself but the guards saw or heard nothing.

William: That's right.

Andrea: But this.

Scott: What's that?

Andrea: It was found on the ground beside my father ... along with the journal.

Scott: Let me see that. "He who dares disturb the resting place of the Great Pharaoh Ahmosis must be prepared to suffer the curse in this life as well as the next." Curious.

Andrea: What is it?

Scott: I don't know. I've never seen it before. Will, take Miss Andrea to her room. Vickie will help you. Perhaps a soothing refreshment might help. *(to William)* If you need to, don't hesitate to call for the doctor.

William: Right.

Scott: And now my brave young lady, I must bid you good night. I have work to do.

Andrea: Thank you, sir. You are very kind.

Scott: Thank you, good night. *(sits)* And now Preston ... think.

(Lights fade)

Scene 12 – Lobby – Night

Salima: Hassan, what are we going to do? The curse has been unleashed.

Hassan: Quiet, Salima.

Salima: No, I won't be quiet. Ahkmed is dead and the American Doctor. And where is Abys-mal? Ahmosis is walking the earth. Who knows who could be next.

Hassan: Quiet, I said and quiet I mean. All my life I have believed in the curse of Ahmosis. That is why we swore to protect the tomb. But now, I'm not so sure.

Salima: What do you mean?

Hassan: There are too many strangers involved and I have too many questions.

Salima: Where are you going?

Hassan: To the tomb.

Salima: Oh, no. Oh, be careful.

Hassan: I will. I'm taking Professor Scott with me.

(Lights fade as they exit, Salima to kitchen, Hassan out main doors. Lights resume as Nora and Nick enter from stairs.)

Scene 12B

Nora: That's it, Nicky! I've had it. Now where are those jewels?

Nick: I've already told you. I don't have them!

Nora: Then where are they?

Nick: If I had them, do you think that we'd still be here! Now calm down.

Nora: I am not calming down. I told you this place gave me the creeps. Dead men, missing mummies. I want out of here!

Nick: I've come this far and I ain't leaving with empty pockets!

Nora: Fine! You stay ... but I'm going.

Nick: All right, all right. Maybe the water is getting a bit too hot. Here pour yourself a drink and I'll start putting the bags together. You're right about one thing, Nora.

Nora: What's that.

Nick: This place does give one the creeps.

(Nick goes back upstairs. Nora goes to tea table/bar)

Salima: *(entering from kitchen)* Is there something I can help you with, Miss?

Nora: Ahh. Oh, no. I was just fixing myself a nightcap. Nerves a bit unsteady with all that's been going on. My brother went up early. It is all right, isn't it?

Salima: Of course, if there is anything else you should need, don't hesitate to call.

Nora: Thank you.

Salima: Good night. *(exits)*

Nora: Good night. A fast boat back to the States that's what I need. What's that? Is that you Nicky? Who's there? (*Mummy reaches from wings and takes her*) AAAHHHHH.

(*Lights*)

Scene 13 – Next Morning

Nick: I'm telling you. I left her here last night!

Salima: Yes, good sir, and I have told you. I saw her. She was having a refreshment before retiring, something about her nerves.

William: (*entering with Andrea*) What seems to be the trouble?

Nick: The trouble is that my sister is missing and that this old crone seems to be the last one to see her!

Andrea: Maybe she went for a morning walk?

Nick: And I'm telling you that she never came to bed last night.

William: And how would you know that? You do have separate rooms, don't you?

Nick: Ah, yes, well.

Salima: And she did say that you retired early, Mr. Price.

Nick: Yes, well, I know she wouldn't have gone out without telling me ... that's all.

Salima: I will check with Miss Victoria and then prepare your breakfasts. (*exits*)

Nick: Yeah, you do that. I'm telling you I don't trust her ... or that husband of hers ... or that crazy archeologist. Nora was just saying last night that this place gave her the creeps ... welllllll.

Andrea: Please, Mr. Price, I'm sure she'll turn up.

Nick: And I'm saying that I don't trust anybody!

Scott: (*entering with Hassan from main door*) And who would you prefer to trust, Mr. Price?

Hassan: Trouble?

Nick: Yeah, trouble. My sister's gone missing and your wife was the last to see her.

Scott: Instead of standing here yelling perhaps a search would be in order.

William: That would be the wisest solution, don't you think?

Nick: Yeah, a search, and where do you suppose we begin?

Salima: *(from kitchen)* AAAHHH.

Hassan: Salima!

Scott: Will, quickly!

(They bring in the body of Nora.)

(General alarm. Scott examines body.)

Salima: She was shoved into one of the cupboards.

Nick: You see. I told you.

Scott: Quiet! Hassan, tend to Salima. Victoria, fix Mr. Price a drink.

Victoria: Yes, sir.

Scott: Now everyone, calm down. Curious. She seems to have been strangled. And these fragments ... bits of old linen.

(Lights fade)

Scene 14 - Office – Scott cleaning up.

Victoria: Everything is set, Uncle. Oh, I do hope you know what you are doing.

Scott: So do I, Vickie. But don't worry, we've been in tighter spots.

(Suddenly a snake drops from ceiling)

Stand back! *(draws revolver and shoots)*

Victoria: Oh, Uncle!

Hassan: Professor Scott ... Professor Scott.

Scott: Here, Hassan. Get rid of this for me, will you? And is everything ready?

Hassan: Yes, sir. All are assembled. Oh, never before have I seen such a serpent in a first class apartment.

Scott: Well, my dear, at least we're getting someone's attention.

(Lights)

Scene 15 – Lobby

(All are assembled)

Scott: I'm sure you all know why I've assembled you here. We have two murders, a ransacked tomb and now, most recently, a poisonous snake planted in my chambers. Someone has certainly gone to a lot of trouble and for what, to protect an ancient tomb, to rob an ancient tomb or to cleverly disguise murder?

Nick: What are you talking about?

Scott: Please. Now, let's look at each element individually. It is true, Hassan and Salima, and this little fellow, are part of an ancient cult sworn to guard the Tomb of Ahmosis but not to keep people out ... but the mummy in. The curse of Ahmosis is their religion ... but not one to kill for.

Hassan: Thank you sir.

Scott: Now the issue of the ransacked tomb. Hassan and I found the secret entrance to the tomb that my brother found all those years ago. Yes, Victoria, he did find the tomb ... and I found his body crushed under a fallen boulder, an accident ... not a curse. This fellow Abys-mal, we found rummaging through the tunnels, but he was only looking for treasure ... harmless. Now the subject of murder, Dr. Shaw could easily have died of a heart attack, whether of natural causes or from a great shock that we can't be sure but certainly the tomb was entered and the mummy and the treasures hidden somewhere within the cavernous halls. Which brings us to Miss Price.

Nick: Yes, what about my sister?

Scott: You mean wife.

Nick: What?

Scott: I said wife. Hassan had you sign the registry. We sent copies of your handwriting and descriptions to the authorities. You have quite a reputation Mr. Price. Card sharp, thief, hustler and now murderer.

Nick: No!

Scott: Salima and Victoria heard you arguing with your wife shortly before her disappearance. You obviously gained Dr. Shaw's confidence in order to join this expedition and have free access in and out of the crypt. I wouldn't be surprised if he even bribed the guards.

Nick: No! It isn't true.

Scott: Now would you like to tell us where you've hidden the body of Ahmosis and his treasure or do we leave that to the police?

Nick: No! It's not true I tell you ... it's not true.

Scott: Take him away. (Hassan and Abys-mal haul him out.)

William: That was brilliant, sir. Absolutely brilliant.

Victoria: Oh, Uncle, you did it.

Andrea: Oh, Mr. Scott, how can I ever repay you?

Scott: First I think by getting a good night's sleep. We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have a mummy to find ... into the tunnels first thing tomorrow. Good night.

Victoria
And Andrea: Good night. *(they exit)*

Scott: Well, young Thompson, I think I'll finish off the evening with a nightcap in my room. Care to join me?

William: Why certainly, sir. If you just give me a few minutes to freshen up.

Scott: Certainly, my boy, but don't take all night. *(he exits up stairs)*

(As Scott leaves Will's demeanor changes ... he goes to the wings and recovers a suitcase from hiding. He pulls out a mummy mask and rags ... then some jewelry. He laughs, tucks the jewels back in the bag and turns to go ... meeting Ahmosis face-to-face as we fade to black.)

Finis!

P.D.W.

In 2004, we knew we wanted to bring back the character of “Preston Scott” and have him solve another mystery but how and where? England, of course! Preston and Victoria can take the artifacts from The Mummy’s Tomb to England where haunted castles and ghost stories abound. But where exactly? Coming to the rescue was one of my actors, Dylan Wright (our Col. Morrison). Dylan had gone to school in South Carolina and his University had a sister campus at Dalkeith, Scotland. Perfect! We could wear kilts! When I announced, “we’re going to Scotland,” my secretary, Lori Jakes, noted, “but there are no snakes in Scotland. What’s he going to shoot? Salmon?” I found a way around that as you will see.

But what about the story? I had seen, a few years before, a series on haunted castles on one of the education channels and remembered one about a ghostly piper. Add to that a household of questionable characters and a hint of the List of Adrian Messenger and you end up with a perfect tribute to Agatha Christie. And this time he was right ... sort of.

A quick note about costumes. The gentlemen started the play in suits. Preston Scott in his signature white suit but with a black vest. When the dinner party commenced, they moved into kilts with Tuxedo jackets. Following that scene, the tops were exchanged for tweeds and four-in-hand ties. Colorful and easy. Owing to the fact that the stage was raised above the first section of the audience and, as actors, we needed an “insurance policy” as not to accidentally offend, we chose not to wear our kilts “traditionally.” All, that is, except Zac Thomas, our Dr. Campbell. The cheek of the man. My apologies to anyone who may have got a glimpse of said “cheek” as he bailed out the window. “And a good time was had by all.”

Preston Scott:
Murder In a Haunted Castle
By
Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

August 2004

Dramatis Personae

Preston Scott

Victoria Scott

Angus MacBride

Justin Thyme

Alex MacGregor

Kinnon McKinnon

Megan Morrison

Dr. Hamish Campbell

Col. Francis Morrison

Lady Agatha Armstrong

Lindsey Armstrong

Setting: Dalkeith Castle – outside of Edinburgh, Scotland - 1907

Note: Except for the train station and the riverbank, the entire action takes place in the great-room of Dalkeith Castle. A large stony room with ample seating, bookshelves, a teacart, a fireplace and, perhaps, a few trophy mounts here and there. Up-stage, we must have a short flight of stairs leading to a balcony with a large open window overlooking a courtyard below and in the short distance, a parapet wall upon which our “apparition” can be seen.

Opening: **A dark brooding midnight in the great-room of Dalkeith Castle.**

(The haunting sounds of bagpipes somewhere in the distance. A dark figure attempting to remove something from a safe hidden in the fireplace.)

Morrison: What's that? Who's there? I warn you ... I'm armed.

(He fires twice from the balcony and the dark figure escapes through the audience.)

Scene - 2 – Train station

(Odd man sitting in corner reading newspaper, smoking pipe, getting shoes shined – busy young woman with clipboard directing traffic of large cases marked both "Shaw – Cairo" and "Scott – National Gallery – Edinburgh.")

Victoria: No, no! Those cases go over there ... to be taken to the museum. That trunk ... oh! Porter? Porter? Ohhh ... Uncle Preston! *(to man getting shoe shine ... she turns and bumps into Angus ...dropping notes)*

Angus: Oh, excuse me Miss.

Victoria: Please, can't you see I'm in a hurry. Porter?

Angus: If only I can help ...

Victoria: Thank you, but please ...

Angus: Angus MacBride.

Victoria: Yes ... what did you say?

Angus: I said, "Angus MacBride." Secretary to Col. Morrison. And you must be Miss Scott?

Victoria: Oh, forgive me. Yes, I'm Victoria Scott. Oh, Mr. MacBride, I can't tell you how glad I am to see you.

Angus: You could have fooled me at first.

Victoria: Again, I'm sorry. Trains, boats, more trains.

Angus: And is this your first visit to Scotland?

Victoria: It's my first visit to anywhere.

Angus: I beg your pardon?

Victoria: Oh, it's a long story ...

Angus: I hope we have time to finish it. And your Uncle. The famous Professor Scott?

Victoria: *(she gestures)* I'm afraid he's not too keen on this trip. To be frank ... he hasn't left Egypt in almost twenty-five years. It was like pulling teeth to get him to come.

Angus: But I can assure you, Miss Scott, that my employer, Col. Morrison and the entire National Gallery are forever in your debt for allowing us to exhibit the artifacts of the Great Pharaoh Ahmosis. You must tell me the story of the discovery some time.

Victoria: Didn't you read the manuscript? Your company published it.

Angus: Oh, I only work for the company. I never read the books. *(they laugh)* If you'll follow me, we'll take the crates to the gallery then I'll escort you and your uncle to the Castle at Dalkeith. You'll be the guests of Col. Morrison for the weekend and then the opening of the exhibit and book signing will begin next week.

Victoria: Book signing?!

Angus: Yes ... is there something wrong?

Victoria: Oh, nothing ... Uncle Preston won't be too happy about that.

Angus: I beg your pardon?

Victoria: Uncle Preston is not what one would call the ... er ... "social type" ... you understand?

Angus: It was all in the contract between Morrison Publishing, the National Gallery and the Museum in Cairo. Certainly you read my correspondence?

Victoria: Of course. All will be fine. Uncle Preston ... Uncle Preston!

Scott: Hm?

Victoria: This is ... er ...

Angus: Angus Mac Bride ... *(extending hand ... Scott ignores gesture and takes sip from flask)*

Victoria: Secretary to Col. Morrison. He will take us to the Museum and then to the country estate in Dalkeith.

Scott: What?

Angus: Col. Morrison's private estate at the Castle in Dalkeith. Not too far from the city.

Victoria: We're going to spend the weekend there.

Scott: Bother ... yes, run along, I'll catch up in a moment when I'm finished with this little fellow.

Angus: I'll see to the vans. *(they both exit)*

Scott: *(rising)* Here you are. *(giving coin)* And what are you called?

Justin: Justin, sir.

Scott: Justin? Justin what?

Justin: Justin Thyme, sir.

Scott: Curious handle. You must do your mother proud?

Justin: I ain't got no mother, sir. Nor father either.

Scott: Well, who looks after you then?

Justin: Oh, I tends to meself, sir. The porters let me stay in the baggage room, works a plenty and there's sandwiches at the news stand. That I don't have ... I can live without.

Scott: *(to himself)* What a remarkable young boy. *(flipping a coin to him)* Here, a little extra for an extra ordinary boy. I wish more had your view of life. Here, wait a minute. Where did that fellow say we were spending the weekend?

Justin: Dalkeith, sir.

Scott: *(from paper)* It appears that last night, at the midnight hour, an attempted burglary was thwarted at Dalkeith Castle. Shots were fired and a lone piper was heard in the distance. Hmm. This trip may prove more interesting than expected.

(Lights)

Scene - 3 – Dalkeith Castle

Alex: Kinnon, take those bags up to the guest rooms for Professor and Miss Scott. And then tell Mrs. Barrymore that I expect seven for dinner.

Kinnon: Yes, Mr. MacGregor.

Alex: And you better see if you can catch a fresh trout. I don't know as yet what Lady Armstrong's temperament is today. I'll check with Miss Lindsey.

Kinnon: Yes, Mr. MacGregor.

Alex: And for God's sake Kinnon. You can call me Alex. I don't care for such formalities below stairs. Not amongst the men at least. There's a good lad.

Angus: Ah, Alex. May I present to you, Miss Victoria Scott. Professor Scott's niece and our guest for the weekend. Miss Scott, Alex MacGregor, Col. Morrison's butler. Practically runs the whole house by himself, don't you Alex?

Alex: Yes, sir, thank you sir. If there's anything you need, please don't hesitate. We're a bit short staffed at the moment. Only myself, Mrs. Barrymore, the cook, and Kinnon, the grounds man. But I'm sure we can afford you a comfortable stay.

Angus: What?!

Alex: Col. Morrison gave the bulk of the staff holiday for the week. Perhaps as a result of the incident last night?

Angus: This is the first I've heard of it!

Alex: Perhaps, the Colonel expects an extra hand from you this weekend, Mr. MacBride?

Angus: Well I ...

Alex: Your bags have been sent up and I'll show you to your rooms shortly. There are tea and cakes and light refreshments on the cart if you wish.

Victoria: Thank you.

Alex: Perhaps you wish to settle yourself in, Mr. MacBride. The usual room.

(Angus tries to hand bags to Alex who stays with arms folded behind back.)

Angus: Hmmpf ...*(exits up stairs)*

Alex: Again, anything you wish, please don't hesitate ...

Megan: Alex ... Alex ... *(entering abruptly)* call for Dr. Campbell. Conquest has gone limp.

Alex: Uhummm ... Uhummm.

Megan: And what are you just standing around for? ... hmmm? *(Alex gestures)* Oh, and who's this, the new maid? *(awkward moment)* Did I say something wrong?

Alex: This is Miss Victoria Scott. Your father's guest for the weekend.

Megan: Oh ... well ... in that case. *(total change in demeanor)* Welcome darling. I'm Megan Morrison. Anything I can get you don't hesitate to ask I'm sure we'll become the best of friends. So you're the ones from ... where is it ...?

Victoria: Egypt, yes.

Megan: Daddy's all agog about sponsoring that little exhibition ... or whatever you call it ... why are you just standing there *(to Alex)* ... call for Dr. Campbell. Oh, good help is just so hard to find these days. Sherry, my dear?

Victoria: Oh, no thank you, Miss Morrison.

Megan: Oh, you must call me Megan. And I shall call you ... what shall I call you?

Victoria: Vickie.

Megan: Vickie ... how quaint. Well, Vickie I'm sure you and your Uncle will add some life to the party. Generally, it's just me and daddy and my Aunt Agatha and my cousin Lindsey ... now there's a bore. Of course we might invite Dr. Campbell. A lovely man ... veterinarian and a magician with horses. You know, sometimes I think up little ailments for Conquest just to get him to come over. Oh, but enough about me. Tell me something of yourself, darling.

Victoria: Oh, there's really nothing to tell.

Megan: Oh, come now ... everyone's got some secret to hide.

Victoria: Not me, I'm afraid.

Megan: Oh, how dull.

Victoria: I've spent my whole life in the Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt. Recording the works of my father and uncle. My father died in an accident and I've been raised mostly by my Uncle Preston. Two years ago, a Dr. Shaw, from America, came looking for the Tomb of Ahmosis. With my Uncle's help, he found it. I'm afraid Dr. Shaw died, as well as several others including ...

Megan: Go on ...

Victoria: Dr. Shaw had a young assistant, Mr. Thompson, he ... he disappeared without a trace.

Megan: Ah, a lost love. You see everyone has a secret. My Aunt Agatha says so all the time. She writes books about it too.

Victoria: Oh, good books?

Megan: Romance novels. Pure pornography. Daddy publishes them just to keep her quiet. Are you sure you wouldn't like some sherry? Daddy only gets the best.

Victoria: No, thank you.

Megan: Well, come then. I'll show you some of the grounds. We can throw rocks at the ducks ... great sport. *(dragging her out as lights fade)*

Scene - 4 –

Hamish: Here you are, Kinnon. (*handing him jar*) Tell Miss Megan it's only a slight stone bruise. Keep this salve on it and give him rest. Should be fine in a couple of days.

Kinnon: Yes, Doctor ... Doctor?

Hamish: Yes?

Alex: (*entering with basket*) Ah, Dr. Campbell. Thank you for coming on such short notice.

Hamish: Not at all. Kinnon has his instructions. All should be fine in a couple of days.

Alex: Again, thank you. Kinnon, take this hamper down to the gatehouse. Oh, and Doctor, Col. Morrison has requested your presence at dinner this evening, if it isn't an inconvenience.

Hamish: Not at all.

Alex: We have guests for the weekend, Professor Preston Scott and his niece.

Hamish: Preston Scott? The famous?

Alex: Yes, Col. Morrison is sponsoring the exhibit at the National gallery.

Hamish: Yes, I know. But I had no idea that the Professor himself would be accompanying the artifacts.

Alex: About dinner, sir?

Hamish: Oh, yes, of course. It would be an honor. (*Alex exits*) Preston Scott in Dalkeith, hmmm. So, Kinnon, Lady Armstrong and Miss Lindsey are still staying in the gatehouse, eh?

Kinnon: Eye, sir. Her ladyship hasn't spent a night under this roof for a fortnight at least. Ever since it started.

Hamish: What started?

Kinnon: The piping.

Hamish: Oh, that.

Kinnon: What do you think, Doctor. Are there really such things as ghosts?

Hamish: That, my good man, is truly the question of the ages. Come, I'll walk you down.

(Lights out)

Scene - 5 –

(Morrison enters, goes to cart and pours sherry. Goes to cord and rings.)

Alex: You rang, sir?

Morrison: Yes, Alex. Is Professor Scott settled in?

Alex: I believe so, sir. Shall I ask him to join you, sir?

Morrison: If you would, thank you.

Alex: Of course, sir.

(Colonel crosses to fireplace. Scott enters from balcony.)

Scott: Col. Francis Morrison, I presume?

Morrison: And you, sir, must be Preston Scott?

Scott: That I am.

Morrison: And that ... I am. *(Faux tension drops as men meet each other with pleasure)* Please, come join me. It's such an honor to finally meet you in person after all these years.

Scott: I'm afraid I haven't traveled much after leaving England.

Morrison: According to my records, you haven't traveled at all.

Scott: Yes.

Morrison: But you have given the world the most extensive literary collections on Egyptian archeology. Remarkable!

Scott: But you, sir, published them.

Morrison: Yes, let us say then that both of us, and the world, has prospered. Sherry?

Scott: Yes, thank you.

Morrison: Dr. Scott ... let me cut to the chase. The reason I sent for you was not purely to open the exhibit.

Scott: I gathered as much.

Morrison: What?

Scott: Nothing, please continue.

Morrison: *(Morrison gestures and they sit)* The artifacts of the Tomb of Ahmosis will be a display long remembered and the time has come for you to accept the public honors you deserve. Not just the dust of countless book shelves.

Scott: Thank you. But many years and far too many lives have been lost in the search for these artifacts. And I'm afraid much of the mystery still lies hidden beneath the sands of the desert.

Morrison: That may be true, but the mystery I want you to solve is here. Someone is trying to kill me.

Scott: I read of the break-in last night ...

Morrison: Oh, it's more than that. I've made my share of enemies over the years. All great men have. I'll grant you that, but lately there has been an air of uneasiness as if danger were lurking behind every corner. And then ... there's the piper.

Scott: Piper?

Morrison: There's a legend, goes back to the days of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, just before a Morrison is about to die, a ghostly piper walks the parapet wall preparing the soul for it's journey to hell. You think me mad?

Scott: I must say, I've seen my share of the macabre in my own works but a harbinger ... in the form of a piper?

Morrison: Truth is stranger than fiction, Professor Scott. I heard the piper at my father's death ... my uncle's. Twenty-five years ago, my eldest brother, Colin, left for Canada to breed Angus beef. The piper played ... Colin never returned.

Scott: Yet, you propose that these recent occurrences may be part of a deliberate plot?

Morrison: I don't know what to think. That's why I'm asking you.

Scott: Hmm ... and who would directly benefit from your death?

Morrison: *(Morrison rises and refills glasses)* My daughter, Megan is my only child. My sister, the Lady Armstrong and her daughter Lindsey were set up quite well at the death of her husband. Endowments have been made to the National Gallery and the University in Edinburgh. I'm at a loss.

Scott: Let's return to the break-in. The papers said that nothing was taken but I notice that your shelves are rather empty.

Morrison: I kept a few pieces to show you but the majority has been moved to the gallery as part of the exhibition.

Scott: Ah, and you oversee the collections yourself?

Morrison: No, my secretary, Mr. MacBride. He catalogues everything. Meticulous too.

Scott: And I noticed you released your staff for the week?

Morrison: Aye, only kept the necessary. And the closest. Mr. MacBride you've met. Kinnon McKinnon, the grounds man. Simple as a lamb. Mrs. Barrymore, my cook. Been with me for years.

Scott: And your butler?

Morrison: Alex MacGregor. And he above all is beyond suspicion.

Scott: And why is that?

Morrison: He owes me his neck. Six years ago, I caught him breaking into the place. Who better to protect yourself and your valuables, but a thief?

Scott: Interesting. And last night. What do you think they were after?

Morrison: That is what will be of interest to you, Professor Scott. *(goes to hidden vault and removes necklace)* Now you look like you've seen a ghost.

Scott: The sacred necklace of Ahnanked.

Morrison: Exactly.

Scott: Reported stolen from one of our first digs. How did you ...

Morrison: I bought it. From your brother, Christoffer. What do you think paid for those early expeditions? Your books?

Scott: *(hackles raised)* If you're trying to blackmail me, sir, you're barking up the wrong tree.

Morrison: No, sir. I'm giving it to you ... in good faith. Please. *(offering necklace ... Scott takes it and ponders)*

Scott: I was often curious. The bearer who reportedly stole it disappeared ... I found his body next to that of my brother's, crushed under fallen rock, inside Ahmosis' Tomb. Hmmm, another mystery solved.

Alex: Ahem ... Lady Agatha is arriving, sir.

Morrison: *(to himself)* Good God ... show them in and prepare refreshments. *(to Scott)* We'd best change for dinner. Please think about what I've said.

Scott: Of course. *(pockets necklace)*

Morrison: *(to Alex)* Is Dr. Campbell coming?

Alex: Yes, sir.

Morrison: Good, he can entertain the ladies while we change. Local veterinarian. Not much pluck but good to have around at dinner parties.

(As they leave the room empty in creeps Angus. He goes to one of the shelves – pulls package from pocket and exchanges it for item on shelf. Kinnon enters quietly.)

Kinnon: Can I help you, sir.

Angus: What!? Oh, Kinnon. No ... I was just ...

Kinnon: Mrs. Barrymore said I might be needed to help serve tonight, sir.

Angus: Of course ... of course. Well then ... fix me a whiskey. *(he does)* Thank you.

Kinnon: I'll go see to the dinner, sir.

Angus: Yes, you do that.

(Goes back to shelf – finishes his "work," drinks drink and wipes brow. Alex views from ledge.)

(Lights fade)

Scene - 6 -

(Lady Agatha – Lindsey – Megan – Angus – arranged around room as Doctor sits and reads poetry. All dressed formally, gentlemen in kilts and tuxedo jackets.)

Agatha: Oh, that was lovely Doctor, just lovely. I do so adore Keats.

Hamish: It was Shelly, Lady Agatha.

Agatha: Shelly, Keats what's the difference as long as we don't have to put up with that damn Bobby Burns.

Lindsey: But I like Robert Burns, mother.

Agatha: Lindsey, hold your tongue. A poet laureate is one to be praised ... not listened to.

Lindsey: Yes, mother.

Agatha: Now, Byron. There's someone you can sink your teeth into. Raw, robust, earthy! Perhaps I should read to you from my latest book. I just happen to have some of it here.

(all jump)

Megan: Yes, Aunt Agatha, that would be lovely. Perhaps later when our guests are present.

Agatha: Just where are these celebrated guests. Lindsey, my glass is empty. They come all the way from India, or wherever, and can't even be on time for refreshments.

Lindsey: Egypt, mother.

Agatha: What?

Lindsey: Egypt. They came from Egypt for Uncle Francis' exhibit.

Agatha: Oh, that's right. Crawled out of one of those pyramid things I shouldn't wonder. You know, I've read that all the physical, carnal passions of the universe can be attributed to the pyramids. What do you think, Doctor?

Hamish: Well, I ...

Agatha: Now don't be shy ... you know I don't believe in censorship.

Megan: Ah, here we are. *(Victoria enters dressed unbelievably beautifully)* Don't you look smashing my dear.

Victoria: Thank you.

Megan: You know, I used to have one just like that ... a few years back. Everyone, everyone, I'd like you to meet Miss Victoria Scott. Now you've already met Angus and Hamish ... this is my Aunt Agatha, the Lady Armstrong, and my cousin Lindsey.

Victoria: Pleased to meet you, your Ladyship.

Agatha: Of course you are.

Lindsey: And I'm very pleased to meet you, Miss Scott.

Victoria: Vickie, please.

Lindsey: Vickie, oh, I'm so excited. I've read all about you and your famous uncle. Where is he?

Victoria: He'll be right down. He's having a little trouble with his ... *(kilt gesture)*

Angus: Who doesn't ...

Lindsey: Please, come sit next to me ...

Agatha: Lindsey, my glass.

Hamish: Allow me, Lady Agatha.

Agatha: Thank you, Doctor.

Morrison: *(from balcony)* Ladies and gentlemen. It is with great esteem that I present to you the greatest archeologist in the world and our honored guest Professor Preston Scott. *(mild applause)*

Scott: Please, don't make a fuss.

Hamish: Whiskey, sir?

Scott: Yes, thank you.

Hamish: I'm Hamish Campbell.

Scott: Ah, yes. The veterinarian?

Hamish: That's right. An honor, sir.

Scott: Thank you.

Morrison: And this is my sister. The Lady Agatha Armstrong.

Scott: Charmed, Lady Agatha.

Agatha: Yes, I'm sure. And this is my daughter, Lindsey.

Lindsey: Oh, Professor Scott. I can't tell you what a thrill this is.

Agatha: Lindsey! Your composure!

Lindsey: Yes, mother.

Agatha: So you're the one that writes all those books my brother is so keen on?

Scott: Well ... yes, I suppose you might say that ...

Agatha: I am a writer too, you know.

Morrison: Good God ...

Agatha: But as you write about dead things ... I write about life! Real life. The passions ... the romance ...

Morrison: And I've lost a fortune publishing them.

Agatha: I heard that Francis. Here let me give you an example ...

Morrison: Good God ...

Lindsey: Not now, mother ...

Megan: Perhaps after dinner, Auntie?

Agatha: Nonsense! Here ... ahem (*reading*) ... "As Sheila sat in the evening sun on the warm hillside overlooking the barracks, her thoughts could only think of her true love. Her love, held captive inside the garrison wall. But as her lover was imprisoned on false charges, the love held imprisoned in her heart was true. And as the passions swelled inside her breast, she felt as if her heart would break and spill crimson upon the heather that lay before her." Well, what do you think of that? Ha!

Scott: Yes ... well ... Col. Morrison tells me that you and your daughter reside in the gatehouse.

Agatha: Yes. I shall not spend another night under this roof.

Scott: And may I inquire, why?

Agatha: It's cursed.

Scott: Cursed?

Agatha: Yes.

Morrison: Since the day she was born here ...

Agatha: I heard that Francis.

Scott: Yes, Col. Morrison spoke briefly about it. A ghostly piper he said. And you believe this ancient curse has fallen back on the house?

Agatha: I don't believe ... I know!

Scott: As I said. The good Colonel only touched on the story. Can anyone here elaborate?

Lindsey: I can ...

Agatha: Lindsey!

Lindsey: Oh, please, mother. I know the story.

Agatha: Oh, go ahead if you must. Doctor? (*waving empty glass*)

Lindsey: During the great wars, about 1300, Dalkeith Castle was often used as a field headquarters. Being just outside of the city you know. Often changing hands between different clans and the English alike. The Morrisons held the fastest. Well, there was a young piper who, unbeknownst to the Morrisons, was a spy. And during his evening tattoos, he would signal with his pipes. He was discovered. His hands chopped off so he couldn't play and then tortured to death. His body buried under the flagstones of the main walk.

Agatha: Tommyrot.

Megan: It's quite true, you know. Workmen replacing some of the stones found the grave only a few years ago. Pipes in arms and hands missing.

Victoria: Ohhh. (*shudder*)

Hamish: Quite the story just before dinner.

Morrison: And if it is “Tommyrot,” Agatha, why did you move out?

Agatha: I felt like it. I may not believe in the piper himself but something is definitely wrong here. I can feel it. I’m psychic. Here! I tell you what. Tomorrow night, we’ll have a séance.

Morrison: Oh, Good God ...

Agatha: If this apparition can be raised, I can do it. You’re all invited.

Morrison: I’ll be in the billiard room.

Hamish: I’m sorry, Lady Agatha, but I’ll be out in the country tomorrow inspecting herds, I’m afraid. But I can’t wait to hear the outcome.

Agatha: Thank you, Doctor. I wish you could teach my brother some manners.

Alex: Dinner is served.

Megan: Well, it’s about time.

Morrison: Come everyone ... I’m famished.

Agatha: You always are ...

Morrison: I heard that ...

(All exit towards dining room ... Scott and Victoria last)

Victoria: (*stopping him*) Uncle Preston?

Scott: Yes, dear.

Victoria: I think she’s right. Something is wrong here.

Scott: Oh, there most certainly is. Here, tomorrow I’m going into Edinburgh with Col. Morrison to look over the exhibits. You see what you can find out. But remember.

Both: Be careful. (*He extends arm. They exit to dining room as lights fade.*)

Scene - 7— Morning.

(Kinnon is sitting on the rail reading poetry to Lindsey ...)

- Alex: Hhhmmm... can I help you, Miss?
- Lindsey: Oh, yes Alex. Mother sent me up for the morning hamper. She especially requested "Finnan Haddie" and "Hair of the Dog."
- Alex: Yes, Miss. We anticipated as such. Mrs. Barrymore is fixing it now.
- Lindsey: Thank you, Alex. *(she exits into kitchen)*
- Alex: Kinnon?
- Kinnon: Just checkin' the shelves for mice.
- Alex: Hmmm *(exits)*
- Victoria: Morning, Kinnon.
- Kinnon: Miss.
- Victoria: I heard someone reading some beautiful poetry. Was that you?
- Kinnon: Yes, Miss. I don't think the master approves. But I like it ... especially when ...
- Victoria: When you have someone to read it to?
- Kinnon: Yes, Miss.
- Victoria: Don't worry, Kinnon. Your secret's safe with me.
- Kinnon: Thank you, Miss.
- Victoria: What have you got there?
- Kinnon: Oh, that's Posey. *(producing rat from bag)* She helps me check for the mice. You aren't afraid are ya?
- Victoria: Oh, no. I'm used to rats. But don't they usually use ferrets for routing mice?
- Kinnon: Aye. I used to have a ferret ... but it died. Dr. Campbell said rats can work just as well. He gave me Posey.
- Victoria: You like Dr. Campbell, then?

Kinnon: Oh, yes Miss. He's the one who teaches me to read poetry.

Victoria: He's not from around here, originally, I mean?

Kinnon: Oh, no Miss. From a farmin' community somewheres. Killgary, I think. But I don't know where it is.

Megan: *(entering abruptly as always)* Kinnon, fetch me a mount. Time for my morning ride. Conquest is laid up. I think I'll ride Jenna today. She's got spirit.

Kinnon: Yes, Miss.

Megan: Would you like to come dear? You do ride ... don't you?

Victoria: Only camels ... I'm afraid.

Megan: Camels! How quaint. Pity. *(exits)*

Lindsey: *(with hamper)* Oh, morning Miss Scott.

Victoria: Vickie, please.

Lindsey: Vickie. I'm just taking mother her breakfast.

Victoria: Lindsey, I just had a nice little talk with Kinnon.

Lindsey: Ohhh. *(embarrassed)*

Victoria: Not to worry. I don't know much about these things but I think he likes you.

Lindsey: Aye, and I him. Mother doesn't approve though. She thinks he's beneath us. It's all right in books she says but not in real life.

Victoria: Well ... I don't agree. Come, let me walk with you. We can talk along the way.

Lindsey: I would like that. And ... thank you.

Victoria: No, thank you. *(exit)*

(Lights)

Scene - 8 – Late afternoon – card table is set in middle of room for séance ...

(Alex and Kinnon lighting candles, arranging chairs, etc. They exit. Angus enters and, once again, attempts to replace objects on upper bookshelves. Exits when he hears voices approaching.)

Morrison: Well, I hope everything is to your satisfaction, so far, Scott. We have a good staff at that museum.

Scott: Yes ...

Morrison: What the devil! What's all this? Oh, my sister and her parlor games. And where's my sherry? Ah, here it is. *(on table opposite normal tea/bar cart)* Damn funny place for it.

(Alex enters carrying normal tray.)

Scott: *(to Colonel)* Hold it! *(to Alex)* Bring me that ashtray. *(With handkerchief, takes glass from Colonel, carefully pours liquid into ashtray – smoke and bubbles.)* Just as I thought. Acid.

Morrison: Good God. Who's been in here?

Alex: No one, sir. Not since we set up for Lady Agatha ... that I know of.

Morrison: *(to Alex)* Get me a whiskey. *(to Scott)* Now do you believe me?

Scott: Col. Morrison ... I never doubted you. Step into the billiard room for a moment and have a sit down. I want to talk to Alex for a minute.

Morrison: But surely, you don't suspect ...

Scott: It's all right. I'll just be a minute. *(Colonel exits)* Alex ...

Alex: I promise you, sir. I had nothing to do with this. I owe my life to Col. Morrison. He saved me from the Nic ... and probably The Drop.

Scott: I know ... he told me. He trusts you and so do I. First, I want you to send this message to the head porter at South Polk station. It's for a lad named Justin. Then, I want you to contact some of your old cronies in the city ... especially forgers and fences. Say a word to no one and report directly to me. *(nods and exits)*

Victoria: Uncle Preston? *(enters excited)* I've got some news.

Scott: So do I, my dear ... so do I. *(points to ashtray as lights fade)*

Scene - 9 – The Séance

Agatha: All right, ladies. Hold hands.

Lindsey: Oh, this is so exciting.

Agatha: Lindsey!

Lindsey: She's very good you know? *(quietly to Vickie)*

Megan: Right. *(bored)*

Agatha: Ladies, please! We must focus our energies. Focus ... focus. Oh ... ummmm Ummmm. Libidium ... Libidium ... come forth. I'm in need of your aid ... mmmm

Victoria: Who's Libidium?

Lindsey: Her spiritual channel.

Victoria: Oh.

Agatha: Libidium, I feel you approaching. In this castle, a spirit wanders. Wanders. Lost between the worlds of light and dark. Call to this lonely piper that we might bring him forth and free him from his eternal prison of agony and pain ...

(As this is going on, a lonely piper mounts the outer parapet wall and as the tension mounts to its climax ...)

Agggghhh. (Agatha bolts forward and falls face down on the table – the piper vanishes)

Megan: *(nudging)* Auntie? Auntie?

All Scream (Colonel, Scott, and Angus rush in from billiard room, Alex from dining room, Kinnon from hall)

Morrison: What is it?

Scott: Lights ... quickly! *(examines body)* She's dead. Murdered.

Lindsey: Mother! *(quickly comforted by Victoria and Kinnon)*

Scott: Look here at the base of the skull ... a dart.

Morrison: Good God, Agatha!

Scott: *(to Alex)* Get him a whiskey. In fact, get us all one. The trajectory is from the outer parapet wall ... and we were all inside. No one is to leave this house tonight. MacBride, ring the authorities. All men are to be armed. We are fighting an adversary ... but I'm afraid not of a supernatural nature.

(Lights)

Scene - 10 – Morning

Scott: Any more disturbances?

Alex: No, sir. All was quiet after ... I'm having trays sent to the ladies' rooms, sir. And here is the information you wanted.

Scott: Excellent. *(reading to himself)* Just as I thought. You're a good man, Alex. I see why Col. Morrison depends on you.

Alex: Thank you, sir.

(voices – Scott crosses to tea table and fixes himself coffee)

Hamish: *(entering)* I came as soon as I heard.

Morrison: Thank you, Hamish. It's awful.

Hamish: I wish I could have been here.

Morrison: There's nothing you could have done. We were all in the other room and ... Oh, Scott ... there you are.

Hamish: Morning, Professor Scott.

Scott: Dr. Campbell.

Hamish: Hamish, please ... I think we're all past formalities by now.

Scott: Yes ...

Angus: *(entering from billiard room)* The authorities have left. Arrangements can now be made for ...

Morrison: Yes, yes ... of course ... ummm.

Angus: Would you like me to prepare the necessaries, sir?

Morrison: No, no ... best do it myself. Poor Agatha. Hamish, you help me. Angus, why don't you take Prof. Scott out for some air? Go fishing or something ... get the mind off this for a while, eh.

Angus: Yes ... Professor?

Scott: Yes. Perhaps that would be best for the moment.

Morrison: You don't mind ... do you, Hamish?

Hamish: Not at all.

Morrison: Good ... good. We'll see you boys at lunch then. (*Colonel and Doctor exit*)

Angus: Do you like to fish, Professor Scott?

Scott: For some things ... yes.

(*Lights*)

Scene - 11 – Creek side

Angus: Watch the bank there, sir.

Scott: Yes, I'm all right.

Angus: Ah, here we are. What a beautiful spot. It's hard to believe such tragedy just up the way.

Scott: Yes ...

Angus: Now, have ya ever fished like this before?

Scott: It's been a while but I think I remember.

Angus: Keep yer arm stiff and let the line do the work. That's it. (*Scott is making a mess of it*) You're a natural.

Scott: Yes. (*change of subject*) Angus?

Angus: Sir?

Scott: I've been meaning to ask you. How long have you worked for Col. Morrison?

Angus: Oh, let's see. About five years now.

Scott: And your duties?

Angus: Oh, a little bit of everything. Cataloguing, correspondence. I did most of the paperwork on the publishing of your last book.

Scott: Oh, really?

Angus: Yes, and of course the arranging of the shipments for the exhibition. Oh, I hope this doesn't interfere with the opening.

Scott: And which do you prefer to work with most. The paperwork ... or the artifacts?

Angus: Oh, the artifacts ... I suppose.

Scott: That's what I thought you'd say ...

Angus: Look sir! You've got one ... easy now ... easy now ...

(Scott fighting with fish. He swings it wildly. Hitting Angus and finally "lands" it on stage. Excited, pulls revolver and shoots it several times.)

Scott: Piranha?

Angus: Trout.

(Lights)

Scene - 12 -

Victoria: Any luck? *(Angus holding what's left of fish.)* Oh, Uncle Preston.

Angus: I'll go see if Mrs. Barrymore can get any of the bullets out. *(exits)*

Scott: Are we ready?

Victoria: They're right outside.

Scott: Good bring them in. *(sets down fishing tackle as Justin and Kinnon enter with dog)*

Justin Thyme. Good lad.

Justin: Here's what ya asked for, sir. *(hands him telegram)* I think you'll find it's all there.

Scott: Excellent. And Kinnon, the dog?

Kinnon: Baxter, sir.

Scott: Is he as good as you say he is?

Kinnon: That and better, sir.

Scott: Good. *(pulling from pocket)* I've drawn up this map starting at the parapet wall. If my calculations are correct this should be an easy hunt. When you find what I'm looking for bring them back here just as lunch is ending. Vickie. Keep everyone in the dining room until I'm ready. All right. Everyone to work.

Victoria: Oh, I do hope you know what you're doing, Uncle.

Scott: So do I, Vickie ... so do I.

(Lights)

Scene - 15 -

Justin: There it was, sir. *(holding box)*

Kinnon: Just as you said.

Scott: Good. *(gestures Justin off and Kinnon to his "place" on balcony)* Vickie, bring them in and arrange the room in this order if you can. *(Hands her note and quickly exits upstairs. Vickie escorts others into room and places them as directed. Scott enters on balcony and begins to "work" room.)* I'm sure you all know why I've assembled you here. I was brought over here, from Egypt, to present the artifacts of the Tomb of Ahmosis at your National gallery and unveil my latest book. *(to Vickie)* The one we thought would never be finished, but that's another story. Based on truth, it was also a guise. Upon my arrival, Col. Morrison immediately informed me of a great fear for his life. The details were sketchy but the events proved themselves all too true. Resulting in the unfortunate death of Lady Agatha Armstrong. My first task was to consider motive. A task, that I

Scott (Cont): dare say, proved much easier than I thought. Everyone in this room had motive to kill Col. Morrison, Lady Agatha or practically anyone else in this room.

(Shock)

All: What? How can you say that? Here, here old boy. Mummy! Etc.

Let us start with the obvious and work our way to the more ... complex solution. The backman, Alex. "The butler did it" ... Ha! A confessed criminal who had constant access to Col. Morrison's private affairs. Especially, his beloved sherry No. Here is a man, boyishly devoted to the man that not only saved him from prison but most likely saved his life by trusting him and showing him a better life. *(nod of approval to and from Alex)*

The secretary. Also having access to the Colonel's private matters. Especially ... his collections. The thief that broke in here the other night was not coming to steal the necklace. He was coming to replace it. With the real one. Mr. MacBride has been slowly manufacturing and replacing the Colonel's private collection with clever forgeries. When he learned of my coming he knew that I would immediately identify the fakes and so he has been trying to replace them with the real ones he had left.

Angus: *(rising)* But ...

Scott: Oh, don't try and deny it. The forgers and fences of Edinburgh know you well. And there is honor among thieves even reformed ones. *(gestures to Alex)* *(to Angus)* Sit!

Kinnon, the grounds man. He had reasons for wanting Lady Armstrong dead. He was in love with her daughter. A love the great Lady would never approve of. But, but, but ... *(calming Kinnon)* His gentleness is as true as his love. As I feel Miss Lindsey's is for him. And my advice, Col. Morrison is to encourage their union.

Megan Morrison. Surely her father's death would help her credit at Harrods. But I see by her account records that her father is not only a doting one but a loving one as well. All girls should be so lucky.

Col. Morrison. Why would he wish to arrange his sister's death? He wouldn't. Although the constant bickering ... I could see through to a deep and long lasted affection. You have my sincere sympathy.

Now who does that leave us with. Dr. Hamish Campbell. Local veterinarian and friend to the family. No other possible connection. Or is

Scott (Cont): there? Where did Dr. Campbell come from? No one really seems to know. Kinnon heard of a place called Killgary but didn't know where it was. Looking at a map of Scotland, I wasn't surprised. There is no Killgary in Scotland. No town, village or farm. But ... in central Canada, there is a farming community called Calgary! Or Cal-Gary, as the locals pronounce it ... Known for its cattle production. I had Justin here wire to the newspaper and courthouse in Calgary and the results were as I thought. Your brother, Colin Morrison, settled in Calgary, married and had a son. A love triangle resulted in his death. The courts could not prove without a doubt the other man's guilt and he was released. Whereupon, he married his rival's widow and she, with her new husband and young son returned to Scotland, under the name Campbell.

Hamish: You can't prove any of this.

Scott: Oh, I already have. And with the main heirs of the true Morrison estate deceased, you could easily step forward as the rightful male heir. But how to do it? Ah! Bring forth the ghost of an ancient legend.

(calling in Justin) Justin, the box. Using Kinnon's hound, they traced the trail of the ghostly piper to the stables. And where did you find this box?

Kinnon: The locker, sir. Used by Dr. Campbell.

Scott: Hm. Costume. Acid for the sherry. A bottle of poison. A dart ... the kind they sometimes use to bring down wild animals. And the pipes. Makes a remarkable blowgun ... don't you think?

Hamish: Stand back *(pulling gun)* ... all of you. Are you always so clever, Professor Scott?

Scott: *(casually pulling his revolver)* I've never taken the opportunity to try the alternative. You'll never get away. You've no place to go.

(Doctor works his way to balcony. Trapped!)

Hamish: There's always one place, Professor. *(jumps off back wall)* Ahhhh.

(general shock, then resolve)

Victoria: Oh, Uncle ... you did it.

Morrison: I don't know how ... but I'm forever in your debt. Kinnon, Lindsey ... of course you have my blessing. Alex. *(Bow of acknowledgement. Gestures to tray of drinks.)*

Angus: Sir, I ...

Morrison: You ... I'll see in the morning. Sit!

Megan: Now who's going to take care of my horses? (*pouting*)

Morrison: Oh, darling. I'll buy you a new one. (*Alex has distributed glasses all around*) And now a toast to the greatest archeologist and detective in the world. Professor Preston Scott.

All: Preston Scott. (*All drink but Victoria and Scott – one by one they all drop dead.*)

Victoria: Oh, Uncle Preston.

Scott: You know my dear. (*taking her glass and setting them down*) I've never really cared much for sherry.

(*Piper is heard and the ghostly figure is seen, once again, on the parapet wall. Scott and Vickie turn with shock as lights fade.*)

Finis!

P.D.W.

Aargh, matey. This one has everything. Pirates, whalers, smugglers, love, death, revenge, explosions, steam whistles, gunshots and, oh yeah, harpoons. I wanted to write a play based on Robert Louis Stevenson's The Wreckers. A book I thought I read only to find out I hadn't. So, again, I had to make up my own story. Everybody loves pirates; or at least talking like one. While pulling out my pirate books, I came across some books on Yankee whaling. Maybe not the most popular of occupations today, the romance of that era swept across me just as it had done when I was in third-grade and so the stage was set; smuggling-whaler-pirates. But where? To the faithful road atlas at the Pioneer Bar and a perusal of the eastern seaboard found me the perfect spot. Point York, Maine, 1858.

Now for the characters. Here's where the fun begins. First the name of the missing ship. How about the "Myrtle Deem" in memory of John Ellingsen's mother? Okay. "Coffin" and "Cook" were common Nantucket whalers. Fine. How about the villain? "Lawrence Johnson" has a nice ring to it and besides ... he's my piano tuner. Throwing in personal names, again, is not only fun but it personalizes a piece; just as long as it doesn't distract from the purpose of the story itself. "Richard A. Denny" is named after my mother's cousin, a real sea captain, Dick Denny. "Hawse-pipe" Bill Sullivan, Rupert Soriano, and others called themselves "the boys from the beach" having grown up in the Rainier Beach area of Seattle. After graduating high school in 1937, they all joined the Merchant Marines. Dick earned his Masters license to command any size ship on any waters in the world in 1947 and continued to go to sea until he retired in his late seventies. Now 88, he still lives in the Seattle area. Enough family history, back to the story. (My mother made me do that.)

We have a location, a story line, and characters. Throw in a smattering of Moby Dick and there you have it. The solemnity of the ambiguous ending caused some to ask, "What happened the next day?" Who cares? It's a play!

The Wreck Of The Myrtle Deem

By

Peter Walther

Virginia City, MT

June 2004

Dramatis Personae

Capt. Peter Coffin – ex whaler, Innkeeper

Mr. Lawrence Johnson – a businessman

Richard A. Denny – an investigator

Caleb Cook – the son-in-law ... devoted but with aspirations

Malachai Smith – a discontent

Amos Jones – an innocent

Jonas Cook – an old salt

Rachel Coffin-Cook – Captain's eldest, wife of Caleb

Nancy Coffin – middle daughter, sweet on Amos

Amber Coffin – Captain's youngest

Lydia Coffin – widowed whaler's wife

Setting: Point York Lighthouse, ME – 1858

Scene - 1 - Lights rise slowly revealing a darkened Inn – a shadowy figure on the balcony observing a tremendous storm through up-stage windows. Thunder, lightening ... the flash of a lighthouse. The shrill call of a steam whistle is answered by a fog-horn. As the storm and music swells the “light” vanishes. The whistle calls are no longer answered. The calls become more frantic and without warning, two explosions. The shadowy figure places an ominous hooked hand on the balcony as lights fade.

Scene - 2 – Office of the Shipping Company “Masters and Johnson”

Richard: Hmmm. Excuse me, sir. Mr. Johnson, I presume.

Johnson: Yes, Lawrence Johnson. Have a seat young man and I’ll be with you in a moment.

Richard: Thank you, sir. (*awkward moment*)

Johnson: Now, how can I help you?

Richard: My name is Denny, sir. Richard Denny. I was sent from Pinkerton’s ... New York office.

Johnson: Yes, thank you for coming on such short notice. I trust your journey was a pleasant one?

Richard: Yes, sir.

Johnson: I don’t know how much your superiors have told you about this ... assignment?

Richard: Very little. I do know this much (*reading from notebook*), “Lawrence Johnson, originally from South Carolina, arrived in Nantucket in 1838 and immediately formed an alliance with three whaling masters as underwriter thus forming the company of ‘Masters and Johnson’. By 1843, you became sole proprietor and moved your headquarters to Boston and since that time have enjoyed success running steam freighters up and down the Eastern seaboard from Charleston, S.C. to Nova Scotia. You sent a request to our office for an investigator ... something about missing cargo?”

Johnson: So far so good.

Richard: Might I inquire how, in just five years you went from Junior partner to sole proprietor?

Johnson: No you may not! Leave us to say that my former partners met with some ... unfortunate circumstances. You seem awfully young to be an “accomplished” investigator.

Richard: I brought my portfolio with me.

Johnson: (*discards it*) Let’s cut to the chase, Mr. Denny. You were not sent here to find missing cargo. I want you to find a missing ship. For fifteen years I’ve built this company, as you said, on my own. In the last three years, I’ve lost five vessels and countless thousands of dollars in cargo. My customers are starting to doubt my ability and I’m not about to let that happen! Two months ago, the “Myrtle Deem” disappeared between Boston and Nova Scotia without a trace. Two weeks ago, I received this cable from Captain Soriano in San Francisco. He traded an outbound whaler for some store of rum. The barrels were not only marked with my company brand but some were distinctively marked the “Myrtle Deem.”

Richard: And you believe these stores were from the particular shipment in question?

Johnson: I don’t “believe.” I know.

Richard: Let me ask you this, Mr. Johnson. Have you any enemies?

Johnson: What kind of a question is that?

Richard: A man of your ... stature ... must have made enemies along the way.

Johnson: Find me the “Myrtle Deem”, Mr. Denny.

Richard: And what makes this particular ship more interesting to you than, say, the other missing vessels?

Johnson: She was the pride of my line. Named for my own mother.

Richard: I see ...

Johnson: (*referring to chart on wall*) Yesterday, the “Conquest” left Boston Harbor for Portland. She never arrived.

Richard: This is quite the rough coastline, Mr. Johnson. And I do believe there was quite the storm last night. Accidents do happen.

Johnson: Not to me they don’t.

Richard: I'll start my research here and report back in, let's say, two weeks. I'm sure my office sent the necessary paperwork and of course, I'll need the initial expense package.

Johnson: Here. And report back in one week. I'll have a steam launch at your disposal.

Richard: Thank you, sir. But with your recent track record, I think I'll take my chances on land.

Johnson: Why you impudent! (*composed, yet threatening*) ... look here, Mr. Denny. Find me those responsible and I'll "make" you. Fail me ... and I'll "break" you. Savvy?

Richard: (*affected*) Aye-aye, sir. (*composed*) Good day, Mr. Johnson.

(*Lights*)

Scene - 3 – A beach (men shifting barrels and crates)

Caleb: All right, boys. That should do it.

Rachel: Caleb.

(*Rachel and Nancy with hampers*)

Caleb: Ah, Rachel. Just in time. Lunchtime boys. Let's take a break.

Nancy: Look, Amos. I packed a special lunch ... just for you.

Amos: T-t-thank you, N-n-nancy. (*He's shy and stutters lightly.*)

(*They find their own place. Leaving focus on Rachel and Caleb.*)

Caleb: Malachai, time for a break.

Malachai: I'm going to check the stores ... tides coming up. (*exits brooding*)

Rachel: Caleb, he gives me the creeps.

Caleb: Ah, he's just moody. That's all.

Rachel: No, I mean it. The looks he gives me ...

Caleb: It's all right. I'll protect you.

Rachel: It's not funny. And you be careful too. I don't trust him.

Caleb: Yes, dear.

Rachel: And have you spoken to father? You don't have much time left.

Caleb: I will today. I promise. He won't be happy though. But I can't go on like this. Captain Sullivan has promised me Third Mate on a whaler. In a year and a half, I can earn enough to set us up in a proper house making an honest living not ...

Rachel: Sshhh. I know ... I know.

Caleb: And then there's ...

Rachel: Don't worry about him ... Father will look after him. He always has.

Caleb: I'm going to miss you, Rachel ... but there's no other way. *(They kiss.)*

Rachel: Come on, Nancy, we best be getting back.

Nancy: But Rachel.

Rachel: Come on!

Nancy: Oh, all right. Bye Amos.

Amos: Bye, Nancy. *(They giggle.)*

Rachel: Nancy!

Nancy: I'm coming.

Rachel: You ninny. *(They exit.)*

Caleb: All right, boys. I'm taking the report up to the Captain. Make one last check of the beach and I'll see you tonight at the Inn. *(exits)*

Malachai: Just who does he think he is? Ordering us around like that?

Amos: The Captain's son-in-law.

Malachai: You ass.

Amos: Malachai?

Malachai: What?

Amos: Wouldn't you like to be the Captain's son-in-law?

Malachai: What are you talking about?

Amos: I would. I'm going to ask the Captain if'n I can marry Nancy. When I get enough courage.

Malachai: Hadn't you better ask her first?

Amos: Oh, I'd be too scared. Malachai?

Malachai: What?

Amos: Amber's still available. Maybe you could marry her?

Malachai: What?

Amos: I think maybe she'd take a shine to you. If'n ya' gave her the chance.

Malachai: Ass.

Amos: If'n I'm gonna marry Nancy ... and Rachel's already married to Caleb ... Then Amber's the only one left.

Malachai: Yeah. *(to himself)* Rachel's already married to Caleb. Let's hurry up and finish here. I've got some thinking to do.

(Lights)

Scene - 4 – The Inn

(Rustic with upper balcony overlooking beach and light. One side has small bar. All is decorated with nautical paraphernalia, including several harpoons placed around room.)

(Lydia is cleaning table – Jonas staring out window)

Caleb: Is the Captain in?

Lydia: He's upstairs. I'll get him. *(she does)*

Caleb: *(crossing to Jonas)* Hey there, old boy. How are we feeling today?

Jonas: Is it time?

Caleb: No, not yet.

Jonas: You'll let me know when it's time ... I've got to tend the light.

Caleb: I'll let you know. Rest easy.

Lydia: He'll be right down. Have you told him yet?

Caleb: No, not yet.

Lydia: Well you'd better hurry ... or I'll tell him myself.

Caleb: Yes, ma'am.

(Captain enters. Left "hand" is fashioned from an old harpoon.)

Captain: Caleb. Is all in order?

Caleb: Yes, Captain. Here's the report. The beaches are clear and all the goods are in the caves.

Captain: Excellent. I received word from Hawse-pipe Bill Sullivan. Captain Kinney is bringing the whaler "Rebecca" into the bay tomorrow at sunset. She'll take a full cargo of rum.

Caleb: Yes, Captain.

Captain: Cash on delivery.

Caleb: Yes, Captain. Captain ... speaking of Captain Sullivan ... I've been meaning to ...

(Enter Amos and Nance with lobsters.)

Amos: Hey, look! I caught three in my trap today.

Nancy: Isn't he wonderful.

Captain: Take 'em into the kitchen and give 'em to Lydia. They'll make a nice chowder. Good work, Amos.

Amos: Do ya mean it, Captain?

Captain: Yes, Amos, last night and today. Now into the kitchen with ya.

Amos: Did ya hear that, Nancy?

Nancy: Ooohhh.

Caleb: Captain ...

Captain: I'm heading into the village for a while. If'n I'm not back by sunset see to the light. We wouldn't want any accidents.

Caleb: Yes, Captain.

Captain: Oh, and Caleb. I know. See that Jonas gets fed and light the wick. We'll talk.

Caleb: Yes, Captain.

(Lights fade)

Scene - 5 – The Inn – Evening

(People enjoying themselves – perhaps a shanty tune. Amber behind bar. Rachel and Caleb at table. Malachai is throwing darts. Nancy and Amos giggle and slip away. Richard enters, dressed as a common seaman and everything comes to an abrupt halt.)

Richard: Excuse me. Is this York Village? They told me a few miles up the road at Ogunquit that I might get a room here.

Lydia: This is York Point. The village is another two miles up the road.

Richard: But this is an Inn? It said on the sign ...

Lydia: Aye, the Inn of the Three Sisters. I'm Lydia Coffin.

Richard: Richard Denny. If you could put me up for the night, I'd be ever so grateful. I've been walking all day and the thought of another two miles well ... I can pay ... if that's what your thinking.

Lydia: Come in, Mr. Denny. We'll see what we can do.

Richard: *(at bar)* A rum, please.

Amber: Sorry, sir. No rum.

Richard: No rum! At a waterfront Inn.

Amber: Father says it's too expensive a commodity to ... *(crowd reaction)*, just ale and wine. And a little brandy ... for when we get the croup.

Richard: *(cough, cough)*

Amber: *(They laugh.)* You're funny.

Richard: And you're cute. Oh, sorry. No offense.

Amber: None taken. I'm Amber. Amber Coffin.

Richard: Richard, Richard Denny. Oh, I guess I already said that. Is that your mother?

Amber: Oh, no. That's my Aunt Lydia. My mother died giving me life.

Richard: Oh, I'm sorry.

Amber: Why? You weren't there.

Richard: Yeh, I guess you're right.

Amber: My Aunt Lydia has been taking care of me and my sisters ever since I can remember.

Richard: Sisters?

Amber: Yes. Rachel and Nancy. I'm the youngest. Oh, I guess you already figured that out.

Richard: Yes ... and that explains the name, The Three Sisters

Amber: Right. And where do you hail from Mr. Denny?

Richard: Richard, please. I just sailed into Bar Harbor and am making a slow trek to New Bedford. They say I can sign on a whaler there. *(She laughs.)* What's so funny?

Amber: New Bedford! Don't you know that a New Bedford whaler is nothing but a backwater bilge barge full of codfish, kettle-fish and carp?

Richard: And where did you hear a thing like that?

Amber: From father. We're all Nantucket whalers ... that is ... until we moved here. I was very little. Don't remember much. My sister Rachel's husband, Caleb Cook, he wants to be a harpooner ... but we're not supposed to talk about it.

Richard: Why not?

Amber: Father might get angry. Mr. Denny ...

Richard: Richard.

Amber: I'm sorry, Richard. And you must call me Amber.

Richard: Agreed. Amber ... that is such a pretty name. For the gemstone I wouldn't wonder.

Amber: No! For Ambergris, you silly. What kind of whaler are you?

Richard: Not a very good one I'm afraid.

Lydia: Caleb. Here's some chowder. Take Jonas to the lighthouse and make sure everything is secure. Then you can come and have your dinner.

Caleb: Yes, ma'am. Come on, old boy ... it's time to go.

Jonas: Is it time to tend the light?

Caleb: No, Jonas. We're going to light the light. Make sure the wick stays lit. Atta boy. *(Gently taking him out. Queer glance at stranger.)*

Lydia: Amber. Take Mr. Denny to number seven when he's ready. When Caleb gets back, we'll all eat. Rachel ... straighten out that table.

(All exit leaving Rachel alone. – Malachai enters from the kitchen.)

Malachai: Rachel.

Rachel: Leave me alone, Malachai.

Malachai: But Rachel ...

Rachel: I said, "leave me alone!"

Malachai: I love you!

Rachel: I have a husband.

Malachai: He'll be leaving soon. Everybody knows it. What if he never returns? Huh? Who'll look out for you then?

Rachel: Get out of here.

Malachai: Kiss me.

Rachel: Get out of here!

Malachai: Kiss me!

Captain: Malachai! (*Grabs him by collar and throws against wall.*)

Malachai: Captain!

Captain: (*very controlled*) I think it's time for you to go home.

Malachai: Yes, Captain.

Captain: And Malachai ... never again.

Malachai: Yes, Captain.

Rachel: Oh, father. (*They embrace*)

Amber: (*coming down stairs*) What's the matter, Rachel?

Rachel: Nothing, dear ... it's nothing.

Captain: (*recovering*) Rachel was just telling me about Caleb sailing out of Boston next week. Weren't you darling?

Rachel: Yes ... that's it ...

Captain: We'll all miss him but a man has to follow his bearing. Besides ... it's in his blood. (*noticing Denny ... with caution*) And who might this young fellow be?

Richard: Richard Denny, Captain Coffin.

Amber: Just sailed into Bar Harbor.

Richard: Yes ... that's right.

Captain: Pleased to meet you Mr. Denny. (*the shake*) Bar Harbor ... did you say?

Richard: Yes ... hope to sail out of Boston or New Bedford. Spending a little time on shore. You know.

Captain: Yes. And how long will you be stopping for ... shipmate?

Richard: Oh, a night ... maybe two ...

Captain: *(recovering)* Fine ... fine. Well, let's wander aft to the kitchen and find some grub. My sister-in-law may look like she washed up from a mean low tide but she can cook. Rachel, Amber ... get things set up. I want to talk with your Auntie for a minute.

Rachel: Yes, father, this way Mr. Denny.

Richard: Richard ... please. *(They exit)*

Captain: Where'd he come from?

Lydia: Blew in this afternoon when you were out. What're ya thinkin'?

Captain: I don't know yet, bad timing to have a stranger in the house. Where's Nancy?

Lydia: Down on the dock with Amos.

Captain: Amos?

Lydia: He's harmless.

Captain: He may not be the saltiest herring in the barrel but he is a man.

Lydia: And let's face it, Peter. Nancy is not the sharpest hook on the line. But I have looked after those girls their whole lives. And mark my words ... I will not let anything harm them. I have lost my son, my husband, your brother, and my sister, your wife. There are some wounds that never heal. Savvy!

Captain: I hear you, woman. The time has come, more than ever, to keep a weather eye open ... in all quarters. I have the queer feeling an old ghost is walking on my grave.

(Lights)

Scene - 6 – The Inn

(Captain seated at table)

Malachai: About last night, sir. *(hat in hand)*

Captain: Yes.

Malachai: Well ... there was an open bottle in one of the crates. I'm afraid I had a little too much rum, sir. It won't happen again.

Captain: See that it doesn't. I owe it to the memory of your father to look after you. Do me proud. The "Rebecca" will be here late afternoon. Start getting things ready.

Malachai: Aye, aye, sir. *(exits)*

Captain: And you two. *(to Nancy and Amos who are at the bar)* Don't be sulking in the corner ... come over here. And don't be thinkin I don't know what's been going on. I've still got a nose, you know.

Amos: Captain ...

Nancy: Father ...

Captain: Amos ... *(tenderly)* I meant what I said last night. You're a good lad. When you two feel the time is right, you come talk to me. All right? No secrets. Agreed?

Amos: Yes, Captain.

Nancy: Oh, father.

Captain: Now get going. Nancy, you'll be working the beach with the boys today.

Nancy: Yes, father.

Amos: Captain?

Captain: Yes, Amos?

Amos: Do ya really mean it? I mean ... what you said?

Captain: Yes, Amos. Now get going ... before I change my mind. *(They exit)*
Where's the stranger?

Lydia: Still in bed. What are you going to do?

Captain: Watch and see. Amber ... I want you to take Mr. Denny into town today and don't bring him back til after sunset. Do you understand?

Amber: Yes, father.

Captain: And for God's sake keep him away from the caves. (*Rachel and Caleb enter from the balcony*) Now, Rachel, Caleb ... sit down. Caleb, your secret's out. Not that it was much of one to begin with. I've spent half my life at sea. I've lost both kith and kin on the land and water. More time away from home than not it seems. Are you willing to be separated from your bride for sometimes two years at a time? And I know you know the risks. (*glance to Jones*)

Caleb: That I do sir.

Rachel: We both do, father. But it's a chance for a new life and I won't hold Caleb back from his dreams.

Captain: Then it's settled.

Caleb: Sir, when I'm gone will you ...

Captain: Of course, Caleb. Nothing will happen to Jonas as long as I draw breath. Now get going ... there's still work to be done here.

Caleb: Thank you, sir.

Rachel: Thank you, father.

Richard: (*entering*) I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

Caleb: Oh, no young fella. We're just celebrating. Caleb's off to seek his fortune in the whalin' fields.

Richard: Congratulations.

Caleb: Thanks.

Richard: When do you leave?

Caleb: Couple of days. Out of Boston.

Richard: Boston, eh. Mind if I travel the road with you? I've never seen Boston.

Caleb: Not at all.

Captain: And speakin of celebrations ... we ought to be havin' one. Mr. Denny, would you do me the honor of escorting Amber into town this afternoon for supplies. I don't like her walkin the roads alone, ya understand.

Richard: It would be a pleasure, sir.

Captain: That's what I thought. (*gestures Rachel and Caleb off*) Sit down, Mr. Denny. Let me get you a cup of coffee.

Richard: Thank you, sir. I heard you're originally from Nantucket. You must have done your fair share of whaling?

Captain: That I did son ... that I did, my brother, Benjamin, old Jonas there and myself. We were quite a team. Three masters ... three ships.

Richard: What happened?

Captain: Oh, we had a few successful seasons. The "Rachel," the "Esther" and the "MaryAnne". On our fourth voyage, we ran into some bad luck near Australia. My brother's vessel, the "Esther," lost in a storm. All hands ... both him and his son. Jonas on the "MaryAnne" ... stoved by an angry sperm whale. We saved those we could. Then one day, I lowered six boats. Only three came back. It was time to head home.

Richard: And Jonas ... what made him like that?

Captain: Now there's a story for ya. "And God prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." The similarities in names is by no coincidence. We thought we lost Jonas ... more than once, I might add ... but he always seemed to turn back up. The last time ... we were hauling in blubber and when the beast was cut open, there was Jonas ... in the belly of the whale. He's never been the same since.

Richard: But you did make it home?

Captain: Aye. Missing two ships, a brother and a hand. An insurance dispute proved too much so ... We found this lighthouse and Inn and there you have it. It may not be much but it's enough to satisfy our humble needs. Enough story telling. You two better be gettin' on your way.

Amber: Yes, father.

Richard: Yes, and, thank you, sir. (*They exit*)

Lydia: Are you crazy old man. Telling all that to a perfect stranger.

Captain: Relax, old woman. I know what I'm doing.

(*Lights*)

Scene – 7 – The Beach

Richard: Slow down.

Amber: Come on.

Richard: Slow down ... what's the hurry. (*sits*)

Amber: Get up ... we have to get to town.

Richard: Let's rest ... just for a minute.

Amber: Oh, all right. But just for a minute.

Richard: Amber, what's in those cave over there?

Amber: Where?

Richard: Over there.

Amber: Oh, just caves.

Richard: I'd like to see them

Amber: No! I mean ... no. They're far too dangerous. The tide could rush in and suck you right out.

Richard: I'm not afraid of a little danger. (*attempts a kiss*)

Amber: Hey!

Richard: I'm sorry. Amber ... I feel like I've known you my whole life but ...

Amber: What?

Richard: I feel like you're hiding something.

Amber: We only met yesterday.

Richard: I know. And that's the crazy part about it.

Amber: Well, come on Mr. crazy man. (*gives him a quick peck*) I don't want to be late.

Richard: Yes, ma'am.

(They exit through the audience. – lights dim and we see workers carting cargo across beach – Amber and Richard return down aisle carrying lantern.)

Richard: What's that?

Amber: What?

Richard: Over there ... it looks like people working.

Amber: Oh, that's nothing, probably just some fishermen. Come this way. We don't want to be late for the party.

(exit through side doors)

(Lights)

Scene – 8 – The Inn – AM

Caleb: Well, we're on our way.

Captain: Take care son ... good luck. *(hands him harpoon)*

Lydia: Ohhh ... *(kisses him and tucks in scarf)* and stay warm. *(scolding)*

Caleb: Goodbye, Rachel. I'll write to you every day. *(big kiss and hug)*

Rachel: *(whispering)* Just come back to me.

Amber: Will I ever see you again?

Richard: Be careful what you wish for.

Caleb: Goodbye, Jonas. *(kisses his hand)*

Jonas: I must tend to the light.

Caleb: That's right, Jonas ... tend to the light. Goodbye everybody. *(They exit)*

Captain: Malachai. I want you to follow them. When you get to Boston check in with Hawse-pipe Bill. See if we have any prospects. Make sure Caleb is safe and watch Mr. Denny, if you can, but stay out of sight.

Malachai: Yes, sir. *(follows)*

Nancy: Amos, would you ever leave me to go a whalin'?

Amos: No, ma'am. I'll never leave you Nancy.

Captain: That's it! Lydia, send for Father Mapple. I can't keep these two apart with a crowbar.

(Lights)

Scene - 9 – Office of Masters and Johnson

Johnson: Well, what have you to report?

Richard: I found a point here, just north of Portsmouth, small Inn and a lighthouse. Geographically, it fits your bill.

Johnson: And the inhabitants?

Richard: Strange, sir. They seem friendly and open enough but there is something hidden. A Captain Coffin, his daughters and extended family. They say they're from Nantucket. Isn't that where you made your start, sir?

Johnson: Why do you insist on inquiring into my past?

Richard: Because from the past, we often can find solutions to the present.

Johnson: Let it drop. Anything else?

Richard: Yes. They referred several times to a Captain Sullivan here in Boston. Has a funny nickname.

Johnson: *(more to himself)* Hawse-pipe Bill.

Richard: Yes, that's it.

Johnson: He sailed for many years and is now a chandler, a ship's purveyor. *(to himself)* The perfect lookout.

Richard: Sir?

Johnson: Go on.

Richard: I saw something odd the other night. They appeared to be moving cargo. I couldn't be quite certain. I wish to go back. I'm sure I can find the proof you need.

Johnson: Yes, by all means. Go back and find me the proof to hang this. What did you say his name was?

Richard: Coffin, sir.

Johnson: Yes, Coffin. Find me the proof that will hang Captain Coffin and you will be handsomely rewarded. Now, leave me.

Richard: Sir, if you would just answer a few of my questions ...

Johnson: Leave me!

Richard: Yes, sir. *(exits)*

Johnson: Well, well, well ... Peter Coffin. The old adage proves true. You can run, but you can't hide.

(Lights)

Scene - 10 – The Inn – night

Richard: Amber.

Amber: You've come back.

Richard: Amber ... I want you to leave with me.

Amber: But ...

Richard: I know what's going on here. I've been to the caves.

Amber: But you don't understand.

Richard: I want you safe.

Amber: But I am safe.

Richard: No you're not. They've been wrecking ships and selling rum to Southbound whalers. They're going to get caught and I want you safe.

Amber: Father will keep me safe.

Richard: Amber, listen to me. You're father is a man blind with vengeance, perhaps justifiably so. But you can't be involved.

Amber: But I am involved ... we all are. *(voices)* Quick, hide! *(Hides Denny behind bar. Amber slips into kitchen)*

Malachai: The "Vanquished" will be passing late tomorrow.

Captain: Flying whose pennant?

Malachai: Masters and Johnson

Captain: Excellent. And Caleb?

Malachai: Heading south on the whaler "Alice May".

Captain: Good work, Malachai. Now get some sleep, we have a lot to do tomorrow.

Malachai: Yes, sir.

Captain: (*ominous*) Mark the stranger, the God fugitive. Seize upon him and like an anchor, cast him into the sea where God will await him in the form of the mighty whale and clamp upon him with the force of all his ivory teeth and swallow him whole into the belly of Hell. (*change of mood*) You can come out now, Mr. Denny. Have a seat. (*returning to sermon*) And there, far beyond the reach of an earthly sound, Jonah cries for repentance. And the Lord speaks to the great fish and from the shuddery cold and blackness of the deep the whale lifts his great head and comes breaching up to the warm sun and vomits Jonah upon the dry land. And ever after, Jonah preached the truth in the face of falsehood. (*end of sermon*) It all really did start with an accident. A storm blew out the light and a vessel wrecked off our shore. All hands went down. The cargo washed ashore and the wreckage ... out to sea. The cargo was marked "Masters and Johnson". I took it as a sign. A way of revenge against a man that wronged me, my family ... the whole damned crew.

Richard: Why are you telling me this, Captain?

Captain: This is what you came here to find out ... isn't it, Mr. Denny?

Richard: Yes. I work for Pinkerton's. Mr. Johnson hired me to find evidence to the wrecking of the steamship "Myrtle Deem".

Captain: Just like the coward. Using his mother's namesake for his own greedy devises.

Richard: When did you know ... about me, I mean?

Captain: That first night. Your hands ... they never held a marlinspike. You've never skipped to the topmast or jumped a spar. It was only a matter of time til he came looking for me. It was bound to happen. Now go. Go! (*placing hook at throat*) Go back to your master like a good dog!

Richard: Don't make me do this, Captain. (*placing gun at chest*)

Captain: Or I this. (*placing gun at belly*) Go. (*he does*) Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness. Delight ... a far, far more inward and upward delight is to him who against the proud captains and commodores of this earth stands forth his own self.

(*Lights*)

Scene - 11 – Office of Masters and Johnson

Richard: You don't have to tell me the names of your three partners.

Johnson: What's that? Who's there?

Richard: They were Peter Coffin, Benjamin Coffin and Jonas Cook.

Johnson: Ah, young Denny. It's about time you turned up.

Richard: You didn't hire me to find a missing ship. You hired me to find a man. A man you wronged fifteen years ago.

Johnson: What are you implying, Mr. Denny?

Richard: You built an empire on insurance money.

Johnson: Yes, I did. Insurance money on two whaling vessels, two sailing masters, cargo and crew. That, my young friend is business.

Richard: Blood business.

Johnson: Is it any worse that the havoc Peter Coffin has wrecked these years past. Think of the lives lost there, eh. Don't try and play the morals game with me.

Richard: That would be impossible, Mr. Johnson. You don't have any.

Johnson: It really doesn't matter. You couldn't, or wouldn't, give me the evidence I needed so I had to find it myself. Captain Coffin will have one last chance to play his little game and then ... the gallows. By the way ... a good hunter should not fall in love with the daughter of his prey.

Richard: You're a monster.

Johnson: Yes, but a rich one.

Richard: By the way, Mr. Johnson, you collected insurance money on one Captain Jonas Cook.

Johnson: Yes.

Richard: Jonas Cook lives. And that, sir, is fraud.

Johnson: How interesting. Well ... it will all be over this time tomorrow. Did I tell you? I bought part interest in a whaler, the "Alice May"? Bound for Portland then parts east. I do hope she doesn't meet with an accident.

Richard: The "Alice May" is heading south.

Johnson: Now who could have told you that?

Richard: Malachai!

Johnson: Yes, I do believe that was the name of the nice young man I spoke with. It's amazing what one will do for a few coins. And I do believe Captain Coffin's son-in-law will be on that voyage. Oh, don't trouble yourself. You won't have time to stop it. And besides ... she's insured.

(Lights)

Scene - 12 – The Inn – same set-up as scene one

Richard: Captain, Captain! You must stop it. It's the "Alice May".

Captain: What?

Richard: Malachai was lying. Johnson set you up. It's the "Alice May".

Captain: Quick ... to the light ... I'll to the beach.

(Explosion – too late)

Richard: What do we do?

Captain: Get the boats. Look for all survivors.

Richard: Aye, aye ... Captain. *(exits)*

Malachai: *(enters)* We're ready for you, sir. You'll want to supervise yourself, of course.

Captain: Malachai, come here. For fifteen years, I've raised you ... like my own son. And now you do this? *(stabs him with hook)*

Lydia: Now you've done it, old man.

Captain: *(enraged)* Leave me, woman.

Lydia: There's not enough water to wash the blood from your hands.

Captain: I said leave me! *(composing himself, he looks around at all that has happened)* Heavenly Father ... may we strive to be thine more than to be the worlds or our own. Hence we die ... we leave eternity to thee. As we journey to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.

(Takes harpoon – back wall magically opens. With a mighty yell, he throws himself, and harpoon, into oblivion.)

Scene - 13 – The Inn

(coffin lying across table – girls crying, etc.)

Lydia: *(to casket)* Old fool. *(Denny and Amos enter)* Any sign of Caleb?

Richard: Not yet ... we'll keep trying.

Johnson: *(entering)* Well, well. Here we all are ... huddled under the sign of the Three Brats.

Lydia: Lawrence Johnson! *(spits)*

Johnson: Why Mrs. Benjamin Coffin, as I live and breathe. I thought you'd be dead by now ... like your husband and whelp. But of course, they were insured. And where's the good Captain? What! Ah, how appropriate ... a Coffin in a coffin. Oh, don't cry, children. You'll all be together soon enough. Oh, and Mr. Denny. Not to worry. I wired your employers after our little visit. You'll be free to join your friends ... on the yardarm. And this must be the late great Captain Jonas Cook. What's the matter Jonas? You look like you've seen a ghost. I certainly have. They should have left you to drown, you wreck of a man.

Richard: Leave him alone.

Johnson: What?

Richard: I said, leave him alone. He's suffered enough.

Johnson: Ah, the moralist.

Richard: I don't know what to believe in anymore, Mr. Johnson. Who's worse? The man in that box who sought vengeance for past wrongs or you who live a life of pure greed. You called him a wreck of a man. He's not. He is loved and in his own way, gives love in return. But you, you are an empty shell, a man alone living through the linings of his pockets. You asked me to find the wreck of the "Myrtle Deem". Well, I've found it. And if I had a mirror I could show it to you.

Johnson: Tell it to the judge.

Caleb: *(entering from above ... pistol at side)* And what will you tell the judge, Mr. Johnson?

Rachel: Caleb!

(all react)

Caleb: I received word of your plot from Captain Sullivan just before we sailed. I only wish I got here in time to ...

Johnson: You signed the articles. So, now we'll add mutiny to your list of charges.

Caleb: I heard what you said about my father. He may not be a whole man but he is a man ... and he is loved. I wonder what the penalty is for attempted murder? I hope you're insured, Mr. Johnson.

Johnson: *(pulling gun)* Why you ...

(Caleb shoots ... Johnson falls.)

Rachel: Caleb.

(Everyone embraces – the sound of a steam whistle is heard)

Jonas: A vessel ... rounding the point. What do we do?

Richard: *(Center ... assessing situation)* Tend the light, Jonas. *(Amber comes to his side)* Tend the light.

Finis

P.D.W.

