

CANTERVILLE GHOST

a dramatic musical comedy
by Joshua Williams and Ryan Hamilton

Notes:

This show is intended to be performed either with full sets and costumes (in true Broadway style) or with more bare-bones, imaginative sets and costumes. In either case, the tricks or mechanics should never overshadow the characters. It should always retain a simple and farcical charm.

ACT ONE

- Scene 1** *1923. The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.*
Instrumental: **Overture**
- Scene 2** *The Otis Home, New York City/ a Phone Booth in England.*
Song: **I'm Leaving Home**
- Scene 3** *The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor*
Song: **The Curse of Sir Simon**
Song: **Our Little Charade**
Instrumental: **The Promise I**
Song: **Out Damn Spot!**
Instrumental: **The Promise I**
- Scene 4** *The Canterville Chase, Virginia's Bedroom.*
Song: **Keeping up Appearances**
Song: **The Promise II**
- Scene 5** *The Canterville Chase, the Garden.*
Song: **Anything**
- Scene 6** *The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.*
- Scene 7** *The Canterville Chase, Virginia's Bedroom.*
Song: **When You're Fifteen**
- Scene 8** *The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.*
- Scene 9** *The Canterville Chase, Sir Simon's Chamber.*
Song: **They Won't Dare**
- Scene 10** *The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.*
- Scene 11** *In the bowels of the Canterville Chase.*
Instrumental: **Scare Suite**
Song: **Four Hundred Years**

Note: *Scenes 1-3 should run seamlessly together, even overlap.*

ACT I
Scene 1

[Song: **Overture**]

England, 1923. The Canterville Chase, Main Parlor.

[A bunch of haggled, ghostly men and women enter the stage carrying “furniture”, “decorations”, etc. The music segues.]

[Underscore: **The Curse of Sir Simon**]

[The ghosts movements are underscored by the music, which is neither comedic nor dramatic, very ho hum. OSCAR, with a colorful Oriental wrap, becomes the visual point, directing human traffic. He is the man in charge. Lights fade, but not completely, on the Main Parlor.]

ACT I
Scene 2

The Otis Home, New York City/A Phone Booth in England.

[The music continues from Scene 1, but more quietly. A pool of light, stage left, reveals MR. OTIS in an English-style phone booth, trying to make an international call. After some haggling with the operator, “Do you know who I am madam?” and “I’ll have my attorney see to it that your company is shutdown pronto!”, he is finally connected. The phone rings and a light comes up on a very distinguished New York parlor. Two young twin boys, LEWIS and CLARK, come racing to the phone, firecrackers in hand, along with VIRGINIA, WASHINGTON and their mother, MRS. LUCRETIA OTIS. MRS. OTIS composes herself and answers the phone. Underscore ends.]

MRS. OTIS – Hello?

MR. OTIS – Hello? Dear is that you?

MRS. OTIS – Who is this?

MR. OTIS – It’s me dear, you’re husband.

MRS. OTIS – I’m not interested.

MR. OTIS – [Raised voice.] Now you listen here, it’s Hiram Otis, your husband.

MRS. OTIS – [Wincing from the volume. To children.] It's father. [To MR. OTIS.] Hello dear.

MR. OTIS – Can you believe how much they're charging me for this telephone call? It's absolutely ridiculous. It leaves me with no time to explain, dear.

MRS. OTIS – Everything all right dear?

MR. OTIS – Fine dear, fine. But I must go now. Too expensive these damned calls.

MRS. OTIS – Yes, well then, goodbye. Wait dear...you there? You must have called for some other reason other than to say hello.

MR. OTIS – Of course.

[Pause.]

MRS. OTIS – Something to do with a house perhaps?

MR. OTIS – Of course! I almost forgot. Pack your bags dear, we're moving to England! I've just purchased the esteemed Canterville Chase at a real bargain.

MRS. OTIS – [To children.] We're moving to England...[In phone.] to a *Chase*?

MR. OTIS – And they say it's haunted by a dreadful ghost. [Laughs.]

MRS. OTIS – Haunted?

MR. OTIS – Yes, haunted by a ghost.

MRS. OTIS – Ghost?

MR. OTIS – Yes, a family ghost...how quaint! Well, I must go. [Beat.] Your ship leaves July 4th. Goodbye. [MR. OTIS fumbles with the receiver. Lights down on him.]

CLARK – A real, live haunted house?

MRS. OTIS – Goodbye, dear.

LEWIS – I call, I get the ghost!

CLARK – No fair! You can't call a ghost!

WASHINGTON – I assure you, there are no such things as ghosts. Ghosts violate any number of natural laws. If father were here, he'd explain it to you.

VIRGINIA – When do we leave?

MRS. OTIS – Apparently, your father booked us on a ship that leaves July 4th.

VIRGINIA – Tomorrow?! [No one seems to hear her.]

WASHINGTON – Nice touch father, we'll set sail with one last patriotic display from the harbor before we conquer England.

VIRGINIA – Tomorrow? [Still no one listens.]

CLARK – But mother, isn't July 4th tomorrow?

MRS. OTIS – What?!

WASHINGTON – Good point Lewis.

MRS. OTIS – We're supposed to ready ourselves with only one day's notice? Is your father a lunatic? Washington, go get the luggage and crates from the attic. Move, move, move! Virginia, you start packing the silver and china. Boys, you just try not to blow anything up between now and tomorrow. Now go on, get!

[Everyone scatters, except VIRGINIA. She moves to a hutch where she starts to take out the dishes and silverware to wrap them.]

[Song: **I'm Leaving Home**]

**Such (this) news so sudden
I'm feeling nervous
Though it's something that I've always wanted
To move away from
Our "perfect" lives here
It's like a brand new start
No misconceptions
A fresh beginning
To live my dreams, to follow my heart.**

**Look out world,
I'm gonna start a new life
I'm leaving home
To start an adventure.
Watch me world
I plan on changing
how I see my future.**

**It will be different
I know I'll like it
The world out there is so exciting.
So full of history
So much to explore
I can't believe it's true.
I'll see new places.
I'll meet new people.
There's so much that I want to do.**

**Look out world,
I'm gonna start a new life
I'm leaving home
To start an adventure.
Watch me world
I plan on changing
how I see my future.**

**I've dreamed about this day
And now it's here.
It's hard to imagine
We leave tomorrow
The ship sets sail.
and I'll be there
waving and smiling
and probably crying
I hate goodbyes.
But I...
I'm ready to go!**

**Look out world,
I'm gonna start a new life
I'm leaving home
To start an adventure.
Watch me world
I plan on changing
how I see my future.**

**I'm leaving home.
I'm leaving home.
I'm leaving home today.
I'm leaving home.**

[VIRGINIA finishes packing. The lights fade one her.]

ACT I
Scene 3

The Canterville Chase, Main Parlor.

[The lights come up on MR. OTIS and LORD CANTERVILLE. The GHOSTS are present, but framed as “family portraits”.]

LORD CANTERVILLE – [Putting together papers in an envelope.] Well, that does it. All the papers are signed.

MR. OTIS – Very good, I’ve informed my family; they shall arrive in a fortnight.

LORD CANTERVILLE – I must say, you are certainly very natural in America, and if you don’t mind a ghost in the house, it is all right. Only you must remember I warned you.

MR. OTIS -- Have no fear, Lord Canterville. Though I feel duty-bound to tell you that if I do find a ghost of one of your ancestors living in my newly acquired home, I shall be forced to charge him rent as a border.

[Exit of MR. OTIS and LORD CANTERVILLE. Enter SIR SIMON, from the shadows—he’s been listening the whole time. The GHOSTS in the portrait shudder.]

SIR SIMON – [With an evil laugh.] Charge me rent, will you? No! It is I who shall charge you rent! And you shall pay with your very souls! And the lease shall be signed in blood.

[SIR SIMON exits with a crack of lightening and a peal of thunder. The GHOSTS move away from the frames.]

FORMER GARDNER – Here we go again.

OSCAR – Places all!

[Song: **The Curse of Sir Simon**]

[The GHOSTS scurry to their places. They sing in a mocking, “put out” way.]

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR
The time has come to haunt again
To cause a quiver in the hearts of men.
Rattle their reason and twist their fate.
At the Canterville Chase, it’s always “too late”.

**The screams of the night
Are sure to ignite...
your fear.**

FORMER PRIEST
It's good to be back, to rattle my chains.

FORMER MAID
The house is alive with our mortal remains.

FORMER GARDNER
To haunt these foreigners, cause them pain.

FORMER COOK
Send them running back from whence they came.

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR
**The curse of Sir Simon
binds our souls to the night.
Now it's our duty, it's our passion to a-fright.
The curse of Sir Simon
binds our souls to his plight.**

FORMER MAID
To think of his vict'ries sends chills down my spine.

FORMER GARDNER
The master of vengeance...

FORMER PRIEST
So subtle and fine.

FORMER COOK
The curse will remain.

SIR SIMON (*from the balcony*)
I will never resign.

OSCAR
Again I'll do the costumes and the make-up design!

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR
**The curse of Sir Simon
binds our souls to the night.
Now it's our duty, it's our passion to a-fright.
The curse of Sir Simon**

binds our souls to his plight.

**The time has come to haunt again
To cause a quiver in the hearts of men.
Rattle their reason and twist their fate.
At the Canterville Chase, it's always "too late".**

SIR SIMON

**I would beware of the man who stands here,
He's keeping up appearances.
Fallen from grace just as Lucifer fell.
I'm cursed to haunt this Chase.**

SIR SIMON—Huzzah!

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR

**The screams of the night
Are sure to ignite...
your fear.**

**The curse of Sir Simon
binds our souls to the night.
Now it's our duty, it's our passion to a-fright.**

GHOST CHORUS, OSCAR & SIR SIMON

**The screams of the night
Are sure to ignite...
your fear.**

GHOST CHORUS

(Reassuming position in frames.)

**We stand here behind him,
Yes, we stand strong behind him.**

SIR SIMON
Yes, they stand strong behind me.

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR

Always there ev'ry time for him.

GHOST CHORUS, OSCAR & SIR SIMON

We're ready to fight!

[SIR SIMON lets out another harrowing shriek from the balcony and then disappears.]

FORMER GARDNER – Oww, damn his howls...all these years and still he lacks any social graces. And that song. I'm done I tell you, the last straw.

FORMER COOK – Four hundred years we're stuck here because of a lousy supper.

FORMER PRIEST – [With a sigh.] Our last supper.

FORMER COOK – “How dare you cook the potatoes with lard. I’m trying to lose weight and so I ask you to use butter and yet you continue to cook my potatoes in lard!”
The lout.

FORMER MAID – And he blames his pretty wife. Poor girl.

FORMER COOK – The lout.

[The portrait frames fly up.]

FORMER PRIEST – [Mockingly reenacts murder.] “You deceive me, my own wife deceive me, you ungrateful...[Pulls out sword and stabs. He jumps into ELEANOR’s position, gets stabbed and falls dead.]

[The GHOSTS look on, sapped of enough energy to really respond.]

FORMER MAID – Stabbed in the heart.

FORMER PRIEST – Actually, just below.

FORMER COOK – And there she lie, dead in pool of her own blood, right here on this very spot.

FORMER GARDNER – I’m done I tell you, the last straw.

[OSCAR has been half-listening and reading the newspaper.]

OSCAR – Listen to this. “Lord Canterville seeks highly qualified, strong-hearted woman for the position of head maid at Canterville Chase. American family to take residence shortly, therefore applicant must be able to decipher queer New England dialect. Committed applicants only.”

FORMER MAID – Poor woman!

OSCAR – But wait! An idea forms in my head. What if...what if...if I were to apply for the position of head maid. No one knows the “ghost” as well as I.

FORMER COOK – But you’re a man!

FORMER MAID – It’s not a far stretch.

OSCAR – A mere triviality my dear woman. We shall give Sir Simon a taste of his own medicine. The dead dressed up as the living.

FORMER PRIEST – Ooh a double life...I like the sound of that.

OSCAR – We shall pit this American family with “queer New England dialect” unwittingly against Sir Simon himself. We’ll finally be set free and I’ll ride to heaven on a shiny star!

FORMER COOK – Please.

FORMER GARDNER – But what about the “Promise” and the “innocent little girl” nonsense. We can’t break the curse without the little girl. I’m done I tell you, the last straw.

OSCAR – You think too much. One thing at a time, we must break him first, then we’ll worry about the girl!

[Song: **Our Little Charade**]

OSCAR

**Let’s plan our little execution
We’ll nip his bud for once and all.**

FORMER COOK

We’ll be swift.

FORMER MAID

We’ll be sure.

FORMER PRIEST

Our motives are pure.

FORMER GARDNER

We’ll mourn this thorn

FORMER GARDNER & OSCAR

that pricks our gall.

FORMER PRIEST

We’ve got our set.

OSCAR

We need fine costumes.

FORMER GARDNER

And a di-rec-tor to “block” our way.

OSCAR—C'est moi!

FORMER COOK
We'll need grace.

FORMER MAID
We'll need skill.

OSCAR
To come right out...and kill.

OSCAR
Curtains up.

ALL
Let's play!

[The music continues underneath the dialogue.]

OSCAR – Let our little charade begin. My trunk of surprises please! [The GHOSTS scurry off stage and return with an ornate trunk. OSCAR lovingly opens his trunk and looks inside.] Ah yes...

FORMER GARDNER – What the bloody hell?

OSCAR – My costumes...

FORMER MAID – Silk knickers?!

OSCAR – Pure couture. Just look at them.

FORMER GARDNER—I'm not wearin' any of—

OSCAR
Beautiful, to the touch, to the eye
Love the silk
So disarming
Look at this hat
Confect-ious delight,
I could wear this ev'ry night.

Splash of red
The accent l'amour.
And more couture
Drape it on me
I am the muse

**The fashion gods speak
The world with me is not so bleak...**

**Once just a butler
So stiff-upper-lipped was I
Hiding behind a façade.
Now, as a maid I'll be,
Happy and finally free
Thanks to our little charade!**

(The GHOSTs break into a Busby Berkeley-style pin-wheel formation humming along in 1920s harmonies.)

(The music stops. Spoken Aside.)

“It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.”

(The music begins again then stops. Spoken Aside.)

“In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing.”

(Pause.)

“Shallow people. Grave importance. Get it? Grave, and I'm a ghost? Oh, and I'm supposed to be the dead one...”

(The dancing sequence climaxes.)

**OSCAR
Gold brocade, accessories too...
A touch of pink makes me look thin.
A runway of style, of glamour and glitz
Each day I'm putting on the ritz...**

**Manicured and pedicured too.
All the best, nothing shoddy.
The titular maid now second to none
Wait one minute,
I'm almost done.**

(A drawn out musical flourish, OSCAR and the GHOSTS disappear behind a curtain of fabric. The curtain flies and the GHOSTS appear dressed in new clothes. The stage becomes a runway, lights flashing and music pulsating/building.)

OSCAR – I'm ready!

(OSCAR appears in all his brightly colored, loud print, teased and tousled Maid Couture.)

GHOSTS – Wow! Ooh! Aah!

(The music is again light and airy.)

OSCAR
**Once just a butler
 So stiff-upper-lipped was I
 Hiding behind a façade.
 Now, as a maid I'll be,
 Happy and finally free
 Thanks to our little charade!
 Now to our little...**

CHORUS
**Ooh ooh
 Ah ah ah
 Hiding. Façade.
 Ooh ooh ooh
 Ah ah
 Charade.
 Now to our little...
 charade.**

OSCAR
Charade.

**ALL
 Our little charade.**

[The OTIS FAMILY has entered in time to see the end “pose”, Oscar immediately falls into his new character, MRS. UMNEY, head maid.]

MRS. OTIS – You must be our maid! How quaint dear, just like I envisioned her, only brighter! I'm Lucretia Otis.

MRS. UMNEY – [Dramatically and somewhat darkly.] I bid you welcome to Canterville Chase. Let me introduce the gardner, the cook, the... [pauses at FORMER MAID] ...my dear friend, and I am Mrs. Umney.

[MRS. UMNEY begins a deep curtsy, but MRS. OTIS catches her in a warm embrace leaving MRS. UMNEY completely at a loss.]

MRS. OTIS – Listen to her, Hiram. Isn't she the most precious little English housekeeper you've ever heard? [Embracing MRS. UMNEY again.] I can't tell you how glad we are to have you, Mrs. Umney. Now, let me introduce you to the children.

[WASHINGTON enters carrying a couple of suitcases. MRS. UMNEY instantly sizes him up and fans herself.]

MRS. OTIS – This is our eldest, Washington. Named after that fine intrepid American president...

MR. OTIS – George Washington.

MRS. OTIS – Thank you dear. [Resumes where she left off.] ...has led the Fox Trot for three consecutive seasons at the Newport Casino and has garnered quite a reputation as being an excellent dancer.

WASHINGTON – [Extending a hand to MRS. UMNEY.] Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Umney. [He spins her around.]

MRS. UMNEY – The pleasure is all mine. [She coyly kisses WASHINGTON on the cheek.] My what finely chiseled features you have, you'll make all the local lads jealous.

MRS. OTIS – Hiram, did you hear that? That was absolutely precious. [Pinching MRS. UMNEY on the cheek.] Oh, never change Mrs. Umney, you are simply too, too dear.

[The GHOSTS try not to laugh.]

MRS. UMNEY – Thank you mum.

MRS. OTIS – And our daughter...

MRS. UMNEY – A daughter???

[There is a fairly loud explosion off stage. LEWIS and CLARK enter running. They are disheveled and have blown sticks of firecrackers in hand.]

MRS. OTIS – [Shaking her head.] Well, these are the twins. Their proper names are Lewis and Clark—named after those fine, intrepid American explorers—but as often as not we just call them the Stars and Stripes as they are always getting swished. Boys, say hello to Mrs. Umney.

LEWIS & CLARK – Hello Mrs. Umney.

[VIRGINIA enters loaded down with suitcases. The lights instantly change to one spot on her alone, as if from the heavens. The GHOSTS gasp as does MRS. UMNEY. The bells toll.]

[Instrumental: **The Promise I**]

[The lights return to normal.]

MRS. UMNEY – Saints and heaven above... there is a god.

MR. OTIS – Ahhh, Virginia...named, of course, after that fine intrepid...

MRS. UMNEY – The blessed Queen Elizabeth...the Virgin Queen.

MRS. OTIS – Mrs. Umney, do watch your language around the children. [Whispered shock.] Virgin?

MR. OTIS – Ahem. Virginia was named after that fine, intrepid American state, the State of Virginia.

WASHINGTON – Really, Mrs. Umney, “Elizabeth” doesn’t sound remotely like *Virginia*.

VIRGINIA – How do you do? [VIRGINIA notices the blood spot.] Mother, have you see this? Mother?

MRS. OTIS – Oh dear! Mrs. Umney, there’s a spot here on the floor. I am afraid something has been spilt.

MRS. UMNEY – [Knowing she must create a stir.] Yes mum, blood has been spilt on that spot.

MRS. OTIS – How horrid! I don’t care at all for bloodstains in the sitting room. It must be removed at once.

MRS. UMNEY – [Smiling, but trying to be mysterious.] It is the blood of Lady Eleanor de Canterville...

[The GHOSTS realize this is their cue to “act”. They get in place to reenact the murder, but are stopped by MR. OTIS.]

MR. OTIS – Yes, yes, we know. Husband murders wife, almond tree dies, departed wife’s cousins curse still living husband, husband *mysteriously* disappears...really, I think this ghost spotting is something of a British obsession. Clearly this country is in desperate need of more motion picture theaters.

FORMER PRIEST – The bloodstain has remained ever since the murder, much admired by tourists and others, and it cannot be removed.

FORMER COOK – The ghost of Sir Simon would simply not permit it. [Coughing aside.] The lout.

MRS. UMNEY – I concur.

MRS. OTIS – A little too...[Whispers.] “Macbeth”...for my tastes.

WASHINGTON – That is all nonsense. Certainly there must be something that will...[He opens a cabinet door. The only two items on the shelves are a big bottle of Pinkerton’s Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent along with a small bucket and brush.] Ah, Pinkerton’s!

FORMER PRIEST – What a coincidence!

[Underscore begins.]

FORMER MAID – [Dramatically.] No!

FORMER GARDNER – [More dramatically.] Stop!!

FORMER COOK – [And more dramatically.] Never!!!

MRS. UMNEY – [The most dramatic of all.] You mustn't!!!!

[Song: **Out Damn Spot**]

[Throughout the song the GHOSTS and MRS. UMNEY reenact Eleanor's death, in the style of melodrama. They must convince the OTIS family of the SIR SIMON's existence, yea his evil deed.]

WASHINGTON

**Don't you worry,
Piece of cake!
It's a bloodstain
Nothing special.
Pinkerton's will get it out.
Out damn spot!
Mrs. Umney move away
Just a rub and scrub will do it.**

(To his family.)

**Hold your heads high,
Do not doubt.
Out damn spot!**

MRS. UMNEY

**Horror, Horrors
At the Canterville Chase.
Murder, murdered
Right here in this *place*.
Lady de Canterville
God rest her soul.
The blood of her life
gone cold
on these floorboards
it did flow.**

WASHINGTON

**Such a story,
Quite a laugh.
If it's true then why'd they leave it?
Evidence like this, so long.
Out damn spot!**

MRS. OTIS

**Look, we're sorry if it's true.
What would you expect us do?**

MR. OTIS

**Such a stain--
It's surely wrong.**

WASHINGTON

Out damn spot!

OTIS FAMILY

Out damn spot!

MRS. UMNEY

**Horror, Horrors
At the Canterville Chase
Murder, murdered
Right here in this *place*.
Lady de Canterville
God rest her soul.
The blood of her life
gone cold
on these floorboards
*it did flow.***

OTIS FAMILY

**Out, out, out
out...
Damn, damn,
damn, damn...
Spot, spot,
spot, spot...
Out
damn
spot!
*It did flow.***

MRS. OTIS – [She touches the spot and tastes it.] *It is blood...Hiram!*

WASHINGTON

**Apply this.
Rub here.
Wipe it down,
Don't fear,
it is coming out.
Scrub hard,
that's what I thought.
Work it more and more and more and
out damn spot...**

MRS. UMNEY Poor damn spot.	OTIS FAMILY Out damn spot.	WASHINGTON Out damn spot.
Lady de	Out.	Don't worry. It's nonsense.
Canterville	Damn.	MRS. OTIS Such a tale cannot be true.
You're in my	Spot.	MR. OTIS Be wary, pragmatic.
thoughts.	Out damn Spot.	WASHINGTON Pinkerton's is just the goo
I hope	Out.	to do the trick.
He will	Damn.	It's working now.
pay		It won't be long
for this.		before it's
Wash his hands of	Out Damn, Out Spot.	gone.
This damn spot!	Out damn spot!	Out damn spot!

[MRS. UMNEY ends up laid out on the floor, right over the spot. The doorbell rings.]

MRS. UMNEY – Ooh, ooh...I'll get it.

[The stage goes dark and spot falls on MR. CANTERVILLE and CECIL who are standing at the door waiting to be let in.]

CECIL – I still don't understand how you could have sold the Canterville Chase to a rotten bunch of Americans.

LORD CANTERVILLE – Now, Cecil, they're not as bad as all that. I had to sell the Chase to someone. Lady Canterville flatly refused to live here any longer and this Mr. Otis is a fine fellow. [Beat.] I understand that he has a daughter your age. Perhaps you shouldn't be so quick to judge a family you haven't met.

CECIL – Oh, I see. It's a ploy then isn't it? A girl to break the Canterville curse, eh Uncle Nigel.

LORD CANTERVILLE – I'm afraid I hadn't even given it a thought.

CECIL – Of course not, how diplomatic of you. Besides she's probably some herdsman from the Wild West, wearing a six-shooter and a bandoleer, hardly the sensitive type able to break a complex British family curse.

LORD CANTERVILLE – Apparently she is quite an equestrian as well as an artist.

CECIL – We shall see.

[The door opens, MRS. UMNEY is there to greet them.]

MRS. UMNEY – Welcome, welcome Lord Canterville. How lovely to see you. And you Cecil, so dashing. [LORD CANTERVILLE looks at her incredulously.] Oh yes, don't be frightened, I am Mrs. Umney, the new maid. We spoke over the phone. [LORD CANTERVILLE stumbles to find words.] Of course you didn't expect me until Tuesday, but I certainly couldn't miss greeting this fine American family with "queer New England dialect". Have you met them, they are a lovely rugged bunch. Come in.

[Lights up on the rest of the family.]

MR. OTIS -- Ah Lord Canterville, welcome.

LORD CANTERVILLE – Yes, yes, quite. How lovely to see you. May I introduce Cecil, my nephew.

MRS. OTIS – Cecil, how charming.

MR. OTIS –This is my wife, Lucretia and our sons Washington, Lewis and Clark. And this is...

[The lights go black except a spot on CECIL and VIRGINIA. The bells beginning chiming again.]

[Instrumental: **The Promise I**]

CECIL – [to Virginia] You may be the most beautiful creature I've ever seen. [The TWINS giggle.] You know, here in Europe, it is customary to greet one another with a kiss, when you meet someone for the first time.

VIRGINIA – [blushing] Really?

CLARK – Ew! Gross!

[CECIL is about to kiss her on the cheek when there is a deafening peal of thunder and the sound of wind. You can hear faintly the sad cry of a woman in the wind. Only VIRGINIA seems to notice the voice.]

MR. OTIS – What a monstrous climate! I guess the old country is so overpopulated that they haven't enough decent weather for everybody. I have always been of the opinion that emigration is the only thing for England.

[More thunder. For more effect MRS. UMNEY faints.]

MRS. OTIS – Oh! She’s fainted! My dear Hiram, what can we do with a woman who faints?

MR. OTIS – We’ll simply deduct the time from her wages. She won’t faint after that.

[MRS. UMNEY gets up, a little surprised.]

LORD CANTERVILLE – We’d better run Cecil, don’t want to be caught in the rain. [to MRS. OTIS] You’ll certainly ring if you need anything?

MRS. UMNEY – I’m sure we’ll all get along swimmingly.

[A peal of laughter.]

LORD CANTERVILLE – Oh dear me, it’s him. Cecil...[CECIL is gazing at VIRGINIA], Cecil. [Grabs his hand and leads him to the door.] Good evening...be safe.

[LORD CANTERVILLE and CECIL exit.]

MR. OTIS – Jumpy fellow, isn’t he?

MRS. OTIS – Oh look dear, bunting. How charming!

[Lights.]

ACT I
Scene 4

At the Canterville Chase in Virginia’s bedroom-to-be.

[A light on SIR SIMON who is hard at work etching “The Promise” into the mantel in VIRGINIA’s bedroom. He has created quite a dusty mess. There is portrait of ELEANOR over the mantel that closely resembles VIRGINIA. Another light comes up on the GHOSTS as they enter, followed by OSCAR, who is wearing another dazzling costume. The GHOSTS groan when they see him.]

OSCAR – What? Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable, that I must alter it every chance I get.

[The GHOSTS groan.]

FORMER MAID – So how do you think we did?

FORMER PRIEST – I’m rather confused by the whole affair.

FORMER COOK – We should've rehearsed more.

OSCAR – Nonsense, nonsense. We were sensational, off the cuff. Improvisational. The trap is set, we simply pretend to be Sir Simon's henchman plotting against the Otis family, while actually plotting against Sir Simon. [With particular glee.] And by the powers of fate we have a little girl, one so innocent and naïve as to surely break the Canterville curse.

FORMER GARDNER – I'm lost. It's the last straw I tell you.

OSCAR – Just pretend that nothing has changed between us and Sir Simon. *Pretend.* [Lights shift as THE GHOSTS enter SIR SIMON's space.] Ah Sir Simon, you look splendid, sir. [Coughing from the dust.]

SIR SIMON – As you know, Oscar, I believe in nothing if not in impeccable preparation...and research.

OSCAR – Yes, yes, I know. Far too many ghosts these days leap straight into haunting without knowing anything about who they're trying to scare. Any old bump in the night can give a body the willies. [Works.] But—if you don't mind my saying so, Sir—what has set your illustrious career apart has been your exacting attention to exhaustive research.

SIR SIMON – Quite right and well said, Oscar. Thank you. Yes, I must say that research, research is the key. And I've found out a great deal about our new tenants. First: they are not even Cantervilles.

OSCAR – [gasps] Scandal!

SIR SIMON – And yet it's true! An untitled commoner not of the Canterville line has purchased and will soon reside in, the Canterville Chase.

OSCAR – Commoners?!

SIR SIMON – Yes. Some class of bourgeois or another, from what I could gather.

OSCAR – Bourgeois? Living in the Chase? I won't stand for this! Is it even worth haunting the middle class? They already have so many demons. [Waits for response.] Sir Simon! Won't haunting the under-privileged affect your standing among the undead peerage?

SIR SIMON – I'd considered that, and I dare say it might. Certainly I will be stooping a bit to spook commoners, but the fact is they're here, and I could use the practice.

OSCAR – I should only hope that these commoners appreciate the opportunity chance has thrown at their feet. To be born without any kind of pedigree and wind up—through the oddities of fate—to be haunted by none other than Sir Simon de Canterville, terror of some of the finest lords and ladies in the history of English nobility... [gets choked up] If only I had tears to shed...

SIR SIMON – I know, Oscar. And thank you. No doubt the Mr. Hiram B. Otis family won't appreciate the quality of the haunting they will receive. To be truly great, one must be motivated by a love of terror. I do it because I love being a ghost. I am simply a devoted slave to my muse. No more.

OSCAR – [he claps solemnly while trying to get the other GHOSTS to join in; they finally do.] In all my tortured eternities of existence, I have never heard such distilled wisdom on the art of haunting.

SIR SIMON – Thank you, Oscar. You are too kind. But on with the business at hand. I have more information about the family. It seems that they are Americans...by which I can only assume that they come from East Ameritage.

OSCAR – Americans from East Ameritage. Quite possible, Sir. There is also the possibility that they come from America.

SIR SIMON – America? America... [Playing it off.] Ah yes, in Ireland.

OSCAR – One of the former colonies, my Lord.

SIR SIMON – You mean France?

OSCAR – Like France, yes, sir.

SIR SIMON – [cheerful] Well! If it's like France then I expect I shall have this wrapped up in a week-end.

OSCAR – Were you able to find out anything else about the family, Sir Simon? Are there perhaps any children? Perhaps a child so loving and pure as to, well, fulfill the Promise and break the Canterville Curse?

SIR SIMON – There is, Oscar. In fact we're in her room now. Nothing like conjuring the past to scare a little girl. Nice touch, eh?

OSCAR – Indeed, I wondered what you were doing. [Beat.] Sir, aren't you the least bit worried that she may divine the "Promise" and perhaps be willing to break the curse? [SIR SIMON laughs.] Of course not, my Lord.

SIR SIMON – Well...don't stand there like a sack of bones, help! [They all get to work.] Back to the matter at hand.

OSCAR – Yes, as to that. I couldn't help noticing, sir, that you made another attempt at ominous improvisation.

SIR SIMON – You mean when I responded to that Otis fellow's parting quip about charging me rent as a boarder?

OSCAR – As I recall, you replied that *you* would not be paying rent, but that *they* would be paying rent with their souls, and that the lease would be signed in blood.

SIR SIMON – Yes.

OSCAR – [pause] I see. So, following through with the logic, if they were somehow to sign this lease in their own blood and were somehow to give over their souls to you as rent, would they then be free to live here?

SIR SIMON – No, of course not! [pause] Ah, I see your point. I'm afraid I hadn't gotten that far when I said it. Quite right, quite right. Touché, Oscar. I'll be sure to get your input on these things in the future.

OSCAR – Still, Sir Simon, taking his quip and turning it into a metaphor of your own design, that was a rather daring bit of wordplay.

SIR SIMON – [pleased] You think so? I tell you, it just came to me and I went with it.

[Song: **Keeping Up Appearances**]

[With a vaudeville flair.]

SIR SIMON
**I am wicked as hell, debauched and scarred.
I'm keeping up appearances.
I'm all that is left, a specter of death.
In short, I am a ghost.**

OSCAR
**I would beware of the man who stands here
He's keeping up appearances.
Fallen from grace just as Lucifer fell.**

SIR SIMON
**I'm cursed to haunt this Chase.
I have perpetrated evil of a sordid kind.**

OSCAR
Still a model specter.

OSCAR
**Still a model specter.
A gho-ul in his prime.**

SIR SIMON
A gho-ul in my prime.

GHOST CHORUS
**All through the land
he's known for his devilish deeds.**

SIR SIMON
My job!

OSCAR, GHOST CHORUS
**Yes, of course.
Your brilliance exceeds...**

SIR SIMON
My brilliance exceeds...

OSCAR
All other ghosts.

SIR SIMON
I have an image to keep.

OSCAR
It's true, you're the master.

SIR SIMON, OSCAR, GHOST CHORUS
A phantom complete.

SIR SIMON
**It wasn't by choice, but I've done all I could
To keep up all appearances.**

FORMER PRIEST
A double-edged sword that keeps you from rest.

FORMER MAID & FORMER COOK
I think you've done your best.

SIR SIMON
**I know that, but still, it's been hundreds of years
Of keeping up appearances.**

OSCAR

**I wouldn't give up, the end could be near.
In the meantime, let's strike more fear!**

SIR SIMON

I have perpetrated evil of a sordid kind.

OSCAR

**Still a model specter.
A gho-ul in his prime.**

SIR SIMON

A gho-ul in my prime.

GHOST CHORUS

**All through the land
he's known for his devilish deeds.**

SIR SIMON

My fate!

OSCAR GHOST CHORUS

**Yes, of course.
Your brilliance exceeds...**

SIR SIMON

My brilliance exceeds...

OSCAR

All other ghosts.

SIR SIMON

I have an image to keep.

OSCAR

It's true, you're the master.

SIR SIMON, OSCAR, GHOST CHORUS

A phantom complete.

GHOST CHORUS

So he keeps a tight schedule,

SIR SIMON

It works well I've found.

OSCAR

**He must stay on task.
Or he will lose ground.**

SIR SIMON

**From the window I gibber
From the first and third
Wednesday of each month,
I'll not be deterred, be deterred, be deterred.**

GHOST CHORUS (S/A)
**Cursed with this workload
leaves no time to sleep.**

GHOST CHORUS (T/B)
**Cursed. Work.
No sleep.**

SIR SIMON

I wander the halls so the floorboards will creeeeaaaakkkk.

OSCAR –Oh, you're giving me the chills Simon. Do it one more time!

SIR SIMON

So the floorboards will... *(On a downward glissando.)* ...creeeeaaaakkkk!

OSCAR – (Giggling.) Stooopppp!

SIR SIMON

I am wicked as hell, debauched and scarred.

SIR SIMON,
I'm keeping up appearances!

OSCAR
You're keeping up appearances!

SIR SIMON – [Surveying his etching work.] It looks eerie, ominous...yes, perfect. Well done. Our game is afoot.

OSCAR – To our little charade! [The GHOST giggle.]

[Lights to black except a spot on the etching on the mantel. The etching is dismally crooked and disproportionate.]

[Song: **THE PROMISE II**]

VOICES FROM OFFSTAGE *(like a heavenly chorus)*

**When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin,
When the barren almond bears,
And a little child gives away its tears,
Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville.**

ACT I
Scene 5

The Canterville Chase, the Garden.

[VIRGINIA paints the garden landscape as CECIL admires her. The dead almond tree is part of the picture.]

VIRGINIA – Why is the almond tree dead? I don't see how it has anything to do with a murder.

CECIL – I don't care much for history, but I do seem to remember that after Sir Simon killed his poor wife, her brothers thought that adding a dead almond tree as part of the curse was a wonderful touch. Twisted, awful really.

VIRGINIA – It is awful. And to think her blood is in our sitting room. Are you sure don't know anything more?

CECIL – It's a family secret. I can't tell.

VIRGINIA – Oh do tell.

CECIL – [Leaning towards her longingly.] I hear she was very, very beautiful.

VIRGINIA – You're not very subtle are you? The art of romance consists not of brazen declarations you know. You'll have to try to be more humble in your approach if you're interested in attracting my attentions.

CECIL – Then you're interested?

VIRGINIA – I didn't say that. You're a good looking boy, Cecil, [CECIL winces.] who could use some help with his wardrobe, but that's nothing that couldn't be fixed.

CECIL – I'll change, I wear my Sunday tweed, if that's what you want.

VIRGINIA – Did I mention you were a bit naïve? [He blushes.]

CECIL – You must have a lot of young men vying for your attention.

VIRGINIA – Sure, I suppose...I'm rather forward for fifteen you know. [Embarrassed pause.] Actually, that's not altogether true. I'm afraid, Cecil, that boys don't really notice me. I've never even had a boyfriend. Hardly anyone notices me for that matter, not even my own mother. The twins are enough to make anyone lose their mind. And father is always so busy with "sharing his gift for business" to those "less fortunate" that he rarely listens to anything I have to say.

CECIL – What about your brother...he seems like a nice chap.

VIRGINIA – Oh Washington, if he's not flirting with a girl he's flirting with himself in the mirror.

CECIL – Well besides thinking you're the most beautiful creature to walk this earth...I also think you're rather smart...and definitely determined. I admire you.

VIRGINIA – [Smiling.] Really?

[Song: **ANYTHING**]

VIRGINIA

**I do lots of thinking
My life is plotted out.
I've got a million plans
I could tell you all about.**

VIRGINIA – (spoken.) For example...

VIRGINIA

**I've got lands to visit
Like Egypt and Spain,
I want to see the desert sky
And the jungle when it rains.**

**I've got no one to dream with
I've got no one to tell
All the things I want to do...
To taste, to touch and smell.**

**I simply want to have a friend
Who listens when I speak.**

CECIL

**I'd stand here all day
I'd listen all night.
I'd be the one to dream with you
Be anything you'd like.**

VIRGINIA

**I want to be the first girl
To be the President
I want to make my mark somehow
To leave my little "dent".**

CECIL – Of course, why not!

VIRGINIA

**I'll be a famous artist
Like Klimt or Chagall.
I'll play a Mozart symphony
At the Royal Albert Hall.**

**I've got no one to dream with
I've got no one to tell
All the things I want to do...
To taste, to touch and smell.**

**I simply want to have a friend
Who listens when I speak.**

CECIL

**I'd stand here all day
I'd listen all night.
I'll be the one to dream with you
Be anything you'd like.**

VIRGINIA & CECIL

**I've got no one to dream with
I've got no one to tell
All the things I want to do...
To taste, to touch and smell.**

VIRGINIA

I simply want to have a friend

CECIL

**Who listens when you speak.
I'd stand here all day**

VIRGINIA

I'd listen all night.

VIRGINIA & CECIL

I'd be the one to dream with you.

VIRGINIA

Be the one to dream with you.

VIRGINIA & CECIL

Be anything, yes anything.

Be anything you'd like.

[CECIL tries to steal a kiss, but is stopped by VIRGINIA.]

VIRGINIA – Thanks for listening Cecil. I'm actually glad we met.

CECIL – You'll meet me then tomorrow?

VIRGINIA – [Innocently.] Sure.

CECIL – Extraordinary! I'll be the dashing young gentleman in tweed!

ACT I
Scene 6

The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.

[Underscore: **Out Damn Spot.**]

[WASHINGTON enters the empty parlor and notices the bloodstain is back. At first he is aghast, he looks around, and then he becomes curious and begins to inspect the stain at length. Befuddled, he heads to the cabinet where he takes out the Pinkerton's Stain Remover and reapplies it. The stain disappears much to his delight. Happily, but still a little confused, WASHINGTON exits.]

ACT I
Scene 7

The Canterville Chase, Virginia's Bedroom.

[VIRGINIA is in her nightgown, brushing out her hair. MRS. UMNEY is turning down her bed. The room is lit with candles. A storm rages in the background, with lots of wind-howling and house-groaning.]

VIRGINIA – Did you hear that? It sounds like a woman crying. I heard it in the parlor when we arrived. So sad.

MRS. UMNEY – 'Tis Lady Eleanor. This was her room, may she rest in peace.

[They look at ELEANOR's portrait.]

VIRGINIA – Mrs. Umney, what is this horrible etching in the mantle? It's really quite poorly done.

MRS. UMNEY – Saints alive, I never noticed it. [Putting on glasses to read and reads dramatically:] Let's see...

*When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin,
When the barren almond bears,
And a little child gives away its tears,
Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville.*

VIRGINIA – How curious. It's really quite a lovely poem.

MRS. UMNEY – Lovely, huh? I would beware of what goes on in this house miss. I've already seen things with my own eyes that would make your hair stand on end. [Pointing to the portrait.] Look at the uncanny resemblance! [In a whisper.] If he, Sir Simon, should ever appear, stand your ground miss. Don't let him scare you.

VIRGINIA – You're such a drama queen Mrs. Umney. [MRS. UMNEY reacts.] Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

MRS. UMNEY – Yes, well I'm placing an extra blanket at the foot of your bed, Miss. These upper rooms can get terribly drafty in storms like we're having tonight. And this "sleeping" hat will keep you extra warm. [She puts the ruffled white hat on VIRGINIA. It happens to match exactly the hat ELEANOR wears in her portrait.] Would you like me to douse the lights?

VIRGINIA – Thank you. Goodnight Mrs. Umney. I'm really glad you're here with us.

MRS. UMNEY – So am I, child. So am I. Goodnight dear, and... *don't*...be afraid. [Under her breath.] This is too, too exciting.

[MRS. UMNEY exits.]

[VIRGINIA tries to sleep but there is an incessant tapping sound at her window. She opens her window and looks out.]

VIRGINIA – Who's down there? Cecil, is that you? What are you doing out here this late at night and in such a storm.

CECIL – I missed you. I wanted to talk.

VIRGINIA – Then come in the morning like a civilized person.

CECIL – I couldn't wait.

VIRGINIA – Well don't stand down there, come in. But be quiet about it, I don't want to be in trouble. Use the trellis to...oh hello, that was fast.

CECIL – You like it. [He spins for her.] Just for you. [He's wearing his tweeds. Finally noticing her hat.] Nice hat!

VIRGINIA – You are impetuous aren't you...and soaking wet! [Pause.] So what did you want to talk about?

CECIL – [Awkward now.] I only wanted to tell you goodnight.

VIRGINIA – That's all?

CECIL – And be safe. There is a ghost. I've seen him.

VIRGINIA – Yes, I know. I'll be sure to call you if I see him.

CECIL – You will? I mean...extraordinary.

[The door opens. MRS. OTIS looms in the doorway.]

MRS. OTIS – Who are you talking to young woman, it's past your...Cecil.

CECIL – Good evening ma'am. I wanted to say goodnight to your daughter and I...

MRS. OTIS – Yes, well that's lovely, but I think it's time to move along.

[CECIL walks by and out the door. MR. OTIS pops his head in.]

MR. OTIS – [to VIRGINIA.] Nice hat. [to MRS. OTIS.] Was that the Canterville boy? How in the dickens did he get in here...I don't remember...

MRS. OTIS – (interrupting her husband.) That's enough everyone. A poor decision has been made, we needn't discuss it further. Lights out young lady.

[VIRGINIA sits on her bed.]

[Song: **When You're Fifteen**]

VIRGINIA
When you're fifteen
Everything matters
When you're caught in between

And you feel like a kid and grown-up.

**When you're fifteen
Life is confusing.
And it's just when you think
That you've figured out things
You start over.**

**And I wish I could scream
At the top of my lungs.
Is there anyone there
Who knows what it's like?
Who knows how it feels...
To be me.**

[A light comes up on CECIL is walking home in the rain.]

CECIL
**When you're fifteen
It's hard to reason
When you feel all alone
But you know there are people around you.**

**I've been fifteen
It feels like forever
Wonder if life will be any clearer for me
When I'm sixteen.**

CECIL & VIRGINIA
**And I wish I could scream
At the top of my lungs.
Is there anyone there
Who knows what it's like?
Who knows how it feels...
To be me.**

CECIL
To be me.

VIRGINIA
When you're fifteen.

[SIR SIMON has entered unbeknownst to VIRGINIA.]

SIR SIMON – Beware! Flee from this place! Beware ye—[looking right at her for the first time, then Eleanor’s portrait and back again, he draws back in horror] Eleanor! No, how have you—It can’t be!

VIRGINIA – My name is not Eleanor. It’s Virginia.

SIR SIMON – But the hat...the...

[Long pause as SIR SIMON tries to regain his bearings.]

VIRGINIA – And I assume you must be Sir Simon de Canterville. You know, it is very rude to just stand there gaping. The least you could have done is introduce yourself.

SIR SIMON – But you look—[regaining some of his composure] How dare you address me. I am a ghost. I’ve come here to terrify you witless.

VIRGINIA – Well, you’ll just have to do better. We Otises may not be as faint of heart as some of those you may have encountered before.

SIR SIMON – You mean, you’re not even a little afraid?

VIRGINIA – Well, it’s hard to be afraid of a ghost that is startled by you. If you’ll pardon the expression, you look as if you’ve seen a ghost.

SIR SIMON – Don’t be ironical, Miss. Irony is very unattractive in a young lady. If you must know, you just startled me because you bear a striking resemblance to my wife. The deceased Lady Eleanor de Canterville.

VIRGINIA – Why did you kill her? You must have been very much in love to get married.

SIR SIMON – We were in love, but I — Never mind! I’ll not talk of this any more! [Turns to go, but turns back.] I’m leaving now, but I’ll be back later tonight. Maybe I’ll leave you alone for the moment; you’ve quite put me off my stride. But after I freshen up a bit and change costume, then the rest of your family is really in for it! You wait and see.

[SIR SIMON slams the door of the bedroom running into MRS. UMNEY who has been listening.]

MRS. UMNEY – I beg your pardon!

[SIR SIMON storms off. Lights.]

ACT I
Scene 8

The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor

[There is a big, big bang. The house shakes.]

MR. OTIS – [Running in to the parlor.] What the hell?

[MRS. OTIS and MRS. UMNEY come running into the parlor.]

MRS. UMNEY – [Peering out the window.] Saints and heaven above.

MRS. OTIS – [Also running into the parlor.] Did you hear that?

[VIRGINIA and WASHINGTON also enter.]

MR. OTIS – Could you please tell me what in tarnation is going on out there. I very clearly remember never ordering any demolition.

MRS. UMNEY – Saints and heaven above, I can hardly believe my own eyes.

[Everyone rushes to the window.]

MRS. OTIS – [Worried.] Oh dear it's the... [She sees that they are alive, becomes mad.] Stars and Stripes.

VIRGINIA – Look, the almond tree!

WASHINGTON – Well, I'll be.

[They continue to gaze out the window as LEWIS and CLARK enter excitedly, a bit blackened and laughing.]

LEWIS – Did you see that?

CLARK – Poooooffffff!

MRS. OTIS – [Very sternly] Hiram, speak to your sons this very instant.

MR. OTIS – [Gives it some thought.] Good work sons, I detested that damned tree. You saved me approximately...[begins computing in his head]

WASHINGTON – One hundred, ten pounds father.

MR. OTIS – Indeed.

MRS. UMNEY – Gone.

MRS. OTIS – [Glaring at MR. OTIS.] Go to your room boys...NOW! [MRS. UMNEY begins to leave behind twins.] Mrs. Umney, I need to speak with you.

MRS. UMNEY – Yes, mum?

MRS. OTIS – According to your very dramatic story, Eleanor, wife of supposed ghost, was killed on this very spot, correct?

MRS. UMNEY – Yes.

MRS. OTIS – Which apparently is why there was a red stain on my floor.

MRS. UMNEY – Yes.

MRS. OTIS – It's now blue.

[WASHINGTON approaches the spot to observe.]

MRS. UMNEY – Mum?

WASHINGTON – Well, I'll be. It's a distinct cobalt blue.

VIRGINIA – Mom, I've got something to tell you. [She's not listening.] Mother...Sir Simon, the ghost, was in my room last night. Did you hear me mother, *he* was in my...

MRS. OTIS – Yes dear, we're all aware that boy Cecil was in your room last night. This is neither the time or place...

WASHINGTON – Wait, did you say...

WASHINGTON/MR. OTIS – ..the ghost?

[MRS. UMNEY faints.]

MRS. OTIS – What?

ACT I
Scene 9

In the bowels of Canterville Chase, Sir Simon's chamber.

[SIR SIMON is reading a large book, which is clearly falling apart. OSCAR enters out of breath.]

SIR SIMON – That took far too long. I expect your immediate attention when I call.

OSCAR – Yes, my lord. These days, a ghost can be pulled many ways you know. [Sees that he is reading.] More research?

SIR SIMON – Yes. As you may already know, I had a bit of run in with the girl.

OSCAR – The young, innocent girl, my lord?

SIR SIMON – No, the young, impetuous girl.

OSCAR – Ah indeed sir.

SIR SIMON – Who looked far too much like my Eleanor. Did you know that?

OSCAR – No sir, I hadn't noticed.

SIR SIMON – All together it was hardly what I expected...young girls are always the easiest scare, the easiest way to begin any "haunt campaign" and yet it failed...miserably.

OSCAR – [Trying not to smile.] Then perhaps you didn't notice that you applied blue this morning while trying to keep up your spot.

SIR SIMON – What was I supposed to do? The damned girl only had one tube of red paint and I've already used it all up. Blue seemed entirely appropriate. What would those impossible Americans know about blue blood anyway?

OSCAR – Quite right sir, I hadn't thought of that.

SIR SIMON – Exactly. Which leads me to this. [Refers to book.] I have confirmed that the label "American" does indeed mean that there is an America somewhere that they come from.

OSCAR – I hadn't realized that was still a matter of debate.

SIR SIMON – I had to make sure. I was beginning to think that "American" was the medical jargon for some kind of mental defect.

OSCAR – Yes, I can see why.

SIR SIMON – Well, according to this book, it turns out that America is a place, and that it is not a part of England at all. No, it's true. In fact, it is all the way across the ocean. [Reads from a dusty book:] “A major North American colony controlled mostly by His Majesty the King of England. Rich in--”

OSCAR – Sir, how old is that book?

SIR SIMON – Why? Does it matter?

OSCAR – I think this one is a little more current, my Lord.

SIR SIMON – Very well. [Looking up...] America, America, A, A... Ah, here. See “United States.” Good enough. United, United... [Reads:] “The United States declared its independence on July 4, 1776 and subsequently defeated a tyrannous British rule. The new nation elected its first president, Mr. George Washington...” [Outraged.] Washington? You mean that impudent pustule is the president-person of this Americaland?

OSCAR – Possible, my Lord. Though it is also likely that he is simply named after George Washington, seeing as how George Washington would be nearly 200 years old by now, and young Washington upstairs can't be more than 17.

SIR SIMON – Ah, yes. I see your point. Still, “*tyrannous* British rule”? What is this nonsense? Oh, Oscar, this is much worse than I had feared. I'm feeling terribly patriotic. Run and fetch a Union Jack to pin to the wall.

[OSCAR runs off. He returns with a British flag and affixes it to the wall.]

SIR SIMON – This is not simply a matter of haunting some vulgar commoners, this is a matter of national pride. I must teach these upstarts a lesson on behalf of the aristocracy; on behalf of the King himself!

[Song: **They Won't Dare**]

SIR SIMON

**It's worse, quite worse
Much worse than I thought.
They turned against Britain
Their royal blood fought.**

**How could they?
So pompous to think they'd succeed.
How selfish seceding,
And they call themselves free?**

**Now these same heathens
Bring slander and shame.
They taunt me, then blame be
For wanting to scare.
I say, “fare thee well”
They won’t last for long.
No, not now...
They won’t dare.**

[The music continues as underscore.]

SIR SIMON – [About to start the second verse of the song when he has an epiphany.]
You know Oscar, the time has arrived, for Sir Simon de Canterville to tread the boards
again! Costume! Make-up!

OSCAR – [jumps up and applauds] Huzzah! Sir Simon, this is always so exciting!

SIR SIMON – Ye Otis Family, if only you knew what you had in store this dark and
dastardly night of nights!

OSCAR – What will it be tonight, my Lord? [Producing a costume.] A revival of “Martin
the Manic, or the Masked Mystery”? [Almost like he’s reading from a catalogue.] The
insane look is back this season! [Produces a largely leather ensemble with dangling,
broken straps from a burst straight jacket, complimented by a gnarled walking staff, and
topped off with a hauntingly disturbing mask made from filthy, rotting bandages.]

SIR SIMON – Yes, I have always been partial to the part of Martin. But, no, I don’t think
he’s right as an opener. I need to build to something. I am thinking simpler to start off.

OSCAR – As minimalist costuming goes, there is none more gruesomely Spartan than
that of “Dumb Daniel, or the Suicide’s Skeleton.” [Producing another costume—a moth-
ridden winding sheet with white, bleached bones, and one rolling eyeball.]

SIR SIMON – I’m thinking simpler still. I thought I’d open tonight with “Manacled
Michael, or the Chained Churchman.”

OSCAR – A feast for the ears, as well as the eyes! [And another costume—rusted
chains, priestly garb. OSCAR holds it up to SIR SIMON.] I am in the presence of
genius.

SIR SIMON – Thank you, Oscar. You are too kind. Now help me into costume, please.
Tonight, I pull out all the stops! This will be my finest performance.

OSCAR – And do you think, perhaps, a hat this time, my Lord?

SIR SIMON – I think not, but let’s do try it with a cape?

OSCAR – Brilliant! I love it!

[A musical flourish as SIR SIMON stands proudly costumed.]

SIR SIMON

It’s worse.

OSCAR

Quite worse.

SIR SIMON

Much worse than I thought.

No blood ties, no lineage

Have these foreigners got.

Such curses, condemn them!

They must leave and fast.

SIR SIMON & OSCAR

It’s final, no questions

This horror can’t last.

OSCAR

Now these same heathens

Bring slander and shame.

They taunt me, then blame me

For wanting to scare.

I say, “fare thee well”

They won’t last for long.

No, not now...

They won’t dare.

SIR SIMON & OSCAR

No, not now...

They won’t dare!

ACT I
Scene 10

The Canterville Chase, the Main Parlor.

[The phone rings. A light comes up on WASHINGTON as he answers the phone.]

WASHINGTON – Hello? Oh hello Cecil. Yes, of course she’s here. You’d like to talk with her? Well, what if she doesn’t want to speak with you? [Listens.] Uh, uh. [Listens.] I think you should be a little more careful [VIRGINIA has entered and hears the conversation. She is aghast. Another light comes up on CECIL.]

VIRGINIA – Washington!

WASHINGTON – It’s your boyfriend. [CECIL jumps up in victory.]

VIRGINIA – Hello?

CECIL – Virginia?

VIRGINIA – Hi.

CECIL – How are you?

VIRGINIA – I’m fine. [Long pause.] Did you call for a reason?

CECIL – I just wanted to tell you goodnight.

VIRGINIA – Goodnight Cecil.

CECIL – I’ll dream of you.

VIRGINIA – Don’t push it Cecil. [Another pause.] Goodnight. [She hangs up the phone, lights down on CECIL.]

[WASHINGTON smirks as VIRGINIA exits, trying not to notice him. Lights.]

ACT I
Scene 11

In the bowels of the Canterville Chase.

[The GHOSTS are sitting around waiting, they seem rather bored and put out. OSCAR enters with gusto, changing the mood.]

OSCAR – Are we ready? [He pulls on a cord that hangs from seemingly nowhere and a movie screen flies down.] Lights please. Music.

[The screen is lit with black and white film footage. The following scene takes place on screen (filmed) or behind a screen (live) still black and white and stilted like an old silent movie.]

Movie Location: The Canterville Chase, Main Parlor.

[SIR SIMON enters in full regal costume, dragging his chains, and carrying a conductor's baton.]

[Underscore: **Scare Suite**]

[SIR SIMON creates a raucous by “conducting” inanimate objects: furniture slides, pictures shift on the wall, drawers on the cabinets open and close and two suits of armor dance—all in rhythm with the music (“Movin’ It” theme). He keeps adding more and more elements, eventually pointing to an old piano, which starts playing itself.]

FORMER MAID – [Watching.] I will say I do love that particular trick of his.

[SIR SIMON waves his button furiously and then comes to a halt. The music stops, he waits in silent anticipation.]

FORMER COOK – The lou...

OTHER GHOSTS – Ssh!

OSCAR – Here comes the American. Notice the angle I catch him in.

[After what seems to be the longest minute ever, MR. OTIS pokes his head out from behind his bedroom door. [Close up on him.]

MR. OTIS – Hello? Hello down there...[Walking out in his robe.] Hello?

CHORUS (*off stage*)

The screams of the night are sure to ignite--

MR. OTIS – Oh, dear me. [running into SIR SIMON] Excuse me, sir. [Pause.]

OSCAR – Don't you love the camerawork?

COOK – Love the score.

MR. OTIS – Who are you?

SIR SIMON – [Underscored by “Keeping up Appearances” theme.] I am the ghost of Sir Simon de Canterville, terror of the British Isles! Fiend from the Pit, who has returned—

MR. OTIS – The ghost? I see. Well, while I am not yet completely willing to admit to your existence, I would like to remind you that some in this household are trying to get some sleep.

FORMER GARDNER – [With gusto.] You tell him!

SIR SIMON – I am the ghost of Sir Simon de Canterville! [He rattles his chains underscored by “The Masked Waltz” theme.]

MR. OTIS – My dear sir, I really must insist on your oiling those chains, and have brought you for that purpose a small bottle of Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator. [He lays it on a table and closes the door.]

[SIR SIMON stands dumbfounded for several seconds. In a rage he lets out a gruesome shriek.]

CHORUS (*off stage*)

The screams of the night are sure to ignite your fear.

[SIR SIMON throttles back to throw the bottle, but stops. He reads the back of the bottle again. He opens it up and applies it to his chains. He sits and begins to cough wretchedly. Amidst his cough attack, MRS. OTIS has come unexpectedly out of the bedroom.]

MRS OTIS – The whiskey is on the first shelf in the mahogany cabinet...I won't tell a soul. [She walks out leaving him dumbfounded. He begins pacing back and forth, mumbling, underscored by “Movin’ It” theme.]

FORMER COOK – That was precious.

FORMER PRIEST – Oh I like her. I like her a lot!

[VIRGINIA enters.]

VIRGINIA – Oh you again. Look at you a wreck, a cheat and a liar. [SIR SIMON can't even respond.] You stole *all* of my paints. What do you suppose I am to do now?

[All of the sudden there is a large blast underscored by “The Masked Waltz” theme. SIR SIMON, scared witless, hides behind the armor. An eerie ghost sound is heard in the background.]

[The two twins covered by white pillow cases and a white sheet billowing from behind race down the stairway. SIR SIMON bolts for the door. The TWINS emerge from their “costume” laughing uncontrollably, followed by MR. and MRS. OTIS.]

LEWIS – We got'em!

CLARK – Pow! [Discordant chord.]

CHORUS

Fear.

LEWIS – Pow! [Discordant chord.]

CHORUS

Fear.

LEWIS & CLARK – Pow! [Discordant chord and tremolo.]

CHORUS

Fear.

[THE GHOSTS laugh hysterically.]

VIRGINIA – You're evil little boys.

LEWIS & CLARK – We scared the ghost. We scared the ghost.

MRS. OTIS – Boys! [Beat.] I need a drink.

FORMER MAID – Quick, I hear him coming. Sshh!

[OSCAR pulls on the cord, the screen flies away. Lights up. The FORMER MAID opens the door and SIR SIMON comes running in.]

SIR SIMON – [Huffing and puffing.] I flatly refuse to ever venture out there ever again. Ever!

OSCAR – I've simply never heard you like this before, Sir Simon. To allow a few ungrateful mortals to get you into such a state...and commoners, no less.

SIR SIMON – I have never, in all my four hundred years of haunting this Chase, had such a reception as the one I received tonight.

OSCAR – Quite right, my Lord. Still, if you were to simply give up, how would they ever learn their place?

SIR SIMON – Give up? I am a knighted lord of the English gentry! I have never, nor would I ever, *give up*. I refuse to cast my pearls before swine, Oscar. I WILL NOT GO UNAPPRECIATED! If they are so poorly bred so as not to know how to properly treat a noble English ghost, then I shall simply refuse them the honor of my poltergeist.

OSCAR – [Disapproving.] Oh, sir.

SIR SIMON – I was attacked by pillow-wielding hooligans while going about my ghastly duties in MY OWN HOME. It is simply not to be borne.

OSCAR – Sir Simon, this is hardly the first time you’ve faced an unfriendly audience. Your career remains unblemished, and now—now?—you are willing to hang up your sheets and your chains because of some uppity Americans who don’t know their place?

[Song: **Four Hundred Years**]

OSCAR
**Four hundred years,
An impeccable career
This is sure to be your winning year.
And you doubt,
Yes you doubt.**

SIR SIMON
**For good reason
I’m worn out.**

OSCAR
**Don’t be so lazy.
You’re still the best.**

SIR SIMON
Me?

OSCAR
**It’s a test.
Don’t give up now.
Invest yourself!**

**Do you remember the butler in the closet he died?
While your green hand was tapping, he committed suicide.
Or how about the Duchess who lay sick in her bed?
When she saw in her mirror that your face was turning red,**

OSCAR & SIR SIMON
Blood red!

OSCAR
**Four hundred years
Without one small defeat.
This hurrah could clinch your**

Winning streak.

**And you doubt
Still you doubt.**

SIR SIMON
**Give it up.
Count me out!**

OSCAR
**You mustn't give up
You're young, you're spry.**

SIR SIMON OSCAR
Please. Please?

OSCAR
**One more try?
This is your chance
To terrify!**

**Do you remember the madam who awoke with a fright.
When she saw you reading from her diary one night.**

SIR SIMON
In just my mere scanties, my skeletal frame.

OSCAR
She turned to the church.

SIR SIMON & OSCAR
She was never quite the same....again.

GHOST CHORUS
**Ev'ry victim
Scared to death.
Doomed to breathe their last breath.
Male or female
Old or young
All just a song unsung.**

**“Bloodsucker of Bexley Moor, Gaunt Gibeon.”
The “Strangled Babe of Sunny Spain.”**

OSCAR
**How about the
“Bloodsucker”?**

(The GHOST CHORUS parade by wearing or presenting costumes, again as if in a fashion show. OSCAR announces them over the singing.)

OSCAR – “The Strangled Babe”, ladies and gentlemen...fashion to die for.

(Spanish-style dance interlude.)

OSCAR
Years of practice.

SIR SIMON
Time to spare.

GHOST CHORUS
Always a grand affair.

OSCAR
All your vict'ries.

SIR SIMON
Now a waste.

OSCAR
(Pointing to more costumes.)
You have such exquisite taste!

CHORUS
Red Ruben of German fame.
Master of fear.
The Royal Sheik from Mozambique's here!

OSCAR – The “Royal Sheik”...so colorful, sexy, unique...trés chic!

(Middle Eastern-style dance interlude. SIR SIMON is beginning to get swallowed up in the excitement, his doubt slowly fading away.)

[The music continues as underscore, like background noise. Lights fade to blue on the festivities. MR. OTIS enters the Main Parlor with candles. He is in his pajamas and looks incredibly tired. MRS. OTIS enters next, also in her bathrobe.]

MR. OTIS – It's ridiculous. How does anyone expect me to sleep with that racket going on?

MRS. OTIS – It's probably the neighbors...a little reveling darling. I think we should revel. [Tries to come on to him but without avail.]

MR. OTIS – Dear, we live at least 25 miles from our nearest neighbors. [Put out.] I'm afraid it may be the ghost. I may be willing to believe outright in his existence. [Pulls out a legal pad.]

[WASHINGTON enters, obviously in from a night out.]

MRS. OTIS – Hello darling.

WASHINGTON – Didn't think you'd be up.

MRS. OTIS – There's a racket going on. Your father is very put out.

MR. OTIS – [Furiously writing.] If he thinks he can pull the wool over our eyes...he's in for a surprise! I don't care how long he's been around...I don't care if he's been here four hundred years...it is high time he pay for being a menace. How can he expect me to help his fellow countryman if I can't even get some shut-eye? [MR. OTIS slaps down the slip of paper on the table in plain sight.]

WASHINGTON – What's that?

MR. OTIS – You shall see my boy. A matter of real estate. Now... [He fumbles through drawer.] let's... [Still fumbling.] go... [He finally finds a set of ear plugs.] ...to bed. [He exits.]

MRS. OTIS – You're father's right, it's late.

WASHINGTON – Goodnight. [She begins to exit.] Wait, mother. Did you see this? [He has noticed the blood spot.] I'll be damned, it's yellow. A yellow blood spot.

[Black out on MRS. OTIS and WASHINGTON. Lights back up on the GHOSTS.]

GHOST CHORUS, SIR SIMON, & OSCAR

(A grand chorus line.)

**Four hundred years,
It's a past for which we're proud.
An unprecedented...**

GHOST CHORUS & OSCAR

Wow!

OSCAR

**And yet you doubt!
Cut it out!**

SIR SIMON

**You've a point.
I'm the lout
For giving up
You're right.**

I'm the best.

OSCAR

Hands down the best.

SIR SIMON & OSCAR

Let's give 'em hell!

OSCAR

Those poor Americans.

GHOST CHORUS

Those poor Americans.

SIR SIMON

Those poor Americans.

GHOST CHORUS

Those poor Americans.

[The OTIS family appears in pools of light as if from each of their bedrooms. They are “physically” separate from the GHOSTS.]

OTIS FAMILY

We're proud Americans.

SIR SIMON, OSCAR, GHOST CHORUS OTIS FAMILY
Those *poor* Americans... ***Proud* Americans...**

SIR SIMON – Thank you, Oscar.

OSCAR – Always a pleasure!

MR. OTIS –The first rule of business, “always get a full night of sleep”. [He inserts earplugs.]

ALL

Tonight!

[A clap of thunder and blast of wind.]

END OF ACT I