

B L O O M S B U R Y
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Bloomsbury Methuen Drama
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Third edition

Version in two acts

The Play That Goes Wrong

FROM AN ORIGINAL CONCEPT BY HENRY LEWIS

Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields

The Play that Goes Wrong was first presented under the title *The Murder Before Christmas* on 4 December 2012 at the Old Red Lion Theatre in Angel, Islington, with the following cast:

Chris Henry Shields

Jonathan Stephen Leask

Robert Henry Lewis

Dennis Jonathan Sayer

Sandra Charlie Russell

Max Dave Hearn

Annie Nancy Wallinger

Trevor Rob Falconer

The production then extended under its new title *The Play that Goes Wrong*, opening on 12 March 2013 at the same venue with the following cast changes:

Jonathan Henry Lewis

Robert Greg Tannahil

Sandra Lotti Maddox

The production then transferred to Trafalgar Studios, opening on 30 April 2013 with the following cast changes:

Jonathan Joshua Elliott

Robert Henry Lewis

The production extended at Trafalgar Studios with the following cast change:

Jonathan Greg Tannahil

The Trafalgar Studios production was produced by Old Red Lion Theatre and Mischief Theatre with the following production team:

Director Mark Bell

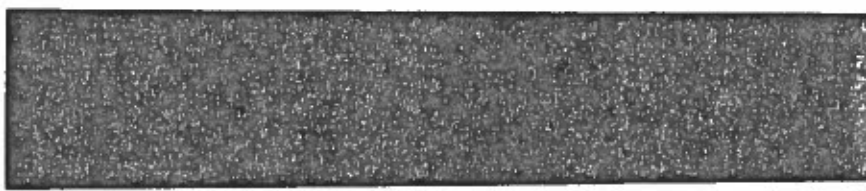
Designer Henry Lewis

Lighting Designer Scott Pryce-Jones

Costume Designer Bryony Myers

Stage Manager Thomas Platt

General Manager Nicholas Thompson



The Play That Goes Wrong



Characters

in order of appearance

Annie, the company's stage manager, Lancashire accent
Stage Crew, the Cornley Polytechnic stage crew
Trevor, the company's lighting and sound operator
Chris, head of the drama society, director of the play and plays

Jonathan, plays 'Charles Haversham'
Robert, plays 'Thomas Colleymoore'
Dennis, plays 'Perkins'
Max, plays 'Cecil Haversham' and 'Arthur'
Sandra, plays 'Florence Colleymoore'

The action takes place on the opening night of the Cornley
Polytechnic Drama Society's production of the murder
mystery play *Murder at Haversham Manor*, written by Susie
H.K. Brideswell.

CHARACTERS IN THE MURDER MYSTERY PLAY

Charles Haversham, deceased
Thomas Colleymoore, Charles' old school friend
Perkins, Charles' butler
Cecil Haversham, Charles' brother
Florence Colleymoore, Charles' fiancée and Thomas' sister
Inspector Carter, an esteemed local inspector
Arthur, the gardener at Haversham Manor
The action takes place in Charles' private rooms at Haversham
Manor on the evening of Charles and Florence's engagement
party. Winter 1922.

Two members of Stage Crew search the stalls and circle for a missing Duran Duran CD with torches. Trevor stands in the stalls; on his radio he tells two members of the audience that they are sitting beneath a faulty stage light.

House music drops to a lower level and the house lights dim.

Trevor Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this evening's performance of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Can I kindly request that you switch off your mobile telephones and other electronic devices and please note that back, please hand it to one of the ushers at the end of the performance. Enjoy the show.

House lights go fully out. Silence.

Trevor (over the speakers) Alright, stand by for Act One, note for the cast the dog is still missing, we need to find him before his entrance . . .

Chris Trevor! Trevor!

Sound cuts off. Annie still hasn't finished the mantelpiece. Chris enters from around the back of the flats in the darkness.

Chris Leave it. Just leave it.

Annie We need it . . .

Chris We haven't got time.

Annie hurries off behind the flat, taking the mantelpiece and tools with her. Spotlight comes up and cuts off Chris' head.

Chris Good evening, ladies . . .

He steps into it.

. . . and gentlemen and welcome to the Gornley Polytechnic Society's spring production of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. I would like to personally welcome you to what will be my directorial debut, and my first production as head of the drama society.

(*Off*) Come along now, Charley, you've been in there for hours now. If I didn't know better I'd say you were having second thoughts about the wedding. (*Chuckles*) Hang it all, Charley, if you won't come out, I'll come in! (*Tries handle*)
 Damn it! He's locked the door. Hand me those keys, Perkins.

Dennis (*off*) Here they are, Mr Colleymoore.
 Robert (*off*) Thank you, Perkins. Let's get this door open.
 We're coming in, Charley! We're coming in!

He tries to open the door, but it won't budge.

(*Off*) There we are. We're in.

Robert and Dennis dart around the side of the set to enter.

Robert But, what's this? Charles, unconscious?

Dennis Asleep surely, Mr Colleymoore?

Robert Damn it, Perkins, I hope so.

Dennis I'll take his pulse.

He takes Jonathan's pulse on the side of his face.

Robert Blast! I knew something was wrong, it's so unlike Charles to disappear like this.

Dennis Sir, he's dead!

Lights snap to red. Dramatic musical spike. Lights snap back to general state.

Robert Dead? Damn it, Perkins, he can't be! He's my closest friend!

Dennis He's not breathing, sir, and there's no hint of a heartbeat!

Robert I'm dumbfounded! He was right as rain an hour ago.
He crosses in front of the chaise longue, treading on Jonathan's outstretched hand.

Robert Until today it seems.

Dennis Shall I telephone the police, sir?

Robert The police? They wouldn't make it out here for days in this snowstorm.

(Opens the curtains to reveal falling paper snowflakes. Closes the curtains again.)

I'll telephone Inspector Carter, he lives just the other side of the village. *(Picks up receiver)* He'll be here in next to no time.

He realises he already has the receiver.

Thank you, Perkins.

Dennis sits on Jonathan's leg

Robert Good evening. Give me Inspector Carter! . . . I know it's late! . . . Damn it, I don't care about the weather.

There's been a murder! Someone's murdered Charles Havertham!

Lights change to red. A musical spike plays again. The spike plays for far too long. Eventually the lights change back to general state.

Robert That's right!

Trevor *(over the speakers)* Sound effect error on cue four.

Robert Thank you. *(Hangs up)* He's on his way.

Dennis Inspector Carter?

Robert They say he's best damn inspector in the district, he'll crack this case and quick.

Dennis Very good, sir, and what shall I do?

Robert Lock every door, man!

He crosses the stage again. Dennis follows. Jonathan sharply moves his hand out of the way of Robert's foot. Once Robert has passed Jonathan replaces his hand. Dennis treats on it.

Dennis Right away, sir! Charles always kept scotch upstairs in his study.

He gets into the elevator carriage. The elevator rises to the upper level and Dennis emerges and walks over to the drinks trolley.
Max My brother had the finest collection of scotch in the county.

Robert Don't you think I know that? He was my best friend.
Max Well, he was my brother, Thomas.

Robert Hang it all, Charley dead.

Sandra I can't bear it.

Robert You aren't to leave my sight this evening, Florence.
Dennis opens the drinks cabinet and seizes a full bottle of scotch and holds it up.

Dennis Oh my god! He's drunk the whole bottle! *(He speaks into the voice-pipe.)* There's not a drop left!

Robert *(into the voice-pipe)* Hang it all, there . . .

Dennis realises and tries to get rid of the scotch, pouring it out into the voice-pipe. The scotch spurts out of Robert's end of the voice-pipe all over him. He quickly grabs the coal scuttle and catches the liquid inside.

Dennis There's not a drop left! *(The bottle is now empty.)*

Robert *(into the voice-pipe)* Hang it all! There'll be another in the cabinet!

Dennis produces the empty bottle he should have got the first time.

Dennis Yes, this one's full.

Robert This is horrifying! I mean, who on earth would have a motivation to murder Charles Haverstham?

Dennis puts it the bottle to a tray along with four glasses. **Dennis** descends in the elevator and walks past the window. As he passes the window, **Annie** leans through and exchanges the empty bottle for a full plastic bottle of white spirit, with a large flammable symbol on it. *He doesn't see the switch.*

Max Yes!

Sandra I can't believe Charles was sat in here alone, drinking, when he was supposed to be downstairs with us.

Max My brother wasn't as happy as he led people to believe. Underneath that cheerful mask lay a darker side to the man that many didn't know about.

Dennis It's true, his smile was often just a *(Reads from his hand)* façade. I was fortunate enough to be one of the only people he truly confided in. I've lost a real friend today.

Robert We all have, Perkins. Hang it all, I knew Charlie ever since school.

Sandra I don't know how I'll ever recover from this.

Robert You'll move back home with me. I'm your brother and I'll have it no other way.

Max Perkins is right, my brother was hiding a deep sense of melancholy and resentment. There's no doubt in my mind; it was suicide.

Dennis Suicide, Mr Haversham? How can you say that! Of course not; it's murder! Murder in the first degree!

Max Nonsense, the man was paranoid, jealous, and I can prove it! Perkins, hand me his journal from the mantelpiece!

Annie's hand reaches through the door and holds the journal in position above the fireplace. Dennis passes it to Max.

Max Why, look at the last entry. *(Not looking at the journal)* 'I fear Florence does not love me. The night of our engagement party; despair engulfs my soul.'

Sandra But I love Charles with all my heart!

Dennis takes the journal and returns it to the mantelpiece; it falls straight to the floor. Annie's hand reaches through the window to try and catch it but she misses.

Max As I said! Driven mad with paranoia and jealousy.

He holds out the tray and they all take a glass. Dennis removes the tray, knocking Jonathan on the head.

Max Let us raise a glass to the man we all loved: to Charles.

All Charles!

They all drink the white spirit. They gag, spit it out and recover. Max holds the white spirit in his mouth.

Chris Delicious.

Sandra Excellent.

Robert Lovely. That's a damn fine bottle, Perkins, what's the vintage?

Dennis *(reads the label)* Flammable and corrosive, sir.

Chris Lasten, you all must be distraught, but forgive me, the sooner I can begin my enquiries, the sooner we can all get to the bottom of this ghastly business.

Max spits out his white spirit. Chris deposits his notebook on the table.

Chris *(to Dennis)* If you'd be so kind as to bring the body up to the study, so I can examine it.

Dennis Yes, Inspector.

Robert I'll lend you a hand, Perkins.

Chris Then lock all the doors to the house and prepare this room, I'll conduct my enquiries down here afterwards.

Dennis Inspector.

Over the next few lines Dennis brings in a stretcher, Robert and Dennis lay the stretcher on the floor in front of the chaise longue and they then try to lift Jonathan up but can't. They roll him off the chaise longue on to the floor.

Max Any ideas on the cause of death, Inspector?

Chris Could be a number of things. Suffocation, strangulation, poison. Before fully examining the body I wouldn't like to say.

Sandra Cecil! We must tread carefully! It would be easy for the two of us to become implicated in Charles' death. If they find out about us, we'll be suspects!

Max You and I are having an affair, so what? It doesn't mean we killed him.

Sandra Of course not! But that's what the Inspector will think!

Max It's fine, we'll just carry on as if everything's just as it was.

He sits on the chaise longue and discovers a ledger under the cushions. In confusion he moves it under the chaise longue.

Max Except now you won't be forced to marry my beastly brother.

Sandra And soon we can be together and not keep secrets.

Max crosses to stage left.

Max But now, with my brother out of the picture, I must ask you one question.

He goes down on one knee. Lights shift to upstairs.

Dennis It's so strange to think of Charles being dead.

Jonathan opens the upstairs door and creeps in to take up his position: lead again.

Dennis He was such an influence on all our lives.

Robert It's almost as though he's still alive in the room with us.

Chris Seeing a cadaver for the first time can be unsettling, Perkins.

He sees Jonathan and jumps a little.

Chris I need you to pull yourself together and help me to dust his personal belongings for fingerprints.

Dennis Of course, Inspector.

Lights shift to upstairs.

Chris Thank you, gentlemen. Now we have looked over the body, perhaps you would take it out to the service quarters for the coroner to collect in the morning.

Dennis Of course, Inspector.

Robert and Dennis *lift the stretcher poles up and carry them out of the upstairs door.*

Chris Check all of the doors are locked, Perkins.

Dennis Inspector.

Chris And Colleymoore, perhaps you could fetch me a pencil and my notebook from downstairs.

Robert Naturally.

Jonathan *re-enters, sees them and exits again.*

Robert *(ad lib)* After you, Charles.

Robert and Dennis *exit. The lights shift to downstairs.*

Sandra Very well, I shall marry you.

Max Florence! Come into my arms.

Sandra I shall!

Max One embrace!

Sandra Oh Cecil! I love . . .

Robert *bursts in.*

Robert The Inspector requires a pencil! What on earth's going on in here?

Sandra Sorry, I felt flustered! Cecil was cooling my brow!

Robert Very well, if you'll excuse me, I have the pencil.

He sees that there is no pencil. In a panic he grabs the set of keys. He exits, closing the door.

Max Thank God he's gone! That man's such a nuisance!

Pause. Dennis is supposed to have burst in. They look at the door. Dennis is supposed to have burst in. They look at the door. Dennis is supposed to have burst in. They look at the door.

Dennis Sorry to interrupt, Mr Haversham, Miss Colleymore. I've come to prepare the room.

Max Thank you, Perkins. Put them on the mantelpiece.

Dennis walks to the mantelpiece with the candlesticks. He goes to put them down and **Annie** leans through the fireplace and holds the mantelpiece in position. A cartouche on the fireplace slips down and reveals **Annie's** face. She stares out at the others.

Max At last we're alone.

Annie continues to stare awkwardly from the fireplace.

Sandra Oh Cecil! Let's run away from here! Far away! Together!

Max Soon, my love, but we must be careful. We mustn't arouse suspicion.

Sandra Cecil, tell me, who do you think killed Charles?

Max There's no question in my mind, Florence, he was killed by your brother, Thomas Colleymore!

Sandra My brother! What a devil of a situation this is!

Jonathan suddenly bursts through the door holding a gun.

Jonathan Not so fast, Inspector!

Max and Sandra stare at **Jonathan**, who realises he has come in much too early and hurriedly exits.

Sandra But, why would Thomas want Charles dead?

Max Isn't it obvious? He was always bitter and possessive when it came to you! He didn't like the idea of his best friend marrying his sister. He saw you together at tonight's engagement party night and it drove him half mad and he snapped and killed Charles!

Dennis *remains sitting. He takes out a cigarette case.*

Dennis May I?

Chris Go ahead. How are you feeling, Perkins?

Dennis A little shaken sir, but I'll be fine.

He goes to light himself a cigarette, but burns his hand and drops the match into the coal scuttle, where it ignites the 'scotch'. Annie is alarmed by the fire and drops all of the props loudly on to the floor. Terrified, she rushes off into the wings.

Chris You were close with Charles Haversham?

Dennis Yes, sir, very close.

Chris You don't appear very upset by his death.

Dennis On the contrary, I've barely taken it in. Oh, he was such a kindly, charming man.

Chris It's true.

Dennis You met him?

Chris Once, briefly at the local police station, he . . .

Robert *runs out from behind the flats with a fire extinguisher and puts out the fire. He realises he's been seen.*

Robert *(ad libs)* Evening, Inspector. We require the coal in the library. *(Or similar)*

He withdraws, carrying the coal scuttle with him.

Chris Once, briefly at the local police station, he . . .

Robert *(off)* Of course they didn't notice.

Chris He came in as a consultant on a fraud case I was working on.

Dennis I see.

Chris How long have you been working at Haversham Manor?

Sandra Twenty-one.

Chris I'll make a note of that. (*Tries to make a note on the vase.*)
When were you and your fiancé due to be married?

Sandra In the new year.

Chris writes on vase again.

Chris When did you first meet?

Sandra Only seven months ago, but my brother has known him since school. He introduced us at a local gala and it was love at first sight. I knew from the very first moment I saw him that he was the man I wished to marry.

Chris Well, I think that's enough note-taking for now.

Sandra comes in a line too early.

Sandra When you love someone there's no such thing as rushing, Inspector.

Chris Did you ever think you were rushing into this marriage?

Sandra Why wouldn't I love him?

Chris Did you love him, then?

Sandra How could anyone have benefited?

Chris Can you think of anyone who might have . . .

benefited from your fiancé's death?

Sandra Cecil?

Chris Not even Cecil?

Sandra I wasn't having an affair! Don't raise your voice to me, Inspector!

Chris YOU WERE HAVING AN AFFAIR!

Sandra (*slaps Chris*) Don't tell me to calm down!

Chris Calm down, Miss Colleymore. (*Reacts to slap.*)

Max Florence! Where are you going?

Sandra *remains unconscious.*

Robert Come back here this instant!

Sandra *remains unconscious.*

Robert She's run off. I'll fetch her back. You stay here Cecil, I dare say the Inspector has some questions for you; you were Charles' brother after all.

He exits.

Max I'm sorry, Inspector, she's badly shaken, we all are. It's been quite a night and it's getting late.

Chris *(looks at clock)* Eleven o'clock already.

The clock says 5:30.

Max Well, Inspector? Do you have any questions for me?

Robert *peers through the curtains to see if Sandra is alright.*

Chris Oh yes, Mr Haversham, similar questions to those I

asked Miss Colleymoore.

Max Fire away Inspector, I'm at your service.

Chris Indeed. You and your brother, did you get along well?

Max Up and down. Since father died there was rather more strain on our relationship. It was no secret our father cared for Charles more than myself.

Chris I see. This is your father in the portrait, is it not?

It's the painting of a dog.

Max It is.

Chris He looks the spit of Charles, doesn't he?

Max He did ever since he was quite young.

Chris You were the junior by four years?

Chris The letter I found in Charles' pocket from Miss Colley-moore to yourself.

Max (*sinks*) You know about that?

Chris As, it seems, did Charles.

Robert, Annie and Jonathan have managed to get **Sandra** out of the window. **Annie** pulls the curtains shut.

Max Well . . . Bravo, Inspector! Very good. You've found out about Florence and I, but it proves nothing. We didn't have a thing to do with Charles' murder, but Thomas Colley-moore does. He's a dangerously unhinged man, with a devil of a temper and Florence is his sister. I've said it before and I shall say it again; he couldn't give his sister up to any man, much less his old school chum. Tonight's engagement party made him lose control and he lashed out at Charles.

A crime of passion perhaps, but there it is.

Chris Thank you Mr Haversham, you've been most helpful. Perhaps you could fetch Thomas Colley-moore. I'm going to need to follow more than one line of enquiry at a time to get to the bottom of this.

Max At once, Inspector, anything to help the progress of your investigation.

He exits, cutting his arm in the door.

Chris Hang it all, Charles. Who could've killed you? Everybody under this damned roof seems guilty.

He sits on the chaise longue.

That's queer. There's something underneath these cushions. A ledger?

He removes the cushions from the chaise longue. There is no ledger. He begins to search for it, pulling off the lining of the chaise longue, looking inside the pillows. Vamps to cover. Eventually he finds it underneath the chaise longue.

Max picks up the barometer and puts it back on the wall, causing the painting of the dog to fall down. **Max** goes to hold up the painting, leaving the barometer to **Robert**. They are left holding up all three items.

Robert I was overjoyed, of course. I love Florence and I loved Charles, I couldn't have approved more of the match.

Max But Colleymoore, it's well known that you're protective of your sister.

The telephone rings.

I'll get it.

He tries hard to keep holding the picture against the wall while reaching for the phone, which keeps ringing. Finally he tries to hook it with his foot. The receiver falls off the telephone and further away on the floor.

Max Good evening. (Beat) It's for you.

Robert Who the devil is it?

Max Your accountants, Colleymoore.

Robert At eleven-thirty in the evening?

Max Yes.

Robert Then hand me the receiver, Cecil.

Max slides the receiver in between his feet and manages to throw it up with his feet and catch it in his remaining hand. He stretches and passes it to **Robert**, who eventually gets it, keeping the voice-pipe and barometer on the wall using his head.

Robert (speaking in extreme discomfort) Good evening. Yes,

Thomas Colleymoore speaking. It is inconvenient, yes! . . . My recent deposits? What of them? . . . Discrepancies? What are you talking about, man? . . . Gone? Gone where? . . . Nine thousand pounds stolen! Good God, man! Perkins, get in here.

Dennis enters through the door as far as he can.

Dennis Yes, sir.

Robert Perkins, fetch me my bank book.

He throws Max downstage left.

Max Now, calm down, Colleymoore.

Robert You always were a snake in the grass, Cecil.

He pulls Max up by his hair and drags him across the room, accidentally slamming him into the side of the clock. Robert draws a sword from the fireplace.

Max It's not what you think! We're in love!

Robert My sister does not love you. How dare you lay a finger on her? Your own brother's fiancée! It's disgusting! No wonder your father hated you!

Max Don't speak about my father, Colleymoore!

He draws a sword.

Robert The time has come for you to answer to me for your indiscretions. Draw your sw – *En garde!*

They fight.

Nice try, Cecil, but no match for my skill. You know sometimes I forget you're Charley's brother, you're so pathetic.

They fight. Max leaps off the back of the chase longue.

Max I always was too quick for you, but nice try, Colleymoore.

1. floorboard slips up and hits him in the face. He stumbles forward and trips, breaking his sword. He holds up the broken sword and makes sword-clanging sound effects as they continue fighting. Max beats Robert to the floor stage left below the upper level.

Max You've got a good party, Colleymoore!

Robert Good party! I'll show you a good party!

He accidentally thrusts his sword through the underside of the upper level. The blade comes up between Chris' legs. Robert tries to pull his sword back but finds it stuck. Both try to continue the fight without

Chris It is important we remain calm, and we don't let each other out of our sight. Where's Miss Colleymoore?

Robert She's coming now! Get in here, Florence!

Jonathan pushes **Annie** in through the door. She's wearing **Sandra's** dress over her own clothes and she clutches a script.

Robert Florence, you don't look yourself this evening.

Annie (reading each word slowly from the script, in a thick Lancashire accent) Thomas, I'm frightened!

Robert Don't worry, Florence; you're safe in here with me.

Dennis What is going on?

Chris Isn't it obvious! Cecil has lost control!

Annie Cecil! Surely not!

Chris He killed Charles tonight, driven mad by his lust for you, and now he knows we've found him out!

Annie I cannot bear it. Cecil would not do such a thing.

Dennis This is a fine mess, sir! The worst night I've seen in eighty-eight years of service!

Annie Save me, brother, save me!

She clings on to Chris, who pushes her towards Robert

Robert I shan't let anyone hurt a hair on your head, Florence.

Annie I'm panicking! I can't believe . . . Cecil?

Chris Cecil!

Annie Cecil . . . is doing this.

Dennis Try to stay calm, Miss Colleymoore!

Annie I shall faint!

She falls back without warning. Robert just catches her

Dennis A double murder!

. I short burst of 'Girls on Film' by Duran Duran plays. Then suddenly the correct musical spike cuts in.

Trevor Found the Duran Duran, carry on.

Chris (*checks Max's pulse*) Time of death: quarter to mid-five o'clock.

He checks the clock. It still reads 5:30.

Annie (*with genuine affection*) Cecil! No! No! No! I loved him! I loved him! I know it's wrong. I know I was engaged to Charles, but Cecil was mine and.

Silence. Chris turns the page in her script.

Annie I was his.

Dennis There there, Miss Colleymoore.

Annie How will I go on? Sobs.

Chris You! Take this body outside.

Dennis Yes, sir.

Robert I'll lend you a hand, Perkins.

Chris I've seen a lot in the twenty years I've been an Inspector, but two murders on one night is certainly unusual.

Dennis opens the door and pulls out the two stretcher poles from earlier. He and **Robert** lay them on the floor before rolling **Max** on top of the two poles. They lift the poles, optimistically. **Max** grasps them and holding on for dear life they carry him towards the door. **Robert** and **Dennis** can't get **Max** off through the door, so tip him on to his side and exit through the door and past the window.

Annie Oh Inspector! My fiancé and my lover killed on the same eve!

Chris Remember your breathing, Miss Colleymoore, now is not the time for another of your episodes.

Robert The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Drinks and spits out the white spirit.*) Good God, I needed that.

Chris Does anyone else have access to the grounds?

Annie No one, Inspector.

Dennis I'm the only one with the master key and as instructed I locked and bolted the doors, as soon as you arrived.

Robert Then who could have killed him?

The script begins to go round in a loop.

Dennis That's a good question, Mr Colleymoore –

Chris – and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

Annie Inspector, you've given me a chill!

Chris Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

Dennis Of course, Inspector.

He pours white spirit again.

Chris Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

Annie Not a soul.

Robert The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Drinks, Spits out again.*) Good God, I needed that.

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Dennis *doesn't realise and the loop goes around again.*

Annie Not a soul.

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Annie Not a soul.

Robert The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Throws the white spirit over Dennis.*) Good God, I needed that!

Chris Does anyone have access to the grounds?

Annie No one, Inspector.

Dennis I'm the only one with the master key and as instructed I locked and bolted the doors, as soon as you arrived.

All Then who could have killed him?

Dramatic house music plays.

The house lights fade and Chris once again emerges from in between the tabs. A spotlight picks him out of the darkness.

Chris Good evening again, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you have enjoyed the break, we will be resuming this evening's performance in just a couple of moments I am assured. I must say I'm delighted to see that so many of you have returned for the second half.

Obviously I would be lying if I said the first act went entirely as rehearsed; there were one or two minor snags, which you may or may not have picked up on. But they are snags that would occur on any opening night and this certainly hasn't been the worst first act Cornley Polytechnic has seen, by some stretch.

Last year our production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* got off to a shaky start when we didn't realise that our set designer suffered from colour blindness. Anyway, before we begin again, one word of . . .

Chris *is interrupted by Trevor's voice offstage over his radio.*

Trevor *(over radio)* It's going quite badly to be honest.

Chris Before we resume the . . .

Trevor *(over radio)* Yeah, she's unconscious, and we still can't find the dog . . .

Chris Before we resume the production one word of health and safety administration; can I please ask anyone who consumed one of the raspberry-ripple flavoured ice creams available during the interval to please seek medical help immediately.

And now, without further ado, please put your hands together for the concluding act of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

Dennis We know Charles Haverham was found dead here, in his own private rooms on the night his engagement party.

Robert We know that his fiancée was involved in an affair with his own brother, Cecil. How could my sister behave in such a way?

Annie Not now, Thomas! We know that he too was murdered on the same evening, in cold blood.

Dennis The only thing we don't know is who the murderer is. **Annie** Oh, the tension in this house is –

She trips up over the fallen curtains and drops her script on the floor. The pages go everywhere. She tries to pick them up but they are all out of order.

Annie Oh, the tension in this house is . . . Oh, the tension in this . . . oh, it . . . oh, it's tense.

Robert Florence. How are you feeling now?

Annie (*ad libs*) I'm great, yeah, really good.

Robert That's dreadful.

Annie (*ad libs*) Oh yes, dreadful, I want to die!

Robert That's the spirit, Florence.

Dennis But now, Miss Colleymore, I must ask you an important question, where were you when the murder was committed?

He mimes the line to her. He points down and mimes drinking a cup of tea. Annie misinterprets.

Annie I was on the floor with a moustache.

Robert That makes perfect sense. So was I.

Annie *reads off the wrong page of the script.*

Annie Kiss me a thousand times – I'm yours!

Robert Good Lord, where was it?

Chris In the library. It was lying on the table, muzzle warm and the barrel still smoking.

Robert Someone killed Cecil with this?

Chris Yes, less than half an hour ago.

Robert But . . . who?

Chris I was hoping you would be able to tell me that, Colleymore? After all we are friends, aren't we?

Robert I have no idea who killed Cecil, I was down in the

kitchens when I heard the gunshots, fetching my sister some

refreshment . . .

He forgets his line.

Line!

Trevor I don't know what page we're on, mate!

Robert I don't know what page we're on, mate.

He realises this isn't the line and looks to Trevor furiously.

Chris (prompts **Robert**) Besides, why would I / want to . . .

Robert Besides, why would I want to kill my oldest friend's

younger brother?

Chris Perhaps because you found out about his affair with

Florence. We all know you're a jealous man, Colleymore,

ruthlessly protective of your sister.

Robert Protective! I approve of whatever makes my sister

happy.

Chris Don't play the fool with me, Thomas. You shot Cecil

Haversham in cold blood and you know that wasn't the plan.

Lights shift to downstairs. There is a heavy knock at the door.

Dennis Who the devil could that be?

Annie (wrong page) I don't know either, Miss Colleymore!

Dennis Mr Haversham was murdered tonight.

Max Charles Haversham?

He walks into the pillar supporting the upper level and knocks it out,

causing the level, with Robert and Chris on it, to slant slightly. The drinks trolley and chair roll across the floor. Robert stops them before

they roll off the edge. Chris and Robert slowly edge to the door and try to go through it, but the handle comes off, leaving them trapped.

Dennis And not only that, his brother Cecil has also been killed.

Max Heavens! That explains the strange goings on I have

seen in the grounds this evening.

Dennis Strange goings on?

Max A mysterious figure stood by the shrubbery that stands outside this very room and I noticed that the latch on the

window was forced open and Winston found this on the ground

beneath it.

He produces a handkerchief from his pocket.

A lace handkerchief. Quiet, Winston! Stained with a deep red

mark with a distinctive scent.

Dennis Cyanide.

Max Precisely, cyanide . . . and you can tell from the shape of the mark it's been used to hold a bottle. But not only that, the handkerchief is also embroidered with the initials 'F.C.'

Dennis . . . Florence Colleymore.

Max Indeed.

Lights shift upstairs.

Chris I must show you something, Thomas. No doubt you'll find it interesting.

Robert slips forward slightly.

Robert What is it, Inspector?

He edges to the elevator and looks inside. He shakes his head. **Chris**

jumps off the edge down on to the lower level.

Chris Perkins.

Annie *(reading from script)* Thank heavens, Inspector. These two have been accusing me of the most dreadful things.

Max Hold your tongue, we all know what you've done!

Woah, Winston! Down boy!

Dennis Winston, the Inspector's here to help us.

Max I'm sorry about Winston, Inspector. I'll put him outside.

He throws the lead out of the door.

Chris Arthur, I presume.

Dennis Arthur the gardener is the gardener, Inspector.

Max I'm the longest-serving member of staff at Haversham

Manor.

Dennis He's been working for Mr Haversham for ninety

years.

Chris *(aside to Dennis)* Nine.

Dennis Ninety-nine years.

Chris *Ninety-nine years? What a dedicated man. But Arthur,*

I was informed you left Haversham Manor at six o'clock

today? It appears you were hiding in the grounds on the night

two men were murdered here.

Dennis Arthur became trapped in the snowstorm and

couldn't make it to the gates.

Chris How implausible. I don't suppose you realise what

you have walked into this evening then, Arthur?

Max On the contrary, Inspector. It appears I have discovered

a clue that will close this case.

He holds out the monogrammed handkerchief.

Max tries to pass Robert the receiver but the cord doesn't reach. Max and Chris create a chain of arms from the phone with Chris' hand in a phone shape at the end, which after some stretching they manage to get to Robert's ear.

Robert Fitzroy: Thank you for calling again . . . Yes, this is a much more convenient time, thank you . . . Another transaction traced . . . A one-way ticket to Dover? No, I have no ideal! You've given nine thousand pounds of my money to someone else. You are causing me more pain than you could possibly imagine! I shall hang up the phone immediately.

The phone is hung up.

Dennis Mr Colley Moore, you look like you could use a scotch.

Robert No! No more scotch thank you, Perkins. What a dreadful evening! I must check my bank records once more, if you'll excuse me . . .

He begins to try and exit through the upstairs door, crawling with all the furniture towards it. The desk has 'Two Sisters' written on the back of it.

Robert If you'll excuse me . . . If you'll excuse me!

Dennis Inspector! There is something about the handkerchief you have not detected!

Chris What is it, Perkins?

Dennis It bears initials . . . the initials 'F.C.'

Max Florence Colley Moore is the murderer, Inspector!

Chris You are the murderer, Miss Colley Moore. It is plain for us all to see. You were engaged to be married to Charles,

a man who according to your letter you despised. Not only this but you were having an affair with his brother -

Annie Cecil!

Chris - Cecil. It seems plausible to me that you both murdered him so you could be together.

Dennis Inspector.

Chris Arthur, you stay here with Miss Colleymoore and ensure she does not leave this room.

Robert and Dennis exit with him through the downstairs door
Sandra and Max are alone again. Max stares at the floor, he cannot look at Sandra.

Sandra Arthur, you have known me years, surely you believe I would never do something like this!

Max On the contrary Miss Colleymoore, it was I who discovered you to be the guilty party.

Sandra Oh Arthur! How can you! Please, you must protect me from these fiends! I'll do anything to win your trust!

She throws herself into Max's arms.

Max Oh no! Miss Colleymoore! Do not use your feminine wiles to confuse me.

Sandra I have seen the way you look at me across the gardens.

Max stares away from her

Sandra Even now, the way you're looking at me. The way you're looking . . . the way you're looking . . . the way you're looking . . . at . . . me . . .

She turns Max's head to look at her, accidentally tearing off Max's mutton chop.

Sandra The way you're looking at me! I know how you feel -

Max Please, Miss Colleymoore! I am a simple gardener, I . . .

Sandra - and you have said before how radiant I look when walking across the grounds. Please Arthur, protect me, I'll be yours if you do . . .

She grasps Max tighter.

Trevor (reads) Your wild accusations have driven me to this! My nerves are a wreck! I feel dizzy!

Chris I suggest you settle down, Miss Colleymoore!

Dennis Quickly! Where's her medication, Mr Colleymoore?

Robert Blast, I must have left it in the study.

He exits through the downstairs door.

Chris Miss Colleymoore! You are a vile criminal!

Dennis And to think we look you in!

Max You manipulated me! I have let my master down tonight!

Chris All the while you were plotting your fiancé's demise!

Trevor Oh no, Inspector, all these accusations . . . I feel an episode coming on.

He begins to have an episode. Chris pushes Trevor aside and he trips under the upper level.

Chris No, Miss Colleymoore.

Robert reappears through the upstairs door, as he steps on the upper level, it fully collapses, crushing Trevor. Silence.

Robert (to Chris) I don't think they noticed.

He exits and closes the door, causing a lighting truss to swing down from the rig.

Chris An adulteress and cold-blooded killer!

Sandra (within the clock) I'm not, Inspector!

All turn to face the clock. Sandra tries to get out. Chris helps but she is stuck inside.

Chris Yes you are, Miss Colleymoore!

Sandra (from within the clock) Oh, Inspector! I can't take this any more! I shall faint!

The clock is lowered on to one side. Beat.

Dennis This is all a mistake!

Chris Save your pleading . . .

Annie climbs up on top of the clock to resume playing Florence.

Chris Save your pleading for the police station.

He throws handcuffs to Robert, who cuffs Dennis to the chaise longue.

Chris Thomas, handcuff him to the chaise longue lest he escape before I can drive him there.

Max That won't be for hours, the snow is at its peak.

Show is thrown through the window into Chris' face.

Dennis It's not true, I tell you.

Annie pretends to wake up.

Annie What happened! I must have fainted! Curse my delicate —

Sandra opens the door of the grandfather clock, hitting Annie.
Sandra What happened! I must have fainted! Curse my delicate constitution.

Robert You did faint, Florence! We've learned that Perkins committed the murder!

Sandra Perkins? But he's such a kindly old man.

Dennis There must be some misunderstanding! I didn't kill Charles. But I know who did.

All WHO?

Dennis INSPECTOR CARTER!

All gasp.

Max What on earth?

Chris Poppycock!

Jonathan I simply didn't drink the poisoned sherry you left out for me this evening.

Sandra Oh Charley, this is more than I . . .

Annie sings **Sandra** *offstage through the swivel bookcase and stands next to it.*

Annie Oh Charley, this is all more than I can bear.

Jonathan Ever since we last spoke at the police station it was clear you thought I was on to you. It was at this point I became afraid you'd try to kill me. For months now I've had my guard up and tonight you fell into my trap.

Sandra *The bookcase suddenly swivels, swallowing up Annie and revealing*

Dennis You've been hiding in the grounds ever since this afternoon when you planted the poison.

Max It was you that I saw. You were the mysterious figure. **Sandra** I thought it was strange . . .

The bookcase swivels again this time revealing Annie. She puts her back across the bookcase blocking Sandra from coming back in.

Annie I thought it was strange you got here so quickly in such terrible weather.

Sandra *keeps trying to swivel the bookcase from offstage but is still blocked by Annie. She runs over to the window and Annie quickly follows her, picking up a tray on her way.*

Max But what about the handkerchief bearing Florence's initials?

Jonathan Perhaps you should ask Inspector Carter, or should I say Inspector Frederick Carter.

All F.C.I.

Max The same initials.

Chris What are you going to do, Charles? Shoot me in front of a room full of witnesses?

Jonathan Don't think I wouldn't do it, Carter! You tried to kill me; I'd merely be returning the favour!

Annie Please, Inspector! You're frighten -

Sandra Suddenly **Sandra** bursts out of the clock. **Annie** opens the door to reveal no one there. **Annie** is furious, the others amazed.

Sandra Please, Inspector! You're frightening me!

Chris You ought to be frightened!

Jonathan Arthur, keep everyone in this room while I send a wire to the local police.

Max Yes, sir.

Jonathan hands **Max** the gun and exits through the downstairs door

Sandra and **Annie** You monster! You tried to kill Charles and you killed Ce -

Annie charges at **Sandra** but she moves out of the way and **Annie** charges out through the window.

Sandra - and you killed Cecil. How could you!

*She stands back in front of the window but **Annie** pops up and drags her out through it and throws her on the floor. **Annie** dives on to **Sandra** with her shoulder*

Chris I'll admit, I tried to kill Charles, but I never went anywhere near Cecil. In fact when I discovered that you and he were having an affair I was overjoyed. I had the perfect man to pin it on. Until my accomplice blundered in.

Max Your accomplice?

Robert rushes to the door and tries to get out.

Chris Thomas Colley Moore!

Robert arrives at the door, **Max** turns quickly and the barrel of the gun flies off narrowly missing **Robert**.

Chris Push him aside, Colley Moore. Do you want to spend the rest of your life in jail?

Robert I will strike you down, Char-ley!

He tries to strike but overreaches, trips and slides down to the bottom of the study floor, grabbing at Chris to save himself. Robert drags Chris to the bottom with him.

Chris It's useless, Colley Moore, there's no way out.

Sandra runs back in.

Sandra Brother! I'm surprised at -

Annie appears in the window with the ledger, hits **Sandra** in the stomach and then over the head with it.

Annie Brother, I'm surprised at you. I don't know what you've become.

She jumps in through the window.

Robert (getting up) I feel so ashamed. Carter and I found that between us we could steal money from the police's sundry accounts easily. Carter had access and I had the facility to move the money fast and keep it secure, or so I thought until earlier on this evening . . .

He forgets his line.

lane!

Trevor emerges from below the collapsed upper level.

Trevor This set's a bloody death trap!

He shuffles off through the door.

Robert This set's a bloody death trap!

Chris (prompts **Robert**) As for Cecil . . .

Robert As for Cecil, that was more a crime of passion, simple as that.

Sandra Charley! I cannot bear it! Look at me, like you used to look at me!

Jonathan Silence, Florence! You mean nothing to me now!

Sandra (managing to stand up) This is the worst night of my life!

Annie punches Sandra in the face. She falls out of sight behind the window.

Annie No! No! This is the worst night of my life!

Max I think this is the worst night of all of our lives.

Annie goes through the door and appears in the window. She stamps on Sandra before ducking out of sight.

Jonathan But Thomas, Carter had you fooled, didn't he?

Robert What do you mean?

Jonathan He never intended to share the money with you!

Let me summarise . . .

Annie (through the window) I love you, Charley!

She begins hitting Sandra with the tray.

Jonathan Inspector Carter knew I discovered you and he

were both embezzling police money, so you hatched a plan to

kill me, planting cyanide in my sherry.

Annie appears with a roll of industrial tape.

Annie I've still got the ring, Charley! We can make it work!

She begins to tape Sandra's hands together.

Jonathan Then, mistakenly believing I was dead, Inspector

Carter tried to pin my murder on Cecil and Florence because

of their affair, until your accomplice Thomas blundered in and

shot my brother Cecil. Carter then tried to pin it on Perkins

instead after finding my will in the ledger.

Annie looks up from taping Sandra.

Chris falls to the floor. **Robert** lowers the gun to his side, where it explodes loudly, hurting his hand.

Robert ARGH! My fingers!

Dennis The officers are waiting in the hall, si –

He enters through the downstairs door, knocking over the whole door flat with the chase longie. Chris rolls out of the falling flat, Robert moves back colliding with the fireplace flat, sending that over as well. The wall at the top of the upper levels collapses. Silence. Stillness. Suddenly the window flat falls down as well, leaving Annie standing in the window frame and revealing Sandra dazed backstage. Silence. Stillness again. Max throws snow from offstage.

Jonathan Excellent. Escort my fiancé downstairs, Perkins. I wish to have a word with Thomas in private.

Dennis and Annie stay, trapped by the fallen flats.

Dennis Yes, sir.

Jonathan Thomas! You're not the man I knew from Elton, you've become greedy and jealous!

Robert I'm sorry, Charles; my nerves are in shreds.

Jonathan There's a glass of sherry next to the telephone.

Robert Thank you, Charles! Ever the kind host!

Jonathan Drink it up.

Robert Most kind!

He drinks the sherry.

Jonathan Tell me, Thomas, one last thing.

Robert Anything, Charles. I shall tell no more lies!

Jonathan The glass of poisoned sherry the Inspector left out for me – what do you suppose I did with it?

Robert Well, I don't . . . know. What do you mean? You don't mean you gave me the . . . Charley? Charley?! *(Forgets his line)* Lined!

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