

The CAT AND THE CANARY



Adapted to be presented
as a live radio broadcast by
DAVID MUNCASTER

Based on the play by
John Willard

**A
MELODRAMA
IN THREE ACTS**

The Cat and the Canary

by

John Willard

adapted by

David Muncaster

Cast

(In the order in which they speak.)

Elowen Penhaligan, maid. Thick West Country accent.

Roger Crosby, the lawyer.

Harry Blythe

Cicily Young

Susan Sillsby

Charlie Wilder

Paul Jones. (Played by the actor who plays Harry.)

Annabelle West (Played by the actor who initially plays Elowen.)

Hendricks, guard at asylum. (Played by the actor who plays Harry.)

Patterson (Played by the actor who plays Harry.)

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place at Glencliff Manor in rural Cheshire and is practically continuous. The play is presented as though it is a live radio broadcast with the actors reading from scripts into microphones at the front of the stage. Sound effects should be performed live in view of the audience.

Act I: Library. Eleven-thirty. Night.

Act II: The next room. A few minutes later.

Act III: Library. A few minutes later.

The Cat and The Canary

ACT I

Scene: Library at Glenclyff Manor.

Time: About eleven-thirty in the evening.

CROSBY: A little more light, Elowen, please. That's better. Well, the old place looks just the same.

ELOWEN: That it be. Nothing's changed 'ere in twenty year.

CROSBY: You've been faithful to your trust, Elowen.

ELOWEN: I has. I stuck right 'ere guarding the old place the whole time.

CROSBY: Haven't you been lonely – living here by yourself?

ELOWEN: No, sir. I got my friends.

CROSBY: Friends!

ELOWEN: Aye, my friends from the shadow world!

CROSBY: Oh! You believe in spirits, eh?

ELOWEN: I don't believe. I know. They be with me all the time.

CROSBY: You never really saw one, did you, Elowen?

ELOWEN: Aye, sir – I see 'em! And they do warn me there be an evil spirit working around this house.

CROSBY: Ever see it?

ELOWEN: No sir, but I felt it pass me in the dark on the stairs.

CROSBY: Nonsense, your nerves are upset. It's with living alone here all this time.

ELOWEN: No sir!

CROSBY: Never mind, cheer up! In a few minutes the house will be full of people, and all your spooks will vanish.

ELOWEN: 'Ow many heirs is coming?

CROSBY: Six! All the surviving relatives. By the way, Elowen, your job as guardian of this house is up tonight. What are you going to do?

ELOWEN: That does depend. If I like the new heirs I stays 'ere. If I don't I goes back to Cornwall.

CROSBY: Let's have a look at that will.

SFX: Safe opening.

CROSBY: There's the will. It's been in that safe, undisturbed for the last twenty years, think of that.

ELOWEN: I thinking.

CROSBY: There you are, just as your master sealed them, and locked them in that safe marked one, two, three – hello. These envelopes have been opened – every one of them! The seals have been cut away and very cleverly glued back again. Someone has opened that safe and read this will.

ELOWEN: 'Ow could they? Nobody knows 'ow to open the safe but ye.

CROSBY: Well, I didn't do it.

ELOWEN: I ain't suspecting nobody. I just like to know why they opened 'em. What do ye expect they'd want to do, change the will?

CROSBY: Perhaps. But if it has been changed, it won't do them any good. I drew up duplicate wills, according to Mr West's instructions. One copy is here – the other is in the vault of the Empire Trust Company and if this one has been tampered with, I'll know it and I'll know who did it.

SFX: Door-bell

ELOWEN: You don't think that I...

CROSBY: See who that is, Elowen. And mind. Say nothing about this.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ELOWEN: *(Off)* This way.

SFX: Door opens and closes. Harry enters.

HARRY: How are you, Mr. Crosby?

CROSBY: Hello, Harry! Did you come up on the train?

HARRY: No. Some friends of mine motored me over from Manchester. The train had just pulled in as I passed the station. Am I the first of the pack?

CROSBY: Yes. I guess the others will be right up.

HARRY: How many heirs besides myself?

Crosby Five.

HARRY: Five, eh? Well, I'm fortunate. I only know two of them, and I wish to heaven I only knew one.

CROSBY: Why do you dislike Charlie Wilder?

HARRY: In the first place because he is my cousin, in the second place because he's a poet.

CROSBY: And in the third place, because Annabelle is very fond of him!

HARRY: You've said it! So this is the old man's library?

CROSBY: Yes. Haven't you ever been here before?

HARRY: No. Why do you ask?

CROSBY: Well, someone has.

HARRY: Just what do you mean by that?

CROSBY: Oh, nothing.

ELOWEN: (*Humming*) hum who hum who hum.

HARRY: I beg your pardon, would you mind parking yourself in the kitchen for a while?

ELOWEN: Pfft.

CROSBY: You've offended her. Do you know who she is?

HARRY: No.

CROSBY: She's Mr. West's old and trusted servant.

HARRY: That's possibly true – but it's not interesting. What are you getting at?

CROSBY: You mustn't treat her like an ordinary servant. They say she has special powers.

HARRY: My dear fellow – I don't care what she has. Is that the will?

CROSBY: Yes, but it can't be read until all the heirs are assembled in this room.

HARRY: All right. Oh, Mr Crosby. You knew old man West. Was he all there?

CROSBY: All there?

HARRY: Wasn't he a little bit off? You know, a little cuckoo?

CROSBY: Have you no respect for a dead relative?

HARRY: None whatever – unless, of course, he has made me the sole heir. Come on, Mr Crosby, you'll admit he was a nut.

CROSBY: He was a little eccentric.

HARRY: He was fantastic! Why did he want a twenty-year-old will read to his heirs at midnight in this old house? Why not in the daytime at your office? Why drag us out here?

CROSBY: Mr. West stipulated that this will should be read in this room at the very hour of his death. One of his whims.

HARRY: Whims. It's going to make me miss the last train to Manchester and I'll have to sleep here.

CROSBY: That's all been taken care of. Elowen will see that you're made comfortable, and you'll have company, the others will have to sleep here too.

SFX: Door opens.

ELOWEN: Mss Young. And Mss Sillsby.

CROSBY: Ah, Cicily, Susan.

SUSAN: How do you do!

CROSBY: How do you do, Susan. And how do you do, Cicily. Do you two know each other?

SUSAN: Oh, yes, yes – we met after we got off the train. My, what a small world it is.

CICILY: I overheard Miss Sillsby asking for a taxi to take her to Glencliff, so we rode up together.

SUSAN: What was I saying? Oh, yes, I was telling Cicily...

CROSBY: Excuse me, Miss Sillsby, let me introduce Mr. Harry Blythe. Miss Susan Sillsby and Miss Cicily Young.

HARRY: Ladies, delighted!

SUSAN: So you are Harry Blythe! Well! Well! Well! My, what a small world it is.

HARRY: Yes, isn't it?

SUSAN: Now, you must tell me all about yourself. We must find out just how we're connected! Did you know my Great-aunt Eleanor?

HARRY: No, Miss Sillsby, I did not know your Great-aunt Eleanor.

SUSAN: Well, she's...

HARRY: I'm not anxious to hear about her so why delve into ancient history?

SUSAN: But I...

HARRY: Aunt Eleanor and I are related – aren't we?

SUSAN: Yes

HARRY: It can't be helped.

SUSAN: No!

HARRY: So let it go at that. Excuse me.

SUSAN: (*Quietly to Cicily*) Why, he's the rudest man I ever met. He's positively insulting.

CICILY: Don't pay any attention to him. He doesn't know any better probably. Anyway, I like him better than I do this house. It's such a spooky old place!

SUSAN: You know, my dear, I've had the queerest feeling ever since we came in the house. I feel as if someone were peering at me.

Elowen sneezes

SUSAN: Oh! This house is haunted. I know it.

ELOWEN: Lady, there be someone in the other world trying to tell ye something. You is mediumistic, (*Cry from Susan.*) a spiritist. I knew it when you came in that door. There be spirits all around ye.

SUSAN: I knew it. I knew it.

CROSBY: What are you trying to do, Elowen? Frighten her to death?

HARRY: (*Returning*) Nonsense, no one was ever frightened to death.

CROSBY: It has happened, and you know it. Lots of women have lost their minds, sometimes their lives, through fright. The asylums are full of such cases.

ELOWEN: Someone be coming. I'll let 'em in.

SFX: Door open and closes.

HARRY: Well, I don't believe it.

SUSAN: Oh, I wish I hadn't come, you heard what she said! It's terrible – I want to go home.

HARRY: Come and sit down.

SUSAN: I don't want to sit down.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ELOWEN: Mr Wilder.

CHARLIE: How are you, Mr. Crosby? Hope I'm not late.

CROSBY: Hello, Charlie! Miss Susan Sillsby and Miss Cicily Young – this is Charlie Wilder, another distant relative.

CHARLIE: It's a pleasure to discover that I have such charming relatives.

SUSAN: Oh!

CROSBY: Oh, Harry, you know Charlie, of course.

HARRY: Oh, yes, I know him!

CROSBY: Now, boys, forget this foolish quarrel of yours. This is a family reunion – stop acting like children and shake hands.

CHARLIE: I'd like to. Come on, old man. Let's bury the hatchet. Shake!

HARRY: Very well. If it makes you happy.

CHARLIE: That's better.

HARRY: When are you going to read the will, Mr. Crosby?

CROSBY: As soon as the other two heirs arrive.

SFX: Telephone rings.

CROSBY: Excuse me.

SFX: Telephone ring stops.

CROSBY: Hello, yes, yes, this is Mr Crosby. Oh, all right, yes, we're waiting for you.

SFX: Telephone receiver replaced.

CROSBIE: That's one of them now. She's on her way from the station. She had trouble getting a taxi.

CHARLIE: I left the other downstairs. Chap by the name of Jones.

CROSBY: What's he doing down there?

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* He's not turned up.

CROSBIE: *(In own voice.)* Who?

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* Pete.

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Where the hell is he?

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) How would I know?

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) We'll just have to cover him.

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) How?

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) This is radio, For God's sake. It can't be too difficult. We can take it in turns.

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) Have you gone mad?

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Mike. Do Pete's lines.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) Why me?

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Just do it! (*As Crosbie.*) Come in, Paul. Glad to see you. My, my, but you're looking fit!

HARRY: (*Adopting a Welsh accent for Paul*) Well, I may look all right— but I don't feel so good.

CROSBY: No

PAUL: I have felt better, but on the other hand, I have felt worse.

CROSBY: Here are some cousins you ought to know, Miss Cicily Young. Mr Paul Jones.

CICILY: So you're Cousin Paul.

PAUL: (*In own voice.*) Apparently.

CICILY: I beg your pardon, I didn't catch that.

PAUL: Yep! That's who it is.

CICILY: Isn't it a wonderful night?

PAUL: Well, the sky didn't look any too good when I came in but of course on the other hand it may be all right by tomorrow.

CROSBY: Miss Sillsby, Mr. Jones.

SUSAN: Well! Well! Paul Jones?

PAUL: Yep!

SUSAN: Isn't the world a small place?

PAUL: Yep, it certainly is but not too small.

SUSAN: I quite agree with you. You're a professional man, aren't you?

PAUL: Yes, ma'am, I'm a horse doctor.

CHARLIE: Horse doctor!

CROSBY: Oh, Paul, your cousin Charlie Wilder.

CHARLIE: How do you do!

CROSBY: And Harry Blythe.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) Behave.

PAUL: Mr Blythe!

CHARLIE: I thought you were in the automobile business.

PAUL: Well, when I graduated from college as a first-class vet, I went back home to practice and found I was sunk. The farmers had quit using horses and were all driving cars, so I naturally began doctoring them, there isn't much difference is there, and I want to tell you I've got about the best garage in Merthyr Tydfil.

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) Merthyr Tydfil?

PAUL: (*In own voice.*) Go with it.

ELOWEN: I hear a taxi comin' down the drive. That be the sixth heir.

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) Ah.

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Ah, what?

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) She's not here either.

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Alison? She's the bloody lead! Don't tell me. Pete was giving her a lift. Well, we'll just have to carry on.

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) I can do her. Bit bored with the Cornish accent now anyway to be honest.

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Great. Do the line again.

ELOWEN: I hear a taxi comin' down the drive. That be the sixth heir.

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Sound effect!

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) There isn't a sound effect!

CROSBIE: (*In own voice.*) Oh. Of course. Sorry.

ELOWEN: I'll go let her in.

CICILY: Ugh! She gives me the creeps.

CHARLIE: She is rather weird. I don't hear any taxi.

SUSAN: This house is haunted.

PAUL: What's that?

SUSAN: I know it!

CROSBY: Rubbish! You'll be seeing ghosts the first thing you know.

PAUL: Well, personally, I've never seen a ghost, however, on the other hand, that doesn't prove that there aren't any. I've felt kind of queer ever since I've been in this house.

The actor playing Harry now has to have a conversation with himself.

HARRY: What will you do with it if you inherit it?

PAUL: Inherit it?

HARRY: Well, you might.

PAUL: Do you think so?

HARRY: Could be any of us.

PAUL: I suppose so.

HARRY: You've as much chance as the rest of us.

PAUL: I never inherit anything, but on the other hand you never can tell, I might.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

The actress playing Elowen adopts an upper class accent for Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Sorry I'm late, Mr Crosby.

CROSBY: Well, Annabelle, you did get here. Miss Cicily Young – Miss Annabelle West.

CICILY: Annabelle West, the illustrator?

ANNABELLE: I suppose so!

CROSBY: Miss Sillsby, Miss West.

HARRY: Hello, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Harry!

CHARLIE: Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Charlie Wilder! Why didn't I see you on the train?

CHARLIE: I was in the smoker.

HARRY: I motored up. Now you can go ahead, Mr Crosby.

CROSBY: If you'll all sit down, I'll begin.

ANNABELLE: Oh! Cousin Paul?

PAUL: Yes, that's right. Little Annabelle West, all grown up and everything.

ANNABELLE: When did you leave Wickford?

PAUL: I think you mean Merthyr.

ANNABELLE: *(In own voice.)* Eh?

PAUL: This morning, I think – yes, as a matter of fact I, um...

CROSBY: Now I'm going to be brief.

HARRY: Good!

CROSBY: Cyrus Canby West died in this house twenty years ago tonight. He made me executor of his estate. Mr. West was a very eccentric man; and hated all his living relatives.

HARRY: I don't blame him.

CROSBY: Not wishing his near relatives to enjoy his fortune, Mr. West invested it in Government bonds to mature in twenty years. At the end of that time I was to assemble all his surviving relatives and read his will. Now you understand why I've kept track of you all. You six people are the last living descendants of Cyrus Canby West.

HARRY: I thought you were going to make this brief.

CROSBY: Please! Here is the will in these three envelopes.

SFX: A muffled weird gong sounds seven times.

CROSBY: I will now read instructions on envelope marked 1.

ELOWEN: *(In a trance like voice)* Oh, tell I – oh, tell I!

CROSBY: Elowen. Elowen Penhaligan!

ELOWEN: Yes. I 'ear you, Eliza.

CROSBY: Elowen!

ELOWEN: Eliza, what is ye trying to tell me about? About...

CROSBY: Elowen! Stop that and answer me.

ELOWEN: Tell me. Tell me the name.

CROSBY: Elowen!

ELOWEN: *(Suddenly back with us)* What?

CROSBY: What was that noise? Like a gong.

ELOWEN: *(In a deep voice surcharged with malice)* That be the warning of death. The master heard it just before he died.

A Beat.

PAUL: Well, I've been thinking that there isn't really any use my staying round here, besides, I don't feel so good, and it looks like rain, so if it's all the same to you, I think I'll run to the station.

ANNABELLE: Nonsense, Paul, it isn't going to rain – and I want you here to... Hey, you don't believe in ghosts, do you?

PAUL: No! No! Of course not! But then on the other hand that gong and...

CROSBY: It's nothing

ANNABELLE: An old grandfather's clock in one of the rooms.

ELOWEN: There be no clock running in this house.

PAUL: You see!

ELOWEN: The toll says seven may live. There be eight persons in this room. One must die before morning.

SUSAN: Oh! I feel faint.

PAUL: Say, listen, honest to goodness, it's too hot in here. I want some air.

HARRY: Quit your kidding and sit down.

PAUL: But I'm not kidding.

HARRY: I said sit! Crosby, go on with the will.

CROSBY: "At midnight, September 27, 1921, you will open this envelope and read its contents to such of my relatives as are assembled in my library at Glencliff Manor."

SFX: *Envelope opened and piece of paper taken out.*

CROSBY: "First, let my executor ask the prospective heirs assembled this night if they are willing to take what fortune offers them, and not question my judgement in the manner in which I shall dispose of my fortune." Is that clear? Any objections?

SUSAN: No, that's all right, go ahead.

CROSBY: "If they are willing"

PAUL: Just a minute, I don't know about that. Maybe his judgement isn't good. Mind you, I don't say that it isn't, but then on the other hand it might not be.

CROSBY: Are you satisfied or not?

PAUL: Well, it seems to me under the circumstances....

CHARLIE: He is. Go on.

CROSBY: Are you?

PAUL: I didn't say I wasn't. I merely started to say that it seemed to me under the circumstances.

HARRY: Will you dry up?

CROSBY: "If they are willing to take what fortune offers, then let my executor open envelope number two and read my will."

SFX: *Envelope opened and piece of paper taken out.*

CROSBY: "I, Cyrus Canby West, being of sound mind and body, do hereby declare as the sole heir to all my money, bonds, securities, estate, real and otherwise, my descendant, man or woman who bears the surname of West. If more than one bear the surname of West, then my estate shall be equally divided among them. Cyrus Canby West. Witnesses: Elowen Penhaligan, Roger Crosby." *(Pause.)* There is, however, a codicil. "In the event of the death of the beneficiary, or if he or she be proved of unsound mind, or if it be proved in a court of law that the said beneficiary is not competent to properly handle the estate, then my executor will open envelope marked 3 and declare the next heir." Therefore, in accordance with the will, I now declare Miss Annabelle West as sole heiress of the West estate, and the mistress of Glencliff Manor. Annabelle, I congratulate you. And as there is no doubt as to the good health and sanity of Miss West – I trust this third envelope shall never be opened.

CHARLIE: It's wonderful, Annabelle, I'm glad.

HARRY: I congratulate you with all my heart.

ANNABELLE: I. I can't realize it yet. All I can say is. Glencliff is open to you all and everything I that have is...

SUSAN: I knew there was a catch in it.

CICILY: I confess I'm disappointed, but I congratulate you.

ANNABELLE: Thanks.

SUSAN: I suppose there's nothing else to do, but to wish you many happy returns.

ANNABELLE: It is so – so unexpected – I can hardly believe it yet.

PAUL: Well, of course, money doesn't always bring happiness, but then again on the other hand, sometimes it does.

SUSAN: I quite agree with you, money is the root of all evil.

PAUL: It is, it certainly is! When you haven't got any!

ANNABELLE: Mr. Crosby, one thing puzzles me about the will.

CROSBY: What is it?

ANNABELLE: What did he mean when it said if the heir is proved to be unsound in mind?

CROSBY: Mr. West believed that there was a streak of insanity in the family. That clause was put there in case that failing should reappear in the heir. In that event, the estate would go to the heir named in envelope three.

PAUL: I wonder who that is?

HARRY: I wonder.

ANNABELLE: I didn't know there was any insanity in our family.

HARRY: Neither did I until I heard that will.

CROSBY: But it is legal – absolutely!

HARRY: I don't dispute that – I'm only saying that the old man was dotty.

CROSBY: He was peculiar, yes, but as sane as any man living.

ELOWEN: 'Ere be the keys to the house, Miss West.

ANNABELLE: Will you remain as my housekeeper?

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) It would be difficult for her to leave without you.

ELOWEN: When Mr. West died he did give me this letter to give to the heir after the will was read.

ANNABELLE: "You will open this envelope tonight, in my room, where you are to sleep." Where is the room, Elowen?

ELOWEN: There. Across the hall.

CICILY: I agree with Harry. Mr West was certainly insane. Imagine trusting that woman to deliver a letter twenty years after his death.

CROSBY: It's all news to me. Elowen, when did he give you that letter?

ELOWEN: Just before he died, when you and the doctor were talking in a corner of the room.

SUSAN: I'm afraid that Cousin Cyrus was a little out of his mind.

PAUL: I wonder what's in that letter.

CROSBY: It may refer to the lost necklace.

HARRY: Necklace?

CICILY: Oh, I remember my mother telling me she saw it once and said it was the most gorgeous thing imaginable. All sapphires and rubies.

ANNABELLE: Seems to me I heard something about it. Wasn't it a family heirloom?

CICILY: Yes. Mother told me it had been in the family for; oh, generations. But she said it was lost or stolen after it came into Mr West's possession.

CROSBY: It did disappear but I don't think it was lost or stolen. I believe Mr West hid it somewhere in this house.

CHARLIE: Why should he do that?

CROSBY: Another of his whims.

SUSAN: Did you ever see it?

CROSBY: Once. It was magnificent. The stones alone are worth a fortune. Annabelle, I congratulate you again.

SUSAN: Gracious – some people have all the luck.

CICILY: You know the old saying: "Them that has, gets."

ANNABELLE: Before I go to bed I'll open this letter. Perhaps in the morning I will show you the necklace. This is going to be a wonderful evening. Elowen, how about some supper?

ELOWEN: Aye, Ma'am. I'll put it on the table in the dining room.

ANNABELLE: While you're doing that, we'll explore the place – and you two can pick out your rooms.

CICILY: I'd like one next to Susan. I'm afraid to sleep alone in this ghostly old house.

SUSAN: I know I won't sleep a wink.

ANNABELLE: Nonsense. There is nothing to fear.

CICILY: Aren't you afraid to sleep in the room where he died?

ANNABELLE: Certainly not, why should I be?

SUSAN: This house is haunted, she has seen them: Spirits!

ANNABELLE: Me?

SUSAN: (*In own voice.*) No, you idiot. Elowen.

ANNABELLE: Suppose she has? She has been living here a long time and they haven't hurt you, have they?

ELOWEN: But there be an evil spirit in this house now.

ANNABELLE: I don't believe it – nothing can frighten me.

CHARLIE: Keep still, Elowen! Don't you see – you are making Miss West nervous.

ANNABELLE: Come on, Susan and Cicily.

SUSAN: I won't budge without a man.

ANNABELLE: Come on, Paul, you'll protect us, won't you?

PAUL: Well, I don't know as I'd be much use to you – but then again, on the other hand, you never can tell – maybe I might.

The actors playing Annabelle, Susan and Paul move to back of stage.

CICILY: I haven't much confidence in Paul. Would you come, Mr Crosby?

CROSBY: Me? Of course I'll come. Delighted.

The actors playing Cicily and Crosby join the others leaving the actor playing Charlie on his own. He struggles on whilst the others chat amongst themselves, unaware of his predicament.

CHARLIE: So. Just the two of us again.

He waits. The others are still unaware of the situation.

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* Mike! Mike! Oh for God's sake.

When reading Harry's lines he attempts the Welsh accent, forgetting that it is Paul that has the Welsh accent.

CHARLIE: So. Just the two of us again.

CHARLIE/HARRY: But it won't be for long. One of us will be gone before morning.

CHARLIE: Meaning me?

CHARLIE/HARRY: Yes, you!

CHARLIE: Until Annabelle tells me I'm not wanted, I'm going to stick right here.

CHARLIE/HARRY: Just try it!

CHARLIE: I see. Now that she's the heiress, you've decided that you're in love with her.

CHARLIE/HARRY: I've decided that she needs my protection...

The actor playing Harry comes to the front of the stage.

HARRY: *(In own voice.)* What the hell are you doing?

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* Well, you weren't here so I had to play roles.

HARRY: *(In own voice.)* But I don't have a Welsh accent.

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* I am aware of that.

HARRY: *(In own voice.)* So why are you doing one. Well, trying to, anyway.

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* Because you decided that your character is Welsh for reasons best known to yourself.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) That's Paul! This is Harry!

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) Oh.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) We'll have to do it again. Go from your line.

CHARLIE: So. Just the two of us again.

HARRY: But it won't be for long. One of us will be gone before morning.

CHARLIE: Meaning me?

HARRY: Yes, you!

CHARLIE: Until Annabelle tells me I'm not wanted, I'm going to stick right here.

HARRY: Just try it!

CHARLIE: I see. Now that she's the heiress, you've decided that you're in love with her.

HARRY: I've decided that she needs my protection and she's going to have it. So you keep out of my way or I'll...

ANNABELLE: What's it all about?

HARRY: Nothing!

CHARLIE: Sorry to disappoint you, Annabelle. Where did you put me?

ANNABELLE: At the end of the hall. Elowen will show you. Harry, you are to sleep in the first room at the head of the stairs.

CHARLIE: Find any spirits in the house?

ANNABELLE: The sideboard is full of Scotch. Help yourself.

CHARLIE: All right, I will, but I'd like to see you later, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Come back when you've had your drink.

CHARLIE: I will. And I'll bring you some.

ANNABELLE: Harry, what's all this nonsense between you and Charlie?

HARRY: It isn't nonsense, Annabelle. It's serious. You know how I feel about you, and it exasperates me the way you smile on that rotter.

ANNABELLE: See here, Harry, don't talk that way about Charlie; he's one of my dearest friends.

HARRY: If he's a sample of your dearest friends, God help you!

ANNABELLE: I used to think you were one of them but when I see you with such an ugly look in your eyes...

HARRY: You're shocked, are you?

ANNABELLE: No! I've always thought there was a good deal of the brute in you.

HARRY: And is that why you told me to run along and find some other girl?

ANNABELLE: Not exactly. I didn't mind the brute in you. I was just afraid you mightn't be able to control it, and it looks as though I were right.

HARRY: How can a man control himself when he sees the woman he loves is being swept off her feet by a romantic milksop?

ANNABELLE: If you mean Charlie?

HARRY: I do. Charlie's a dreamer. He'll never amount to a row of pins. Don't throw yourself away on him!

ANNABELLE: Do you suggest that I throw myself away on you?

HARRY: You'd better!

ANNABELLE: Is that a threat?

HARRY: Whatever it is, Annabelle – it comes straight from my heart.

ANNABELLE: Just for a moment the old trust in you comes back to me.

HARRY: And if you'll give me the chance I'll make you trust me forever.

ANNABELLE: It's too late.

HARRY: You love him?

ANNABELLE: Please!

HARRY: All right, but I know a cure for it!

ANNABELLE: A cure?

HARRY: Yes! Just marry him! And you can take my word for it, you'll be sorry as long as you live.

ANNABELLE: What are you doing? Putting a curse on me?

HARRY: What do you want me to do, give you my blessing?

ANNABELLE: You can give me one thing. A promise that you'll always be my friend.

HARRY: That goes without saying! You'll need me, Annabelle, and when you do, I'll come a-running.

ANNABELLE: I've a mind to give you a kiss for that!

HARRY: No, thanks – I want all or nothing.

Crosbie and Charlie return.

CROSBY: Annabelle, as hostess, I think you might hurry along the supper.

ANNABELLE: Elowen may not like my interfering but I'll see what I can do.

CROSBY: That was a fine Scotch, Charlie! Just like old times.

CHARLIE: I'll say this much, the old man knew whiskey.

HARRY: I'll say he didn't know much about wills.

Susan returns.

SUSAN: I know it, I know it, I know it.

PAUL: What's, what's the matter with her?

CROSBY: Anything wrong, Miss Sillsby ?

SUSAN: I know it, just as sure as I'm standing on this spot.

PAUL: What do you know?

SUSAN: That something is going to happen. Something terrible. (*Harry laughs, first with a Welsh lilt then he remembers and corrects himself.*) Don't you laugh at me, Harry Blythe. Don't you know Aunt Eleanor is trying to warn me?

PAUL: What's she trying to warn you about?

SUSAN: Some danger.

HARRY: Miss Sillsby, aren't you stretching your imagination, just a little?

CHARLIE: You're not a medium, are you?

SUSAN: Yes. I've always thought I was a psychic, and now I know it. Didn't you hear Elowen Penhaligan say a spirit was trying to warn me? Aunt Eleanor!

CROSBY: You mustn't believe everything that Elowen tells you, Miss Sillsby.

SUSAN: But I do. I felt it in my bones, the moment I entered this house, that something terrible was going to happen.

PAUL: And I suppose if nothing terrible happens you'll be disappointed?

SUSAN: Mr Jones! Really!

PAUL: Sorry – no offence.

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) Oh.

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) What is it now?

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) My next line.

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) Which is?

ELOWEN: There be a man outside. He says he wants to see the boss of this house.

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) The problem being? No, don't tell me, I can guess. We'll just have to cover it.

CHARLIE: (*In own voice.*) Don't look at me.

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) Mike. You'll have to do it.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) I'm already doing two!

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) Come on. It's only a small role.

HARRY: (*In own voice.*) You owe me a pint. OK?

CROSBY: (*In own voice.*) Good man. Carry on then.

ELOWEN: There be a man outside. 'E says he wants to see the boss of this house.

CROSBY: Who is he?

ELOWEN: 'E's from the sanatorium at Fairview.

CROSBY: You mean, the asylum?

ELOWEN: Aye, sir.

CROSBY: What does he want?

ELOWEN: I don't know.

HARRY: Why not see him, and find out?

CROSBY: Send him in, Elowen.

CHARLIE: Could he be after some...

HARRY: Where is this asylum, Mr. Crosby?

CROSBY: Up past the village. What do you suppose he wants?

PAUL: Maybe he wants to take one of us back with him.

ELOWEN: This be the man. Mr Hendricks.

Harry adopts a bad Pakistani accent.

HENDRICKS: Hello, please. Are you the boss?

CROSBY: *(In own voice.)* What the hell was that!

ELOWEN: *(In own voice.)* Bit racist.

HARRY: *(In own voice.)* Well, I'm sorry but I'm running out of accents.

CROSBY: *(In own voice.)* Anything but that.

ELOWEN: *(In own voice.)* Maybe you can give us your Rasta.

HARRY: *(In own voice.)* I can try Scottish but I'm not making any promises.

CROSBY: *(In own voice.)* Yes, yes. Fine.

ELOWEN: *(In own voice.)* Again?

CROSBY: *(In own voice.)* Yes.

ELOWEN: This be the man. Mr Hendricks.

HENDRICKS: Are ye the boss.?

CROSBY: I represent the owner of this house. Who are you?

HENDRICKS: Mah name's Hendricks. Aam th' heed guard up at Fairview.

CROSBY: Yes, I know. What are you doing down here?

HENDRICKS: We're lookin' fur a patient tha got away thes efternuin.

CHARLIE: A patient!

HARRY: You mean you're looking for an escaped lunatic?

HENDRICKS: Aye.

HARRY: Why didn't you come right out with it?

HENDRICKS: Coz Ah didne want tae scaur ye.

CROSBY: Is there any cause for alarm?

HENDRICKS: Aye.

CROSBY: And this – this patient is dangerous?

HENDRICKS: Dangerous! He's a killer. A homicidal maniac!

CHARLIE: What makes you think he's here?

HENDRICKS: Ah didne say he was here. Aam askin' at aw the hooses, Ah thought Ah was daein' a favoor in warnin' ye, that's aw.

CROSBY: Just a minute. No offence was intended.

HENDRICKS: Weel?

CROSBY: Have you any reason to believe he might be around here?

HENDRICKS: Weel, he might be in one of these hooses. ye see, he aye gits intae a hoose when he escapes, an' hides until a' fowk goes tae bed – 'en he prowls around like...

HARRY: He's escaped before?

HENDRICKS: Och aye. he got awa' frae us abit a year ago, an' hid in a hoose in th' village. Ah got there jist in time.

HARRY: What does he look like?

HENDRICKS: When he escaped he had on a black hat an' a lang jacket. he's an auld bloke, wi' a bald heed, sharp teeth an' finger-nails like claws. He crawls around on aw fours like...

CROSBY: An animal?

HENDRICKS: Aye, a cat!

HARRY: A cat!

HENDRICKS: Aye, an' aam th' only one up thaur 'at can handle heem. he's afraid ay me.

CHARLIE: I suppose you control him through kindness.

HENDRICKS: Control heem through kindness! och aye, Ah dae that aw reit. Ah control heem wi' a club, a chair, an iron bar. Anythin' Ah can git mah hans on. We have tae keep heem strapped doon most of th' time in a straight jacket!

CHARLIE: That's the crudest thing I ever heard of. Think of being strapped down in that, it's enough to make anyone violent.

HENDRICKS: Ye dont say.

CHARLIE: Yes, and I dare say, because of his treatment up there, this old man thinks everyone is against him. He's probably just a poor old nut.

HENDRICKS: Puir auld nut! hear this, young feller, let me tell ye, this puir auld nut could rip ye open jist like a cat rips open a bird. Puir auld nut. Ah say, young feller, ye take mah tip, if ye see heem, run like hell!

SUSAN: Oh!

HENDRICKS: Sorry, ma'am, Ah forgot ye was there.

SUSAN: Do you think...

HENDRICKS: Noo don't get excited. it ainae likely he's around here.

CROSBY: Where are the rest of your men?

HENDRICKS: Lookin' ower the estate next tae this one. Weel, Ah guess I'll be goin'.

CROSBY: But suppose?

HENDRICKS: Don't get nervous, he ainae liable to ever get in this hoose. it ainae likely he's even around here.

CROSBY: You think so?

HENDRICKS: Sure. He may be prowling around the neighbourhood, waiting for a chance tae sneak in somewhere, so jist tae play safe, none ay ye had better go it before morning. But be sure tae lock all the outside doors an' windaes. I'll be around here an' if we get heem, I'll drop in an' lit ye ken. Goodnight.

CROSBY: What do you think we ought to do?

CHARLIE: We'd better not say anything about this to Annabelle or Cicily: It would only throw them into a panic.

HARRY: You're wrong. Both these girls should be told. If there is any danger they ought to know it.

CHARLIE: What do you think, Mr. Crosby?

CROSBY: I agree with you. It would throw them into a panic. I don't believe there is any danger, so there is no use alarming them. Harry, you won't tell them, will you?

HARRY: I don't know about that. What do you think, Paul?

PAUL: I think I'd better go down and lock all the cellar windows.

SUSAN: Yes! Yes! Do, do!

HARRY: I mean about telling the girls.

PAUL: Well, I don't know. Maybe they ought to be told and on the other hand maybe they oughtn't.

HARRY: You're a lot of help. You win. I shall say nothing.

CROSBY: You'll keep quiet, Paul?

PAUL: Well, I don't know, it seems to me under the circumstances...

CROSBY: Will you answer me?

PAUL: What I started to say was, it seems to me under the circumstances...

CROSBY: Will you or won't you?

PAUL: Well, you don't give me a chance to talk. Of course I won't say anything.

CROSBY: Now, Susan, promise not to mention this to the girls!

SUSAN: Of course I won't. Good heavens, do you think I'm the kind who can't keep a secret? Let me tell you, Mr. Crosby, that we girls don't talk half as much as you men. (*Mocking.*) Oh dear, oh dear. I just know we'll all be murdered in our beds.

HARRY: Cheer up, the worst is yet to come.

SFX: Door opens.

CICILY: Annabelle wants you to come to supper!

CROSBY: We'll be right along.

CICILY: Why, Cousin Sue – what is it?

SUSAN: Oh, it's nothing, nothing! Come, Cicily, I must have a strong cup of tea! (*In a whisper.*) My dear, I've something to tell you about a terrible old maniac who is loose in this house. He thinks he's a cat! – Oh, I wish there was a train back to London.

SFX: Door closes.

CROSBY: Now I don't think there is any danger, but it is just as well to be prepared... Where are you going, Harry?

HARRY: Out in the garden for a little air.

CROSBY: But – suppose you run across this madman?

HARRY: You mean the cat? If I do I'll bark at him, and chase him up a tree! I won't see you again, Mr Crosby – I'm leaving early in the morning. Good-bye!

SFX: Door open and closes.

CROSBY: Good-bye! We had better go down and see that all the windows and doors are bolted.

CHARLIE: I'll be right along– I want to speak to Annabelle.

CROSBY: Come on, Paul.

PAUL: Eh!

CROSBY: Come on.

PAUL: Well, I don't know that I'll be much use to you – but then again, I'm always nervous before going into action. Oh, hello.

ANNABELLE: Paul, are you coming back?

PAUL: I hope so.

SFX: Door closes

ANNABELLE: Charlie, don't you want anything to eat?

CHARLIE: I'd rather talk to you while I have the chance.

ANNABELLE: Go ahead!

CHARLIE: I don't know just how to begin!

ANNABELLE: Then let's begin by asking you a few questions.

CHARLIE: All right!

ANNABELLE: What's the trouble between you and Harry?

CHARLIE: You.

ANNABELLE: Oh, I thought it was something deeper than that; more important, you know.

CHARLIE: There's nothing in the world quite so important as you, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: That isn't so awfully good, Charlie.

CHARLIE: My dear, I'm not trying to flatter you. I was only speaking the truth. Our quarrel was about you. Of course I don't exactly blame him. He's jealous.

ANNABELLE: Just jealousy doesn't explain this deadly hate that's sprung up between you and Harry – and I don't like it.

CHARLIE: The hate's all on his side. I've tried to make it up. But I'm afraid that's Harry's nature. He broods over the fact that I've cut him out.

ANNABELLE: With me?

CHARLIE: Of course. I didn't tell him about it, he just sort of sensed it.

ANNABELLE: Still you must have been quite sure that you had cut him out.

CHARLIE: Well, I thought I had some reason to feel that, well, it is all right, isn't it?

ANNABELLE: It's all right to feel anything you choose, but isn't it taking a great deal for granted to think that I'm in love with you?

CHARLIE: Perhaps it is, but when you chased Harry off – and encouraged me.

ANNABELLE: And I don't mind owning up that for a while I was a wee bit foolish about you.

CHARLIE: Thanks.

ANNABELLE: And it might have got worse, you know, you have a way of making yourself rather attractive – and you did seem to be so fearfully sincere. Then, suddenly you changed. I couldn't make out what it was. You seemed worried about something. I thought it must be one of two things, another girl or money. But it couldn't be money, you're too successful.

CHARLIE: No, just successful enough to get what I go after.

ANNABELLE: That's just it, what you go after. But you sort of let up going after me.

CHARLIE: You're mistaken, I never.

ANNABELLE: It was the other girl, or girls – how many were there?

CHARLIE: None

ANNABELLE: That's such an old one. Charlie!

CHARLIE: It doesn't make it any the less true.

ANNABELLE: All right, I'll take your word for that part; but the rest, I know when it came, your growing coldness.

CHARLIE: There was no such thing.

ANNABELLE: Then call it distraction, whatever you like.

CHARLIE: But that passed and I came back, more in love with you than ever.

ANNABELLE: Yes, and I welcomed you, I tried to warm up the old affection. And only today I realised that it couldn't be done.

CHARLIE: You can't really mean? Isn't there the slightest hope, ever?

ANNABELLE: No! Fate has taken the matter out of my hands!

CHARLIE: You, you really – love him?

ANNABELLE: I can't help it, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Then I guess this is my finish.

ANNABELLE: Not unless you wish it.

CHARLIE: You think after this we could be just friends?

ANNABELLE: I wish you'd try.

CHARLIE: Very well, I'll try. Good-night, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Good-night, Charlie. See you in the morning.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

A beat

SFX: Door opens and closes.

CROSBY: You here alone, Annabelle? I don't want to worry you, but there's something you ought to know.

ANNABELLE: Won't it keep till morning, Mr. Crosby?

CROSBY: No, tomorrow may be too late, Annabelle! You know Mr West was a very eccentric man. I have just made a discovery and it has convinced me it would be dangerous for you to be left here alone.

ANNABELLE: (*Laughing*) Mr Crosby.

CROSBY: Don't laugh, Annabelle! There is something about this bookcase. Hm. Is this a false panel? I know what I'm talking about, believe me. I'm alarmed and I want you to take me seriously. Annabelle, you're in danger, great danger, but, thank God, I can tell you who they...

SXF: Wall panel creaks open. Crosby gives a strangled yelp as he is pulled through, the panel slams shut. The actor playing Crosby exits the stage.

ANNABELLE: Oh, Mr Crosby, I've heard so much about ghosts and spirits tonight that in spite of myself I'm growing nervous. And so that's why I'd rather not hear... Oh. Mr Crosby? Mr. Crosby? When has he gone?

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ANNABELLE: Elowen, where did Mr. Crosby go?

ELOWEN: I ain't seen 'im.

ANNABELLE: You haven't seen him? You must have passed him in the hall.

ELOWEN: No, Miss West, I passed no one in the 'all, and I ain't seen Mr Crosby. Are you sure 'e was in this room?

ANNABELLE: Yes. I was talking with him just a moment ago. Susan, Cicily, Paul! Come into the library.

SUSAN: What is it, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: Was Mr. Crosby with you in the dining room?

CICILY: No. Only Charlie and Paul. Mr Blythe is outside in the garden. What's wrong, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: An extraordinary thing has happened. A few moments ago I was sitting there and Mr Crosby was there, talking to me when suddenly he vanished.

CICILY: Vanished!

CHARLIE: Mr. Crosby vanished?

ANNABELLE: Yes, he melted into the air. I ran and opened the door. Elowen was standing there. And she said that no one had left the room.

ELOWEN: I didn't see anyone leave this room.

ANNABELLE: But you must have heard him talking to me when you came down the hall.

ELOWEN: I only 'eard ye. Talking to yeself. Excuse me.

SUSAN: I'm afraid Cyrus West wasn't the only lunatic in our family. When a woman begins to talk to herself, and to see people vanish right in front of her – it is curious.

CHARLIE: Are you trying to insinuate that Annabelle is losing her mind?

SUSAN: Oh dear, oh dear.

ANNABELLE: You, you mean you don't believe me?

CHARLIE: Certainly we do.

PAUL: Certainly.

ANNABELLE: But you do think that I imagined Mr Crosby disappeared in front of me. If that's imagination – where is Mr Crosby?

SUSAN: Probably out with Harry Blythe in the garden. My dear, you are upset and nervous. I didn't mean to say you were crazy, I was only trying to... Come, Cicily, let us go to our room, and pile the furniture in front of the door. What with a dozen lunatics in the house, it will be a mercy if we're not all murdered in our beds.

CHARLIE: Is there anything I can do?

ANNABELLE: Yes, please find Mr. Crosby!

CHARLIE: Where was he standing when he vanished?

ANNABELLE: There. Please try to find him.

CHARLIE: I'll do my best, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Paul. You don't think I'm mad, do you?

PAUL: Well, I guess I'd be damned annoyed if some old chatter-box said I was crazy, but then again, if I really was crazy, I wouldn't have sense enough to get annoyed.

ANNABELLE: You're such a help to me! Good-night!

PAUL: But I want to talk to you. I haven't had a chance.

ANNABELLE: Your chance will come later, it's almost one o'clock.

PAUL: But I've got an idea.

ANNABELLE: Keep it until morning.

PAUL: But it may not keep until morning.

ANNABELLE: Run along now, and see if Mr Crosby has returned. Good-night, Paul.

PAUL: Annabelle, I really do think under the circumstances, honest to goodness, I only wanted to say that now I am here and you're here, too, how awfully glad I was, glad I am, I mean that we both am, was... Good-night

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ANNABELLE: How can he have just vanished?

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ELOWEN: Mr Crosby ain't come in yet.

ANNABELLE: Where can he be?

ELOWEN: I know. It's got 'im, the demon in this house. It be 'ere.

ANNABELLE: Oh, don't, don't, please!

ELOWEN: All right. Your room be ready and remember you've got to open that letter.

ANNABELLE: Oh, yes! Unpack my bag, Elowen – I'll be right in.

ELOWEN: Right you are.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ANNABELLE: (*Frightened.*) Oh. Oh no! Oh my goodness!

SFX: Door opens and slams shut. Thunder.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene: Bedroom next to library.

Time: A few moments later.

From here the actor who had been playing Crosby now assumes the role of Elowen attempting a female West Country accent. The actress who had played Elowen now plays only Annabelle.

ELOWEN: (*Mutters*) Rhonda! Rhonda! Spirit of Evil!

ANNABELLE: (*In own voice.*) Is that supposed to be me?

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) It is a better Cornish accent than yours.

ANNABELLE: (*In own voice.*) Oh yes, and so much more feminine.

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) Look! Needs must. We'll get to the end of this if it kills us all.

ANNABELLE: (*In own voice.*) Don't give away the plot.

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) Let's get on shall we. Act two. The master bedroom a few moments later.

ELOWEN: (*Mutters*) Rhonda! Rhonda! Spirit of Evil!

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ELOWEN: Why, Annabelle! What be it?

ANNABELLE: It's nothing Elowen. That fire is an inspiration. You have no idea what a difference it makes.

ELOWEN: It do make the room more cheerful.

ANNABELLE: But wait until I redecorate it. I'm going to have a real boudoir here. Elowen, this is – the most wonderful night of my life. I can't realize that I've inherited this house and this estate and everything.

ELOWEN: I hope ye'll be 'appy 'ere.

ANNABELLE: My, what a darling old clock. Oh, it isn't running!

ELOWEN: That clock stopped twenty year ago tonight, just as Mr. West died.

ANNABELLE: Let's see if it will go.

SFX: Clock begins to tick.

ANNABELLE: Hear it. Isn't that lovely? It makes the room cosier than ever. This house has character, Elowen.

ELOWEN: Argh.

ANNABELLE: And I'm beginning to love it more and more every minute in spite of what the others said. And in spite of what just happened.

ELOWEN: What be that?

ANNABELLE: Nothing really but... Well, just a moment ago, when I turned off

the light in the library I felt, or rather sensed the approach of something, well, evil.

ELOWEN: Evil?

ANNABELLE: For a moment I felt trapped. It was the same horrible feeling I had when I was a little girl – hurrying up the stairs in the dark – afraid something was going to catch me. Elowen, do you think there could be anything in the house?

ELOWEN: Aye, spirits! But there be two kinds. The good ones that 'elp you and the others, like the one that was behind ye in the dark. That be the demon that's got into this house.

ANNABELLE: Oh!

ELOWEN: As long as you ain't afraid – it can't get you. Don't forget that letter, Miss.

ANNABELLE: Oh, yes. Uncle Cyrus gave this to you twenty years ago!

ELOWEN: Twenty years ago tonight—just before he died on that bed.

ANNABELLE: Oh!

ELOWEN: You are still scared.

ANNABELLE: No, I'm not, in the library just before you called, I picked up this book without knowing what it was, it seemed to open itself at this chapter called "Fear."

ELOWEN: Fear!

ANNABELLE: Listen. "Fear is a delusion. Fear, or the belief in fear, can be controlled and eliminated by understanding."

ELOWEN: You believe that?

ANNABELLE: Yes, I do! "Only the ignorant suffer through fear. Take a bird; a canary in its cage. Put it on a table then let a cat jump up and walk around the cage, glaring at the canary. What happens? The canary, seeing its enemy so close to it is frightened almost to death. But if it had understanding, it would know that the cat couldn't reach it while it had the protection of the cage. Not knowing this, it suffers a thousand deaths through fear."

ELOWEN: But you ain't in no cage.

ANNABELLE: Yes, I am. I am surrounded and protected by my faith and philosophy and my friends. I am not afraid.

ELOWEN: But ye be afraid for Mr Crosby!

ANNABELLE: Why, I'd forgotten for a moment. Could he have, no, if he had you would have seen him. Are you sure you didn't see him go out? He must have gone somewhere. But where? Elowen, I couldn't have imagined that he was in the room with me, could I?

ELOWEN: No.

ANNABELLE: He was there and yet he's not in the house; but he couldn't have... Elowen, I tell you he was there!

ELOWEN: I believe ye, Miss.

ANNABELLE: Well, if he was there and you didn't see him go out, where is he?

ELOWEN: I tell ye, it got ee.

ANNABELLE: Rubbish. How could a spirit, if there was one there, take a man like Mr Crosby and disappear with him? No spirit could do a thing like that.

ELOWEN: 'Ow do ye know it couldn't?

ANNABELLE: Well, I just know, that's all

ELOWEN: Huh! What was Mr. Crosby telling ye when ee was taken away?

ANNABELLE: He was telling me about some danger that was near me. Oh!

ELOWEN: Ye see! Ee was trying to warn ye about it when it got ee.

ANNABELLE: No, no. Impossible. Absurd!

SFX: Three knocks on the door.

HARRY: Annabelle, may I come in?

ANNABELLE: Yes! Yes! Harry, where have you been?

HARRY: Out in the garden. What is this about Crosby?

ANNABELLE: He was talking to me in the library. I was sitting with my back to him so I couldn't see exactly what happened, but when he stopped talking I looked around and he'd gone! Could... Well, could anything have taken him?

HARRY: Of course not. You don't believe in ghosts, do you, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: No, no! But I thought I'd ask you.

HARRY: As soon as I heard about it, I went to the library and looked around. There's no place he could hide, no closets or anything. I don't understand it. Are you sure he was in the room with you?

ANNABELLE: Yes, of course I am. Why does everybody keep asking me that? It's all perfectly exasperating.

HARRY: Annabelle, you're just working yourself up needlessly. Crosby's an able-bodied man, he can take care of himself. Don't worry, it's all right.

ANNABELLE: I hope so. What were you doing in the garden, Harry?

HARRY: Just looking around. Better lock your door tonight, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Why should I?

HARRY: Just to be on the safe side. Perhaps I had better sleep in the library.

ANNABELLE: Why should you?

HARRY: Er, in case you need(ed) me.

ANNABELLE: Why should I need you?

HARRY: I don't know – you might get nervous, or something.

ANNABELLE: What about?

HARRY: Oh, Lord, I don't know. Well, anyway. If you want me – call.

ANNABELLE: Yes, I will. What time do you leave in the morning?

HARRY: Early. May I say goodbye to you before I go?

ANNABELLE: Yes, I wish you would.

HARRY: Goodnight, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Goodnight.

HARRY: Don't worry, it's all right.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ANNABELLE: He wanted to tell me something but he didn't dare. I wonder what it was? Heavens, everyone seems to be acting so strangely, I begin to think I must be losing my mind.

SFX: Knock on door.

ANNABELLE: Come in.

SFX: Door opens.

ANNABELLE: Oh, Susan, Cicily. Please come in.

SUSAN: Oh, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Just a minute! Elowen, won't you please go and see if Mr. Crosby has returned – look in his room.

ELOWEN: Very well.

SFX: Door closes.

ANNABELLE: What is it, anything happened?

SUSAN: My dear, I simply couldn't sleep. I just had to tell you that Charlie absolutely misunderstood me. He put the wrong construction on a most innocent remark. I never meant to say that you were really crazy, I only thought that you were upset my dear, please say you understand.

ANNABELLE: Yes, I understand. Perfectly. Won't you sit down?

SUSAN: Annabelle, I feel it's my duty to tell you something.

CICILY: Cousin Sue, you promised you wouldn't.

ANNABELLE: What was that, Cicily?

CICILY: Why, why, nothing of importance – Annabelle.

SUSAN: I feel it's my duty to...

CICILY: Oh, your duty! It would be a lot better, Cousin Sue, if once in a while you would think of other people's feelings instead of your duty.

SUSAN: Heavens! Hear the child rave. You'd think I'd done something terrible. Cicily, where's your respect for me?

CICILY: I do respect you but, but I've felt so nervous ever since I've been here and you pick on me because it's your duty and, oh dear, no one understands me!

ANNABELLE: (Come, come Cicily. What's it all about?

CICILY: Something happened that would make you nervous, if you knew.

ANNABELLE: Anything serious?

CICILY: No, just something that was I was told about the...

SUSAN: I am (in?) duty bound to tell.

CICILY: No, Susan.

ANNABELLE: And I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it! If it will make me any more nervous than I am now. I've had enough for tonight, Susan, you may tell me in the morning.

SUSAN: Are you quite all right, my dear?

ANNABELLE: Yes, of course. Why do you ask?

SUSAN: I was anxious about you. You know you were a little hysterical in there.

ANNABELLE: I'm all right, thank you.

SUSAN: Your health always been good, my dear?

ANNABELLE: Splendid. I need good health to work the way I do, at my painting and dancing.

SUSAN: I suppose you've led a feverish life, down there in London with those artistic folk?

ANNABELLE: No, never had money enough for that.

SUSAN: Ever have black spots in front of your eyes?

ANNABELLE: No.

SUSAN: Ever feel dizzy? Pains in the back of your head?

ANNABELLE: No.

SUSAN: But you have terrible dreams, don't you?

ANNABELLE: Only when I sleep on my back.

SUSAN: Do you suffer much from hallucinations? – Come on, tell me!

ANNABELLE: No, but I have, I don't know what you would call them but they're...

SUSAN: Symptoms!

ANNABELLE: That's it! I have them every morning and every evening.

SUSAN: That's the dangerous time, my dear.

CICILY: What are they?

ANNABELLE: Every morning, as soon as I wake up, I have the queerest feeling, it's some feeling...

SUSAN: Yes, you, I knew it, I knew it, where?

ANNABELLE: Here, in my stomach, and the funny part of it is, it disappears, as soon as I've had my breakfast. I was just fooling, Susan. I'm just an ordinary healthy, normal girl. If I weren't so normal I'd probably be a better artist. Anything else you'd like to know?

SUSAN: I hope you're not offended at my questions, my dear? It's only because I take such an interest in you, now that you're the heiress! And I've been wondering if there really is anything in hereditary insanity. It's in our family, you know.

ANNABELLE: I'm afraid it's missed our side entirely, eh, Cicily?

CICILY: I don't know anything about that, but it certainly missed our side.

SUSAN: Well, let us hope so. Another thing, my dear. Now that you are the heiress, men will suddenly find that you are very attractive. Beware of them, my dear. All of them.

ANNABELLE: All of them?

SUSAN: All of them! Every man who tells you he loves you is only in love with your money. They're all alike, there isn't a decent man in the world.

CICILY: Oh, Cousin Sue, don't say that! There are lots of nice men in the world. Who could be nicer than those – three men?

SUSAN: Dumb-bells, my dear. All of them, dumb-bells.

CICILY: I don't think so at all. I think Charlie is awfully sweet.

SUSAN: An overgrown ribbon clerk. A bluff and as cold as a dead fish.

CICILY: You can't say that about Paul. He's real cute and he has such expressive feet.

SUSAN: Paul! He! He don't know anything, not even his own mind. And he's as timid as a rabbit, my dear. Never trust a man with wiggly feet – they're treacherous.

ANNABELLE: Let's get them all in. What about Harry?

SUSAN: He's the biggest fool of the lot. Every time he looks at me he begins to laugh.

ANNABELLE: Really? You know men, don't you?

SUSAN: I do and that's why I'm warning you about these fourth and fifth-rate cousins of yours. Take my advice and get rid of them as soon as you can. Goodnight, dear and I hope you won't have more... Actually, Annabelle, I feel it's my duty to tell you something.

CICILY: Susan!

SUSAN: Don't you dare to interrupt me! Annabelle, they made me promise that I wouldn't tell you about the dreadful maniac who's prowling around the house.

SFX: Thunder.

ANNABELLE: What are you saying? A maniac, in this house?

CICILY: Yes and the guard.

SUSAN: The guard from the asylum was here, he had traced him to this house. He's a terrible old person. He thinks he's a cat and goes around ripping people wide

open. They made me promise I wouldn't tell you but I felt it my duty to warn you because if we are all going to be murdered in our beds, I think we ought to know about it...

CICILY: If there's anything in anticipation, Cousin Sue – you've been murdered a dozen times.

ANNABELLE: So that's why Harry was so mysterious, that's what he wanted to tell me.

CICILY: Harry wanted to warn us but Mr Crosby and Charlie wouldn't let him.

ANNABELLE: I wonder if that was what Mr. Crosby was trying to tell me.

SUSAN: Perhaps. Perhaps he got Mr Crosby

ANNABELLE: Then he must be in the house!

SUSAN: He must be. He must be sneaking around the hall now, waiting to jump on us. I could scream.

ANNABELLE: Yes. If he got Mr Crosby then he must be in the house.

SUSAN: Maybe he's out there now waiting for us.

SFX: Door bangs. Women scream.

PAUL: Out in the hall, out in the hall. Something passed me. I couldn't see it but I felt it, it touched me, I heard it breathe!

SFX: Door knob rattles.

PAUL: Look out! *(All scream.)*

SFX: Door opens slowly and creakily.

ELOWEN: Why did ye run away from me?

PAUL: You! Was it you that passed me in the hall?

ELOWEN: Yes, sir! I be coming from Mr Crosby's room. Mr Paul saw me in the hall and ee turned and ran like a mouse.

SUSAN: You were scared!

PAUL: Well, I don't know that I was exactly scared. I may have been a trifle nervous, you see, I was just coming...

ELOWEN: No, sir, ye was going!

PAUL: Well, maybe I was.

ANNABELLE: You see, Paul, you were frightened by an idea – a delusion. You thought Elowen was a ghost and she frightened you. Your fear was nothing but imagination.

SUSAN: Yes, yes, my dear, no doubt you're right. But all the same if I were you I'd lock the door tonight and look under the bed. That's what I'm going to do.

ANNABELLE: Really! *(Begins to laugh.)*

SUSAN: Don't laugh, my dear. I've never gone to sleep in my life without first looking under the bed.

PAUL: What do you expect to find there?

SUSAN: Why, a man, of course.

PAUL: Wouldn't that be terrible for the man?

Susan gasps.

PAUL: And then on the other hand maybe it wouldn't. I don't know!

SUSAN: Come, Cicily, let us go to bed. We'll feel safer there.

CICILY: I'm afraid to go up-stairs in the dark.

ANNABELLE: Elowen go along with them, goodnight.

SFX: Door open and closes.

(Cicily and Elowen exit. Close door.)

PAUL: I wonder if, well, I guess it's all right, but on the other hand...

ANNABELLE: What's all right?

PAUL: My being here alone with you.

ANNABELLE: Of course it's all right. This isn't an ordinary occasion, and besides, we're cousins, aren't we?

PAUL: Yes, we're fifth or sixth cousins. But somehow you seem like a perfect stranger to me.

ANNABELLE: Is that why you acted so strangely when we met in the other room?

PAUL: Yes. It didn't seem possible that you were Annabelle West, my little... The little girl I used to know in Merthyr so long ago.

ANNABELLE: It must have been all of five years.

PAUL: Five years and eleven months. Yes, five years and eleven months since you left Wales and went to London to study art. Remember, you always wanted to be a great artist or a trained nurse.

ANNABELLE: And you were going to be a great surgeon.

PAUL: I went to college and became a horse doctor. The folks never did think I'd amount to much, no, but on the other hand, well, I've got ideas. I've got one now.

ANNABELLE: I'm sure you have! But isn't it strange for us to meet like this – after five years?

PAUL: Well, maybe it is strange but I think it's wonderful. I used to think about you a lot.

ANNABELLE: You did! Really! How nice!

PAUL: Yes, no doubt of it, now that I remember, I did think of you often.

ANNABELLE: You don't seem to be quite certain about it. Are you ever sure about anything?

PAUL: There's one thing – I'm dead sure about!

ANNABELLE: You mean that you're really positive about something?

PAUL: Yes, Annabelle, I. I. But on the other hand – you probably wouldn't believe me.

ANNABELLE: How do you know? You've never been really serious with me. Why don't you try?

PAUL: I am trying, but I don't seem to get anywhere. I've been trying to ask you something for the last five minutes.

ANNABELLE: Then for Heaven's sake, stop rambling around and ask me.

PAUL: I'm going to, just as soon as I get myself wound up.

ANNABELLE: Paul, about how long does it take you to wind yourself up?

PAUL: I don't know, exactly.

ANNABELLE: Evidently it's quite an operation.

PAUL: Well, this time it's taken me five years and eleven months and I don't know if I'm wound up yet but I'm getting set to.

ANNABELLE: Paul, what are you trying to tell me?

PAUL: Listen. Annabelle. I. You know I'm only a vet, but from doctoring horses and mules, I've learned a great deal about women, I mean that all three of them do a lot of things they shouldn't do and without any reason.

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: Yes.

ANNABELLE: What are you trying to tell me?

PAUL: This. Annabelle. Did Cousin Susie tell you about something that's going on around the house to-night?

ANNABELLE: You mean about spirits?

PAUL: Well, not altogether about spirits. You know, Annabelle, I'm not exactly afraid of spirits but on the other hand you and...

ANNABELLE: You mean about the crazy man?

PAUL: That's it. I couldn't tell you but from my knowledge of women I guessed that Cousin Susie'd tell you because she had promised she wouldn't.

ANNABELLE: Yes, she told me and it hasn't cheered me up any. I wonder if he really is around the house, Paul?

PAUL: I, I don't know. I don't know but what I want to tell you is that I'll protect you. I've handled wild horses and wilder mules and there isn't a spook or a maniac living that I'm afraid of.

SFX: Gong. Paul screams.

ANNABELLE: It's only the clock, Paul, see?

PAUL: Oh Lord, I thought it was that other gong. The one Elowen said was tolling for someone's death to-night!

ANNABELLE: Don't, Paul. Please don't talk about it.

PAUL: I'm awfully sorry.

ANNABELLE: You were saying?

PAUL: I was saying that I wasn't afraid. You know I'm lying, don't you? I'm scared stiff, but I'm always like that. I always get nervous when I go into action. Every time we went over the top I was paralysed but I had to go, scared or not. So scared or not, if that maniac is in your house, I'm going to get him.

ANNABELLE: You always did fight for me, didn't you, Paul? Even away back there in Wickford...

PAUL: Merthyr.

ANNABELLE: Merthyr, when you used to carry my books to school!

PAUL: I'll never forget those days.

ANNABELLE: Remember the time big Jim Daly pulled my hair? Remember how you flew at him? What a terrible beating.

PAUL: He gave me! Well, I hope I have better luck with this lunatic if I find him. Listen, Annabelle. If you hear anything, don't come out. Just yell like hell!

ANNABELLE: I feel safe now, knowing you are protecting me. Goodnight, Paul.

PAUL: Goodbye.

ANNABELLE: Goodbye? Won't I see you in the morning?

PAUL: God knows.

SFX: Door opens.

PAUL: Argh!

ELOWEN: Goodnight, Mr Paul.

SFX: Door closes.

ANNABELLE: There's a man, Elowen. He's frightened to death but he conquers his fear!

ELOWEN: Don't forget that letter.

ANNABELLE: Oh yes!

SFX: Knock on door. Door opens.

CHARLIE: Did I interrupt you, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: Come in.

CHARLIE: You don't mind?

SFX: Door closes.

ANNABELLE: No, I'm glad you came. I wanted to see you. Charlie, what do you think has become of Mr. Crosby?

CHARLIE: I haven't any definite theory – I've been trying to figure it out. It's very puzzling, but I think he'll turn up all right. You are the one that I am worried about.

ANNABELLE: That's very sweet of you but why worry about me?

CHARLIE: Just the natural feeling a man has for the woman he... Annabelle, you know how I feel – toward you.

ANNABELLE: Please, Charlie.

CHARLIE: This is a queer old house and if, well, if you need me, just call. My room is at the end of the hall, you know.

ANNABELLE: Thanks, Charlie, I know I can count on you. I guess I'll be safe with all the men guarding me. Harry just told me the same thing.

CHARLIE: So he was here? Leave it to him to get anywhere first

ANNABELLE: And, Charlie. I know all about that crazy man.

CHARLIE: He told you?

ANNABELLE: I'm not telling you who told me. You ought to be able to guess.

CHARLIE: All right. Now, I'll be ready if you need me because I'm going to sleep with my shoes on. Annabelle, don't you think you could ever feel a little, a little...

ANNABELLE: Please, Charlie. I'm very fond of you. I'm awfully sorry.

CHARLIE: Goodnight, Annabelle.

SFX: Door open and closes.

ELOWEN: Don't forget that letter, Miss.

ANNABELLE: Oh, yes.

ELOWEN: Goodnight, Miss.

ANNABELLE: Don't go, I want you to help me. Just the negligee. It's so late I'm not really going to bed, just lie down. Now then. "To my heir, man or woman, as you read, pause and reflect that this is the twentieth anniversary of the hour that my spirit left my body. I could take no earthly possessions with me – I was compelled to leave them to you, my unknown heir. Your hour will come and you will follow me. In your brief span of life, enjoy the glittering symbols of the world which I have renounced." Oh, it gives me the creeps, reading this. Here's a verse. That's a little more cheerful. "Find the number beneath the vine; The sparkling gems forthwith are thine. Find the number; its rhyme is 'mine'!" What a silly little verse; but it's the key to the necklace, it must be. Come along, Elowen, help me.

ELOWEN: Nine!

ANNABELLE: Of course. Nine rhymes with "mine." And the date today is the 27th. 2 and 7 make 9, and September is the ninth month; nine must be the number.

ELOWEN: But ye have two nines now

ANNABELLE: True. But two nines make eighteen and eight and one make nine. It must be nine. Now I wonder where the vine is?

ELOWEN: There, Miss. The mantel. Nine! Need me any more, Miss?

ANNABELLE: Not now, Elowen, if I want you I'll call.

SFX: Door opens.

ANNABELLE: Oh, Elowen, put the key in the lock on the inside, would you?

SFX: Key being removed from outside lock and put in inside lock.

ELOWEN: Goodnight, Miss.

ANNABELLE: Goodnight, Elowen. I'll lock myself in.

SFX: Door closes and is locked.

ANNABELLE: Beneath the vine, the scroll work above the fireplace is a vine and these little knobs on the edge of the mantel, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9. Press here I suppose.

SFX: A compartment opens.

ANNABELLE: And inside, is the necklace. My Goodness, it is beautiful!

SFX: Door knob squeaks as it turns.

ANNABELLE: The door. Is someone there? Hold on, it's locked.

SFX: Door unlocked and opened.

ANNABELLE: Peculiar. No one there. Hello! Oh!

SFX: Door slammed shut and locked.

ANNABELLE: I will not be frightened.

SFX: Three hard knocks on the door.

ANNABELLE: No. It's just my imagination playing tricks on me.

SFX: A scratching sound.

ANNABELLE: It's nothing. Oh, gosh. I'm so tired. I didn't think I could sleep but... Haaa.

A few moments pause then Annabelle lets out a blood curdling scream.

ANNABELLE: Help! Help!

SFX: Door rattles.

ANNABELLE: I can't get out, the key has gone.

SFX: Pounding on the door.

ANNABELLE: Help, help. Paul, Charlie, Harry! Paul, Oh!

SFX: Sound of Annabelle collapsing.

Pause.

SFX: Footsteps running. Banging on the door.

HARRY: Annabelle, Annabelle, did you call?

PAUL: Harry, I heard Annabelle call.

SUSAN: What is it, Annabelle?

CICILY: What's happened?

SFX: Banging on door continues.

CHARLIE: Break the door down!

SFX: Door is smashed open.

PAUL: Annabelle!

CHARLIE: What is it?

PAUL: She's fainted.

CHARLIE: What's happened?

HARRY: I don't know.

CHARLIE: I heard her scream for help.

HARRY: She's had a shock.

CHARLIE: Yes, but how did she get it?

HARRY: I don't know. There's no one here! It couldn't be her imagination.

CHARLIE: It must be her imagination.

HARRY: What do you mean?

CHARLIE: You told her.

HARRY: Told her what?

CHARLIE: Told her about the maniac after we'd all agreed to keep silent.

HARRY: I did not.

CHARLIE: Don't lie, you were here – you told her.

HARRY: You're crazy. I didn't tell her a thing.

CHARLIE: You're a liar!

CICILY: Charlie, you're wrong. Cousin Sue told her.

CHARLIE: Susan! So you're the one?

SUSAN: Yes, I'm the one. I told her because it was my duty, and I'd do it again.

CHARLIE: You ought to be gagged for the rest of your life. I was mistaken, Harry. I'm sorry.

HARRY: Save your breath, you'll need it later!

CHARLIE: Will I really?

HARRY: Yes. You called me a liar. You'll have to make good for that.

PAUL: Shh! Quiet. Annabelle!

CICILY: She's coming to.

ANNABELLE: Oh! Oh!

PAUL: There, there, Annabelle, what was it?

ANNABELLE: It came from the dark. It, it touched me. It's, here! It's gone!

SUSAN: What's gone, my dear?

ANNABELLE: My necklace. The... The hand took it.

HARRY: What hand?

ANNABELLE: I don't know, it was just, just a hand.

SUSAN: Just a hand! My dear Annabelle, you're raving again. It's nothing but your imagination.

CHARLIE: Shh!

ANNABELLE: No, I saw it. It was here. It touched me

CICILY: But, Annabelle, if there was anything here – where is it now?

ANNABELLE: It was here. It took my necklace.

CHARLIE: There was no one in here when we broke in, Annabelle.

PAUL: If Annabelle says that something was here in the room, something was in the room! Now, the question is, what was it?

HARRY: Why not the maniac?

SUSAN: Ha! Even if he had been here, which he wasn't, what possible use would he have for a necklace?

CICILY: Oh, the poor dear, isn't it a shame: What do you think. Charlie?

CHARLIE: I don't think she saw anything.

HARRY: Well, I do. She must have seen something terrible to make her faint like that. Her imagination couldn't do it.

SUSAN: No. But an unsound mind could!

CICILY: What?

SUSAN: I've known all along that Annabelle was as crazy as a March hare.

CHARLIE: That's absurd.

SUSAN: It's true. Didn't she say that Mr Crosby vanished right in front of her? And now she says that a hand reached out and took her necklace. Rubbish! If anything was here, where did it go? People don't disappear into thin air, even if she says they do. Annabelle is unbalanced. And I for one am going to see that she is examined by a specialist!

HARRY: You ought to be ashamed.

CICILY: Oh, Cousin Sue!

SUSAN: Don't Cousin Sue me! All of you, every one of you, think just the same as I do: that Annabelle is crazy. Only none of you are honest enough to come right out with it.

ANNABELLE: So that's it. You all think I am mad.

PAUL: I don't.

ANNABELLE: I know you don't. You've had your say about me, now I'll have mine. I've been through enough tonight to drive anyone mad and a few moments ago I was hysterical, but now I can think clearly. I'm going to tell you exactly what happened to me in this room and you're going to believe it. I found the necklace there in the fireplace, then I felt something watching me. The doorknob turned but when I opened the door there was no one there. Something was either trying to frighten me or my nerves were getting jumpy. I looked under the bed, nothing there, then I was certain it was my nerves. I turned out the light and went to bed and then, just as I was falling asleep, I felt an icy breath sweep over me. I opened my eyes and out of the darkness a long claw-like hand reached toward me. It came nearer and nearer. I was like a person in a dream. I couldn't move. It touched my throat, I jumped up, the hand disappeared with my necklace, I ran to the door, I couldn't open it, I screamed – and that's all I remember. (*A beat.*) Oh, you don't believe me. Some of you think that I'm mad. I'm not, I'm as sane as anyone in this room. You must believe me because what I've told you is the truth, so help me God. (*Another beat.*) And I'm going to prove it to you. The hand that took my necklace came out of that wall. There is a panel. Somewhere round... Here!

SFX: Panel opens.

ANNABELLE: What did I tell you?

SFX: Body falls to the floor.

HARRY: My God!

The women scream.

HARRY: It's Crosby. He's dead!

END OF ACT II

ACT III

Scene: Same as Act I.

Time: A few moments later.

The actress who plays Cicily now takes on the additional role of Elowen.

SFX: Door opens.

ELOWEN: If you could all come into the library.

HARRY: (In own voice.) That's Elowen's line.

ELOWEN: (In own voice.) I know. I'm going to do Elowen now.

HARRY: (In own voice.) Where's Mark?

ELOWEN: (In own voice.) Gone to pick up Pete and Alison. They'd broken down, apparently.

HARRY: (In own voice.) What's the point? We'll be finished by the time he gets back.

ELOWEN: (In own voice.) Don't ask me. All I know is that I got asked to do Elowen.

HARRY: (In own voice.) Well, if you are going to do Elowen you had better do a West Country accent.

ELOWEN: (In a Brummie accent.) Oyl troy mi best.

HARRY: (In own voice.) That's more like Birmingham.

ELOWEN: (In own voice.) It is about as close as I can get.

HARRY: (In own voice.) It'll do. Carry on.

Elowen's lines are spoken with a Brummie accent from this point forward.

ELOWEN: If yaouw could all come into the library.

PAUL: I'll lay Annabelle here on the sofa. Pass me the smelling salts, Cicily.

CICILY: Oh, isn't it terrible! Poor Mr Crosby

HARRY: Yes, yes

CHARLIE: Is she all right?

PAUL: Hasn't come out of it yet. I didn't know she was so prone to fainting.

CHARLIE: God, what she has been through!

CICILY: What are we going to do?

HARRY: Wait a moment. I'm trying to figure it out. When Annabelle recovers there will be no talk about that in there, understand?

PAUL: That's right, not a word to remind her about it. She's been through enough to drive anyone mad. Harry, what do you think we ought to do?

HARRY: Listen, all of you. There's no doubt about our having company in the house, Crosby's death proves that and Annabelle has been in terrible peril. But how did he, or it, get in there?

PAUL: God knows. Crosby and I locked every window and door. Then after you started for bed, I went through the house but didn't see or hear a thing.

CHARLIE: Of course you didn't. The maniac, or whatever it was that killed Crosby, was hiding behind the panel.

HARRY: That's just what I'm coming to, that panel. I'm wondering if it would be best to explore it now or to wait for the police?

CICILY: Don't go in there and leave us alone.

HARRY: There's probably no one in it now, and yet there may be something we wouldn't ever dream of.

SFX: Door opens.

SUSAN: Close the door.

SFX: Door closes.

PAUL: I know what I'm going to do just as soon as Annabelle recovers.

CICILY: Is she all right?

PAUL: Well, she's breathing regularly and her colour's coming back.

CHARLIE: What are you going to do?

PAUL: I'm going through that panel, and I'm not going to wait for anybody, not even the police.

HARRY: Just a moment. Think it over. According to the law – no one is supposed to enter a room where a murder has been committed until the police arrive. You probably wouldn't find anything there anyhow and you might disturb some valuable clues.

CHARLIE: For once I agree with you; whoever killed Crosby probably beat it. It isn't natural to believe that the murderer would wait behind that panel to be caught.

HARRY: Even if we found him there we'd probably have to kill him.

SUSAN: Oh!

HARRY: Defending ourselves, Miss Sillsby. No, we'd better wait.

SUSAN: Oh, what a terrible night.

CHARLIE: Miss Sillsby, look at me. Are you now convinced that Annabelle really saw everything she said she did? Answer me.

SUSAN: Yes, yes I am.

CHARLIE: Then don't you ever open your mouth again about her being unbalanced, do you hear me?

SUSAN: Yes.

CHARLIE: Now the first thing to do is to get the police and a doctor.

CICILY: Are you sure we need a doctor?

CHARLIE: Yes, huh? *(In own voice.)* That's not in the script.

CICILY: Paul said her colour was returning.

CHARLIE: *(In own voice.)* What the hell are you playing at? *(As Charlie.)* Yes, we must get the police and a doctor.

SUSAN: The police! And I'm in a negligee!

HARRY: Well, you have plenty of time to change.

SUSAN: Yes, of course!

CICILY:*(In own voice.)* I tried to warn you. Oh well. *(As Cicily.)* But I'm afraid to go upstairs.

ELOWEN: I'll go with you, Miss.

SUSAN: Come on, Cicily Let's pack up and get out of this terrible house.

CICILY: Elowen, you go first.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

CHARLIE: Are we all agreed that it's better to keep out of there until they come? Then, I'll make the call.

SFX: Telephone receiver is picked up.

CHARLIE: Hello! Hello! Must be out of order.

HARRY: Probably cut.

SFX: Telephone receiver is put down.

CHARLIE: Paul, Did you and Crosby fasten all the cellar doors when you were downstairs?

PAUL: There was only one door. It has a bolt on the inside and I bolted it.

SFX: Windows bangs in the wind then two slams of a door.

HARRY: Hear That?

SFX: Door slams once.

PAUL: Sounds like a door swinging against the house in the wind.

HARRY: Listen! I think our guest has left us without closing the door. You locked the door, Paul, it couldn't have opened unless he went out. He probably escaped while we were talking here. I'm going to see.

CHARLIE: I'll go with you.

HARRY: No, you stay here and watch that door in case I'm mistaken.

CHARLIE: But I want...

HARRY: Do as you're told.

CHARLIE: *(Furiously)* Why should I take orders from you?

HARRY: Because I'm giving them to you.

CHARLIE: Oh, I see. Now that you believe it's safe you're going to be a hero in front of Annabelle

HARRY: Go down and do it yourself then.

CHARLIE: Oh, I couldn't rob you of that honour.

HARRY: All right, come along with me will you. I want to, ahem, talk with you alone.

CHARLIE: Yes, and I want to talk to you as well.

PAUL: Cut it out you two. Maybe I'd better give the orders from now on. You don't seem to be able to do anything except snarl at each other. Why don't you two look after Annabelle. I'll go and see about that door.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

ANNABELLE: Oh.

HARRY: Annabelle!

CHARLIE: Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Where's Paul?

HARRY: He'll be back in a moment.

CHARLIE: Are you all right, Annabelle?

ANNABELLE: I feel very weak. Did I faint again?

SFX: Door opens.

CHARLIE: Yes. Just after Mr Cro...

HARRY: Shh!

ANNABELLE: Is he still there

HARRY: Yes, and no one must go in there until the police come.

ANNABELLE: Did you telephone for them?

CHARLIE: The wires have been cut.

ANNABELLE: The Wires are cut?

CHARLIE: Yes, but I'm going after the police myself. Soon as Paul comes back.

HARRY: I think the most important thing to do is to get a doctor. Elowen, can you tell me where the nearest doctor lives?

ELOWEN: I cud tell yaouw but yaouw'd never find it. I'll goo if Miss West wants me ter.

HARRY: But, Elowen, aren't you afraid?

ELOWEN: Afraid! Me what's lived alone in this owse for twenty 'eass!

ANNABELLE: *(In own voice.)* Sounds more Black Country than West County.

ELOWEN: (*In own voice.*) Well, if you hadn't got all stuck up because now you are playing the lead..

CHARLIE: Wait a minute, Elowen. I'll go with you. Is the doctor's house near the police station?

ELOWEN: Naaa. yaouw goo ter the village – I goo the other woy. if yaouw'll cum with me i'll shoo yaouw the rowad

PAUL: Annabelle! Are you all right?

ANNABELLE: Yes thank you, Paul. Elowen is just going for a doctor.

HARRY: Paul! What did you find?

PAUL: You were right. The door was open. It must have been opened from this side because I'm positive I bolted it myself when I was down there when Mr Cro..

HARRY: Shh!

ANNABELLE: What is it?

PAUL: We heard a door swinging against the house. The one I locked tonight. I went down and found it open, so I locked it again. That's all.

HARRY: I don't think there's any doubt now but that our guest has left us. I think we are all pretty safe now eh, Paul?

PAUL: Well, maybe we are, but then on the other hand, you never can tell.

ANNABELLE: I'll never feel right again until Mr Crosby has been..

CHARLIE: The police will attend to all that, Annabelle. I'll be back as soon as possible. Come, Elowen. Oh, and Harry. (*Quietly*) I don't want any more words with you than I can help but while I'm gone, you just look after Annabelle.

HARRY: There's no more danger.

CHARLIE: How do you know? The maniac may be in the house now. The open door doesn't prove that he's gone.

HARRY: You're right, he may still be here.

CHARLIE: And do you realize that another shock like she just had might kill her or drive her insane?

HARRY: Yes, another shock might kill her or she could be mur...

CHARLIE: Yes, she might, or someone else might. Until the police get here look out for that room and don't believe yourself too safe.

HARRY: I know, you don't have to tell me.

CHARLIE: I'm not telling you because I'm worried about you! Come, Elowen.

SFX: *Door closes.*

ANNABELLE: Has Susan gone?

HARRY: No, but she's threatening to go. I believe she's packing up.

ANNABELLE: Oh, I hope she goes. You can't imagine how nervous she makes me.

PAUL: Oh yes I can. She makes me nervous. I can't stop her talking.

HARRY: Suppose she won't go? It's still dark.

ANNABELLE: You must make her go.

HARRY: What?

ANNABELLE: I'll feel so much better when she's out of the house, Paul.

PAUL: Harry, I've got an idea. If she stalls about being afraid to go to the station before daylight, you take her.

ANNABELLE: Splendid. That gives her no excuse for not going.

HARRY: Good God! Have you people got a grudge against me?

ANNABELLE: You'll do it for me, won't you?

HARRY: Yes, if you really want me to. Sure you won't be nervous staying here alone?

ANNABELLE: Alone? You forget, I have Paul.

HARRY: Oh. Yes.

SFX: Door opens and closes.

SUSAN: Have the police come? Oh dear! What a night! I just know it, I felt it in my bones the minute I entered this terrible house that something would happen. And just to think it had to be poor Mr Crosby and it might just as well have been you! It's a wonder we weren't all murdered.

CICILY: Poor Mr Crosby!

SUSAN: And I'll never forget to my dying day how he pitched out of that panel and nearly into your arms, Annabelle!

PAUL: Miss Sillsby. Stop talking.

SUSAN: Mr Jones. To whom are you speaking?

PAUL: To you. I'm the boss around here and I command you to, to, to dry up.

SUSAN: Well, I never! In all my born days I never... Come, Cicily. Now, we're packed up, let's get out of this terrible house. I'm so sorry to leave you, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: That's nice of you but I'll be all right.

SUSAN: Perhaps I had better stay here after all.

ANNABELLE: Don't stay on my account. The doctor will be here soon.

SUSAN: But I wonder if there'll be any trains. It isn't dawn yet.

HARRY: If you hurry you've got just about time to catch the milk train.

SUSAN: Milk train! I never rode on a milk train in my life!

PAUL: You ought to try anything once!

CICILY: But I'm afraid to go and now, it's still dark.

HARRY: Miss Sillsby, if you're really anxious to go, I'll be only too happy to see you and Miss Young to the station.

CICILY: Oh! Will you, really?

SUSAN: Young man. I'll allow you to come with us on one condition. You may talk with Cicily if she will let you, but I'll have nothing to say to you.

HARRY: Can I depend on that?

SUSAN: Well, Annabelle. I am glad you are all right because I was afraid the next time I saw you'd be non compos mentis. Goodbye, my dear. I hope you'll soon be well again – but I'm afraid you won't.

CICILY: Goodbye, Annabelle.

HARRY: I'll see you later.

SFX: Door closes.

PAUL: She's a nice little pal!

ANNABELLE: I don't think she's half as malicious as she seems to be, do you?

PAUL: Well, I don't know. Maybe she's only one half but on the other hand, I think she's one hundred per cent, poison.

ANNABELLE: It's rather nice to be alone isn't it, Paul?

PAUL: Yes it certainly is. It's kind of quiet, though.

ANNABELLE: This is the first time we've been really alone tonight.

PAUL: It's the first time we've been really alone since you left Merthyr.

ANNABELLE: What was it you wanted to tell me?

PAUL: When?

ANNABELLE: Tonight. Don't you remember, you said you had an idea.

PAUL: That's right, I did have an idea then. But it's gone now.

ANNABELLE: Oh well. You'll get another.

PAUL: I'm not so sure about that, ideas are scarce with me.

ANNABELLE: Really.

PAUL: Yes. Up at university they used to say I only got one idea a week but let me tell you right now when I do get one, it's a belter.

ANNABELLE: What was this last idea about?

PAUL: It was about you.

ANNABELLE: Me!

PAUL: Yes. Gosh! It's quiet in here – I never knew a house could get so quiet.

ANNABELLE: Was that that door really open downstairs?

PAUL: Yes and I closed it and bolted it. You didn't want me to, er, to go down and see again?

ANNABELLE: No, it's all right.

PAUL: Thanks. I mean much obliged. I think I need a drink. Do you mind?

SFX: *Whiskey bottle opened and a measure is poured. Paul swallows.*

ANNABELLE: Paul, do you really think that, it, is out of the house?

PAUL: Now, Annabelle, you mustn't think about it.

ANNABELLE: Tell me, Paul are we safe?

PAUL: Of course. Doesn't it stand to reason that the door couldn't open itself? Of course it's gone. Don't think about it.

ANNABELLE: But suppose it didn't go out.

PAUL: Annabelle, you're getting nervous. You know it's wonderful, wonderful how all my ideas are coming back to me. *(He snaps his fingers.)* I've got one!

ANNABELLE: Tell me.

PAUL: The whole thing just struck me as being damned odd.

ANNABELLE: What?

PAUL: Everything. Right straight through from the start to finish.

ANNABELLE: You mean?

PAUL: From the time the will was read tonight until now.

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: Remember when you were declared the heiress?

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: Remember the codicil? That if anything happened to you or you were to lose your mind or anything, the estate was to go to the next heir?

ANNABELLE: Yes, yes, I remember.

PAUL: And his or her name was in the third envelope.

ANNABELLE: You mean the one that Mr Crosby put in his pocket when he said, "I trust that this shall never be opened."

PAUL: Exactly. And from that moment on, things began to happen to you.

ANNABELLE: And to Mr Crosby.

PAUL: Because he was the one who drew up the will and he was the only one who knew the name of the next heir. Unless. Maybe. But then again, maybe not.

ANNABELLE: Paul Jones. What are you saying?

PAUL: Didn't I tell you that while my ideas are scarce, but when I do get one it's a humdinger?

ANNABELLE: Heavens, you don't mean...

PAUL: I'm liable to mean anything. Listen. This is just an idea of mine, but you never can tell it may lead us somewhere. All right! Things began to happen to you in this house tonight, what for? To scare you.

ANNABELLE: You mean someone was...

PAUL: Just a minute. Crosby got on to this plot and he tried to tell you but before he finished something happened to him. Then gradually everyone, I don't say they did it intentionally, but they started to think and to say that you were unbalanced.

ANNABELLE: You mean that all this was a plot to frighten me.

PAUL: I don't know. I don't know. I'm just trying to figure it out. Just seeing where my idea will carry me.

ANNABELLE: Yes, yes, go on.

PAUL: Now, just suppose that someone, call it the next heir, thinks that you might possibly have inherited the family, erm...

ANNABELLE: You mean, the family failing.

PAUL: Exactly. And they, that is he or she, starts to frighten you, hoping to shock you, or worse, and then it discovers that Crosby is on the plot, so it kills Crosby.

ANNABELLE: No! No! Impossible!

PAUL: Why is it impossible? The doorknob turning, locking you in your room, the panel, the hand. (*Annabelle gives a little cry of terror.*) I'm awfully sorry, but don't you see, it is possible? The whole thing might have been arranged to frighten you into...

ANNABELLE: No, no. How can you explain about that bell and Elowen's warning of Mr Crosby's death?

PAUL: They might have all been planted. Yes. They might have all been planted. Think about Elowen Panhaligan.

ANNABELLE: Elowen! Why, she's not the next heir?

PAUL: How do you know she's not? She might be. Besides your necklace alone is worth a fortune. She might be the next heir.

ANNABELLE: But that old man who had escaped from the asylum. How does that fit in?

PAUL: He might have been brought here to frighten you. Now suppose, just suppose that that Crosby had brought him into the house, then the maniac suddenly grew violent, turned on Crosby and killed him.

ANNABELLE: Oh, no!

PAUL: On the other hand. Suppose I was the next heir.

ANNABELLE: Now, I know you're joking.

PAUL: Well, I can tell you right now it's not me. So who's left? Susan, Charlie, Cicily, Harry. Take your choice.

ANNABELLE: It's fantastic. Absurd.

PAUL: Well, maybe it is. But then again maybe it isn't. But there's one thing I'm dead sure of. Your brain is one hundred per cent normal. If there's any insanity in this family, it's not in you. But the more I think of it... I've got another idea. But I'm not going to tell you about this until I'm sure of it. But part of my idea is this. Law or no law, I'm going in there to get that envelope out of Crosby's pocket and find out who is the next heir.

ANNABELLE: No, no. Don't leave me.

PAUL: I won't be gone a minute. I'll leave both doors open and nothing can possibly happen. But mind you, nobody must know that I've been in there, especially the police. Understand? Don't tell a soul. I'll be right back!

SFX: Door opens.

PAUL: See, I'll leave both doors open.

There is a pause. The actress playing Annabelle coughs. Eventually the actor playing Paul speaks.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* What's going on?

ANNABELLE: *(In own voice.)* Who's the doctor?

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* I did try to tell you.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* Don't tell me!

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* That new guy, Gary. He was supposed to be playing both Hendricks and the doctor.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* Where the hell is he?

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* Well, I don't know. He never was very reliable. He missed half the rehearsals.

ANNABELLE: *(In own voice.)* Oh, him! He was usually drunk when he did turn up.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* So, what do we do?

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* It's obvious. You'll have to play him.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* I'm already playing three!

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* You don't expect me to play him do you? It's all very well Mark doing his West Country Panto dame impression but no one is going to think I'm a man.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* What about the others?

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* No idea where they are to be honest. Think they've nipped out to the pub.

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* This is ridiculous.

CICILY: *(In own voice.)* Are you going to do it or not?

PAUL: *(In own voice.)* Oh, what the hell. But he'll have to be French. It's all I've got left.

The actor playing Harry, Paul and Hendricks will now play Patterson, adopting the most ridiculous French accent.

PATTERSON: Meess Annabelle West?

ANNABELLE: Who are you?

PATTERSON: I am Doctuer Patterson, your maid just brought me over. She told me you were in 'ere, so I walked in. Did I frighten you?

ANNABELLE: Yes. No. I thought it was...

PATTERSON: I see your condition is more serious than I thought. You've been under a nervous strain!. Look into my torchlight. Voila. Your eyes hurt you. Very quick action. Were you excited?

ANNABELLE: No.

ELOWEN: Feelen be'ah, Miss West?

ANNABELLE: Yes thank you, Elowen.

PATTERSON: Ah, zee water. I will take that. Alores. Very strange.

ANNABELLE: Strange?

PATTERSON: Oui, your actions and your eyes suggest a terrible worry. You act az if you recently had a shock.

ANNABELLE: Didn't Elowen tell you about...

PATTERSON: Meess West, I never discuss my patients with their servants. Besides, your maid told me nothing. I think she iz dumb. As I was saying, your physical condition iz normal but your mental state iz not. Tell me about yourself.

ANNABELLE: Oh, I can't stand it any longer. Why doesn't he come out? He went in there.

PATTERSON: Who? And where iz there?

ANNABELLE: Paul. He went in there. The room where Mr Crosby was murdered. Charlie has gone for the police. Don't tell them will you?

PATTERSON: Murder? Police? 'e iz in there with a dead body. Why?

ANNABELLE: To get the envelope.

PATTERSON: A letter?

ANNABELLE: No, the will

PATTERSON: Ah. And you are afraid of something in zat room?

ANNABELLE: Please don't ask me any more questions. Go and fetch Paul. Please hurry.

PATTERSON. All right. I will be az quick as I can. Wait here.

A beat.

ANNABELLE: Dr Patterson. What's happened? Oh!

PATTERSON: 'e was lying on zee floor.

ANNABELLE: Put him on the couch.

PATTERSON: Hmm. Nasty bruise. 'e must have tripped, and az 'e fell, 'e probably struck his head on the corner of the table.

ANNABELLE: Was he lying near... Lying near...

PATTERSON: Near what?

ANNABELLE: The body

PATTERSON: What body?

ANNABELLE: Mr Crosby. He was murdered in there tonight.

PATTERSON: Here. Drink this, it is merely a sedative. Meess West, your nerves are completely upset. Zhere was no one in that room but zis young man. Hmm. I smell whiskey. Did you have some? Oh well, zis young man probably had too much. 'e'll come round in a minute.

PAUL: What time did the eclipse take place?

PATTERSON: 'ow do you feel now?

PAUL: Did you hit me?

PATTERSON: No – you must have hurt yourself on zee table.

PAUL: Nothing of the sort. Somebody hit me from behind when I went in to get that envelope from Crosby's body.

ANNABELLE: Was the body there, Paul?

PAUL: No, it was not. While I was looking for it someone hit me.

PATTERSON: What iz all zis about?

ANNABELLE: I told you but you didn't believe me.

PATTERSON: You are all right now Meess West. Young man, you'd better not drink any more. I'll look in tomorrow. Everything will be all right zen. Zee pair of you 'ave been seeing things.

ANNABELLE: But Paul's head.

PATTERSON: 'e'z all right. Does it hurt you?

PAUL: No.

PATTERSON: It never does after you've had a few. Au revoir.

SFX: Door closes.

ANNABELLE: Mr Crosby wasn't there.

PAUL: No, but someone else had been. Who could it have be? Who the dickens could it have been? Oh, my head begins to hurt now.

ANNABELLE: There, there. Don't try to think.

PAUL: I've got to think. Just as I had the whole thing figured out, now it goes and gets itself all muddled up again. We saw Crosby fall on the floor didn't we?

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: He was dead, wasn't he?

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: Ha!

ANNABELLE: What is it, Paul. What is it?

PAUL: How do we know he was dead?

ANNABELLE: Why? Wasn't he?

PAUL: I don't know. I suppose he was but that doesn't prove it. I couldn't swear he was dead and neither could you.

ANNABELLE: No

PAUL: I got an idea. Maybe the whole thing was only a plant. He was shamming all the time to frighten you and waiting in there to wallop me.

ANNABELLE: No.

PAUL: You don't think much of that one.

ANNABELLE: No.

PAUL: No. neither do I. Guess my ideas aren't coming as good as they might since I got hit on the bonce.

ANNABELLE: Where's Elowen?

PAUL: She's out. I sent her on a personal errand of my own.

ANNABELLE: I wish she were here.

PAUL: Now don't worry about Elowen. I'll take care of you. You know I'll take care of you, don't you?

ANNABELLE: Yes.

PAUL: All right. Now where was I? Oh, yes. Elowen. I sent her for a...

ANNABELLE: Shh!

PAUL: What?

ANNABELLE: Shh!

PAUL: You think you heard something?

ANNABELLE: I thought I heard a footstep.

PAUL: I guess you were mistaken, I didn't hear any, Now, where was I? Oh yes, my garage.

ANNABELLE: Your garage. You didn't tell me about that.

PAUL: Didn't I! Well, I meant to. I've got the nicest garage in Merthyr Tydfil. Most of the cars in it are ancient but it's a good garage. One that any girl would be proud of. And. Well. I...

ANNABELLE: (*Softly*) Paul, did you miss me when I left Merthyr?

PAUL: Did I miss you? Did I miss you! Yes I did. And when you went away you didn't think that some day I'd own a garage did you?

ANNABELLE: I hadn't the slightest idea. I'm glad you missed me, Paul, but why didn't you write to me?

PAUL: I didn't think you wanted to hear from me. Besides, I didn't have my garage then.

ANNABELLE: Well, you have it now.

PAUL: Yes, but. But you can't ask a girl to marry you just because you've got a garage.

ANNABELLE: Why can't you? Does having a garage make you tongue-tied?

PAUL: Are you making fun of me?

ANNABELLE: No. I'm only trying to help you.

PAUL: You could have helped me more if you hadn't turned out to be the heiress.

ANNABELLE: I'm awfully sorry, but I don't see why you should keep me from helping you with your garage.

PAUL: But I don't need a mechanic. What I need is a wi... A wi... Oh. Oh, I don't think you would understand. You have been living so long in London with all those all those artists, you'd never be content to settle in the country, in a little cottage with a little garden around it and...

ANNABELLE: Don't be too sure. I could live anywhere with the man I loved.

PAUL: Could you? Honestly?

ANNABELLE: Of course I could. So could any woman if she loved a man.

PAUL: Annabelle...

ANNABELLE: Yes? You want to tell me something?

PAUL: Yes. I want to tell you. Tell you. About a new idea of mine. I've got an idea for a twelve-cylinders car. All twelve cylinders in a row. That would give the crank shaft thirteen main bearings. Think of the power and flexibility.

ANNABELLE: Very interesting. But what about your idea of getting someone to keep the little cottage for you?

PAUL: Annabelle. Would. Would you...

SFX: A body being dragged across the floor followed by the sound of dragging feet.

ANNABELLE: Hear that?

PAUL: Sounds like someone dragging something across the floor.

SFX: A body being dragged across the floor.

PAUL: It's upstairs. I suppose I ought to go up there, but I hate to leave you alone.

ANNABELLE: I'm not afraid.

PAUL: No. Neither am I. Here, you'd better take this in case anything happens. Wait a minute, I'll cock it for you.

ANNABELLE: Where did you get a gun?

PAUL: Never mind that. All you got to do if you see something is just point this at it and pull the trigger.

ANNABELLE: Yes, but what about you?

PAUL: Never mind about me. If that's the guy that bashed me a while ago, may God help him. I'll be back in a minute.

SFX: Door closes.

SFX: Panel slides open.

ANNABELLE: The panel. I. I don't know why you are trying to frighten me but if you don't go away I will, I will...

SFX: Door bursts open.

HENDRICKS: Whit is it, miss. anythin' wrang?

ANNABELLE: Mr Hendricks! There! In the corner. Can you see?

HENDRICKS: Aye Ah can. an' i'm jist in time. Ah heard he was aroond here. You'd better give me the gun. that's it. Don't worry, Miss. He cannae get ye noo. He knows me. he's afraid of me. Come on the noo, ye an' me are going haem. Come on, Ah won't hurt ye.

ANNABELLE: Oh dear!

HENDRICKS: Noo, miss, everything is aw reit. I'll just take him alang tae the asylum. Come ye, come out of that panel an' nae funny business. That's it. that's it. Go toward tha door.

ANNABELLE: Wait.

HENDRICKS: Don't worry, Miss.

ANNABELLE: No wait. I want to see his face.

HENDRICKS: Stay back, stay back.

ANNABELLE: That's a mask, he's wearing a mask.

HENDRICKS: Stay away from heem, Miss. I'm warnin' ye.

ANNABELLE: No. I want to see under the mask!

SFX: Monster roars.

ANNABELLE: Let's see who you really are. *(She gasps)* Charlie!!

CHARLIE: Grab her!

HENDRICKS: Cover her mouth!

Annabelle tries to scream but it is muffled.

CHARLIE: How did she get wise?

HENDRICKS: How do I ken? I got tae her jist in time.

CHARLIE: What did you do with Crosby?

HENDRICKS: Rolled heem under the bed. (*Annabelle tries to scream.*) Och, shut up! Another yip out of you and I'll shut ye up for gui.

CHARLIE: You need to take care of her, anyway. I'll go and see to Jones.

HENDRICKS: No. Nae more killing. I did everything you tauld me. I planted the gong. Ah made them think Ah was from the asylum and locked her in the room but while Ah was daint that you had one of your crazy turns and killed the auld man.

CHARLIE: What are you saying?

HENDRICKS: If we're caught, I don't go to the gallows with you. No, I'll squeal and save my own neck. (*Annabelle tries to scream.*)

CHARLIE: We need to take care of her.

HENDRICKS: No. I willnae stand for it, dae you hear? I won't have it. We'll tie her up and gag her and poot her behind the panel. I knew you couldnae drive this girl crazy! It's time to cut our losses. I want half of that necklace and then I go my way and you go yours. I'm through with you. Do you get me? (*Annabelle tries to scream.*) Och, shut up, will you!

CHARLIE: I'll make you scream, damn you! You cheated me out of my inheritance. You didn't know that I used to play around this house when I was a kid, did you? Well, I was the old man's favourite, he showed me the secret passage and I should have been his heir too. I'm next in line, you see. The third envelope. You see my name right there?

HENDRICKS: Calm down, man. You are having one of your turns.

CHARLIE: When I opened that safe and read the will I found out that you had robbed me. You thought I went for the police. Well, I didn't. Oh, and here's your lovely necklace!

HENDRICKS: I want my half noo.

CHARLIE: Try to get it.

HENDRICKS: Double-cross me would ye? In that case, I'll take it aw.

CHARLIE: Try it!

SFX: Punching. The gun drops to the floor.

CHARLIE: The gun!

HARRY: I'll take that.

ANNABELLE: Harry!

HARRY: Everyone, stay where you are.

PAUL: Stay still, Hendricks.

ANNABELLE: Paul!

PAUL: Thank God you're here, Harry. I'm scared to death.

HARRY: Scared?

PAUL: Well, yes. Maybe.

HENDRICKS: I didnae kill him. He did it. He's been getting crazier and crazier. Just now he had one of his spells and tried to kill me.

HARRY: Tell that to the Judge. Come on, the police are waiting and remember. Keep calm or I'll shoot. Now move!

PAUL: Team work.

ELOWEN: It's all roight, Mr Paul.

ANNABELLE: What's all right?

ELOWEN: Aks Mr Paul. Excuse me, Miss.

SFX: Door closes.

ANNABELLE: What's all right, Paul?

PAUL: Well, you see, that was just another little idea of mine. I thought, that is, I got to thinking, after what you'd been through tonight and everything, that maybe you wouldn't be so nervous if you were to wake up suddenly and found me to be your husband.

ANNABELLE: What?

PAUL: I mean found me by your side.

ANNABELLE: What?

PAUL: I mean after we are married.

ANNABELLE: Oh!

PAUL: So I asked Elowen...

ANNABELLE: Oh!

PAUL: Well, to see if we could have a chat with the vicar. I mean, if you, I mean I had this idea that...

ANNABELLE: Oh, Paul, you did have an idea, didn't you?

THE END