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*Dramatic Publishing*



A full-length  
mystery-comedy

# A-Haunting We Will Go

by  
**TIM KELLY**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**



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## A-HAUNTING WE WILL GO

A Full-Length Mystery-Comedy  
For Seven Men, Twelve Women and One Face\*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS In Order of Appearance

SUTTON . . . . . a menacing old prospector.  
NORMA CORWIN . . . . . a glamorous young television producer.  
GINNY ALBRIGHT . . . . . her young assistant, eighteen.  
MOE PHILLIPS . . . . . Norma's business agent.  
CLANTON . . . . . a highway patrolman.  
ENGINEER . . . . . plans to dynamite the hotel.  
CAROLYN PENMARK . . . . . a kidnap victim, about fifteen.  
BATES . . . . . a criminal type, young.  
RHODA . . . . . another criminal type.  
MYSTERIOUS YOUNG WOMAN . . . . . a teenager, on a dangerous  
mission.  
TOM . . . . . a young serviceman.  
MISS CRISP . . . . . a nurse -- or is she?  
FACE AT WINDOW\* . . . . . a menace.  
BETH . . . . . a spirit manifestation.  
JULIE . . . . . another.  
MARY . . . . . another.  
FLINT . . . . . another.  
MADAM LUGOSI . . . . . an expert in ESP.  
MORGANA . . . . . her daughter.  
DOREEN . . . . . a young horsewoman.

\*Can be male or female. No lines.

TIME: The Present.

PLACE: The Lobby of The Inn of the Three Sisters.

# Act One

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## SCENE ONE

SETTING: The lobby of The Inn of the Three Sisters. Late afternoon.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The lobby is deserted. A moment passes and then, from the cellar, we hear the sound of SUTTON singing. (He's the only man alive who can make "Home On The Range" sound like a dirge.)

SUTTON (offstage, from D. R.).

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam  
Where the deer and the antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day. (The voice draws nearer.)

Home, home on the range.  
Where the deer and the antelope play.  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word.  
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

(SUTTON enters carrying a shovel.)

SUTTON. Always hated that song. Never could understand it. Mushy. That's what it is -- mushy. (He puts the shovel by the fireplace.) Another day with nothing to show for it. You're a clever ghost, Mary Hallahan, but I'll find out your secret. All it takes is patience. (He addresses the room as if it were a person.) I know you're here. I can sense your presence the way other folks can tell there's a storm brewing from their aches and

pains. It's a feeling. It's a gift. (He moves behind the table and continues to speak as if Mary Hallahan were actually nearby. He boasts.) I've got that gift. (In a crafty tone.) Why don't you give me a hint, a sign? Some little spirit work, hocus-pocus, that'll point me in the right direction? (Voices are heard approaching the door U R.)

GINNY (offstage). You can say what you want, but I still think it's a stupid idea.

NORMA (offstage in authoritative voice). It's my idea, not yours. I'm the one who's going to do it, not you.

GINNY (offstage). I still say it's stupid. (SUTTON tenses and draws a hunting knife from his belt, ready for some imagined attack from outsiders.)

SUTTON. Eh? (Worried.) Who could that be? (His mood shifts and his eyes dart about expecting the ghost of Mary Hallahan to materialize.) Playing your tricks again, eh, Mary? You forget -- I've got a trick or two up my dirty sleeve. (He darts U C for the stairs and turns to look in the direction of the front door.)

NORMA (offstage). Your main trouble, Ginny, is that you lack imagination.

GINNY (offstage). You've got too much. (By now the women are standing outside. The door is rattled. SUTTON grunts in anger and tightens his grip on the blade.) Don't you need a key?

NORMA (offstage). For this old door? Nonsense. One good push and it'll probably fall down. (The door is pushed open. SUTTON slinks up the stairs not wishing to be discovered.) There -- what did I tell you.

(NORMA CORWIN enters, a stylish travel bag slung over one shoulder. She's delighted with the condition of the lobby.)

NORMA. Time hasn't been too cruel. The walls are still standing. Why, it's better than I hoped for. (She points L.) The old registration desk! Still here! Imagine.

(NORMA crosses to the desk and puts the travel bag on top of it. GINNY enters and follows her into the lobby.)

GINNY. If this is what you hoped for, you didn't hope for much. Why wouldn't the registration desk be here? Hotel lobby is the logical place for it.

NORMA. I thought someone might have torn it out.

GINNY. What for?

NORMA. Firewood, a garage sale, vandalism. Who knows? (She sees the ledger.) Look, Ginny, the ledger.

GINNY (flatly). How exciting. This isn't exactly my idea of a fun way to spend an afternoon. Are you really going to stay the night?

NORMA (defensively). I most certainly am. (GINNY moves behind the table.)

GINNY. I hope no one hears of this crazy stunt. You've got enemies. A few people who wouldn't mind making you look like a fool.

NORMA. Rubbish.

GINNY. You didn't get to be the highest paid female producer in television by being gentle, loving and easy to get along with.

NORMA. You've been nothing but irritable and critical for days. I can't imagine what's wrong.

GINNY. You know what's wrong.

NORMA. I do?

GINNY. You're a genius at avoiding the issue.

NORMA. What issue? (She flips a few pages of the ledger.)

GINNY. That idea I pitched about a new T.V. series.

NORMA (uninterested). Oh, that.

GINNY. Yes, that.

NORMA (directly). Ginny, no one wants another series about the Old West. (She recites like a blurb in a television guide.) "The trials and tribulations of a frontier family struggling against the odds of man and nature." It's been done to death. Besides, I couldn't see it.

GINNY. That's what you said about my proposed police series idea.

NORMA. Old hash, Ginny. Cops and robbers. Bang, bang, bang. The public isn't interested. Besides, when you pitched that idea you gave it no vividness at all. Flat as a sticky pancake. I couldn't see it.

GINNY. My idea about the all-female outer space cadet corps?

NORMA. Ginny, you're the best assistant I've ever had, but let me do the producing. Your time will come, believe me.

GINNY. When I'm old and gray. When my hearing's gone and my eyesight's dim.

NORMA. You need more time to get the feel of the industry.

GINNY. Monica Sills sold an idea for a series to CBS and she's six months younger than I am.

NORMA. Monica is an exceptional case. Her idea was unique and showed promise.

GINNY. I'd like to know what was so unique and promising about a talking dog. Some idea. Ugh.

NORMA. She was obviously able to pitch it so the buyers could see it.

GINNY (with a touch of sarcasm). Bow-wow, bow-wow. Woof, woof. I wonder if the buyers paid her off in dog biscuits? (She looks about the room.) What did you say they called this cave?

NORMA. The Inn of the Three Sisters. Isn't that poetic?

GINNY. The name may be, but the inn is depressing. This is the sort of place where they don't change the sheets. They just move them from room to room.

NORMA. You've made up your mind to be disagreeable, haven't you?

GINNY. Judging from this lobby, the sisters were the three witches from *Macbeth*. I bet this hotel never won an award from *Good Housekeeping*.

NORMA. The sisters were "strange." I suppose it was inevitable that the place became haunted.

GINNY. Haunted! You didn't say anything about this place being haunted.

NORMA. Didn't think it was important. (She checks the ledger.) I can barely make out the names and dates. Such a long time ago. The last entry was a day before the murder.

GINNY (alarmed). Murder!

NORMA (nonchalantly). Business dropped off after that and then the mines gave out and the place closed up.

GINNY (concerned). I did hear right -- murder?



MOE (offstage). Someone say something about murder?

(MOE PHILLIPS, Norma's agent, enters U.R. carrying a sleeping roll.)

NORMA. Put the sleeping roll in the big bedroom at the top of the stairs, will you, Moe?

GINNY. The one with the cobwebs and spiders.

MOE. What am I? An agent or a bellhop? (He moves to the bench in front of the fireplace, puts the sleeping roll on the floor, and sits down.) That's some climb to this termite palace. I'm beat. Let me catch my breath.

NORMA. I didn't ask you to come along, so don't blame me for your discomfort.

MOE. Ginny and I both thought it would be nice to get out of Los Angeles. A slow drive across the desert is a great cure for smog.

GINNY. Only we didn't know anything about this place being haunted.

MOE. Haunted?

GINNY (confirming). Haunted.

MOE. First I hear murder and now I hear haunted. And it's not even Halloween.

NORMA. The place isn't really haunted. That's only a local superstition.

GINNY. Norma, you're intelligent and sensible. Why you want to retreat to a childhood fantasy is something for a psychiatrist to figure out.

MOE. I agree. (He looks about.) This place gives me the creepies. Let's leave.

NORMA. You're both acting like imbeciles. My staying here has nothing to do with either of you.

MOE. You're our meal-ticket. If anything happens to you, we're out of a job.

NORMA (in a critical tone). That's a funny description of loyalty.

MOE. So how come I'm not laughing?

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NORMA (adamantly). When I was a child, I vowed I'd spend one night alone in The Inn of the Three Sisters. I intend to follow through on that vow with or without your approval.

GINNY. Does it have to be tonight?

NORMA. Tonight or never. When I got the news they were tearing the place down, I knew I had to move fast. (She quotes.) "She who hesitates is lost."

GINNY. Or demented.

MOE. I hate to think what the columnists will do if they get hold of this. Or the bigwigs at the networks. They like their young producers to be level-headed and sane.

GINNY. That's what I've been trying to get across to her.

MOE. No luck, huh?

GINNY. Zilch.

NORMA. You insisted on tagging along. The least you can do is be agreeable. Go back into town and have a good dinner and a decent night's sleep. Watch that new series ABC is launching. It's supposed to be quite interesting. If you see anything in it, I may want to come up with something similar.

GINNY. That's television for you. Monkey see, monkey do. Bow-wow, bow-wow.

MOE. What about you? Aren't you going to have dinner?

NORMA. I'm on a diet. Come back for me in the morning. Early.

MOE. I don't like it.

GINNY. Neither do I.

MOE. Stuck out here all night, smack in the heart of nowhere. What will you be doing? Digging for copper?

NORMA. I'll light an oil lamp and do some reading. If I'm lucky, I might even get to see her.

GINNY. Who?

NORMA. Mary Hallahan.

MOE. What agency is she with?

NORMA. United Ghosts, I imagine. She was the sister who was murdered.

GINNY (curiously). Who murdered her?

NORMA. They never found out. That's one of the mysteries of The Inn of the Three Sisters. I'm spending the night in her bedroom.

MOE. I think the whole idea is morbid.

CLANTON (offstage, from U. R.). Who's in there?

GINNY (surprised). Company.

(MOE, GINNY and NORMA look to the door. CLANTON enters. NORMA recognizes him immediately.)

CLANTON. Mind telling me what you folks are doing in here? This is condemned property. It's posted. Didn't you see the signs?

NORMA. Don't you recognize me, Harold?

CLANTON (startled). How did you know my name?

NORMA. I have an excellent memory. You're Harold Clanton. Your father was a mining engineer. You lived on Willow Avenue. We went to grade school together.

CLANTON (recognizing NORMA). Well, I'll be -- Norma Corwin. (GINNY sits at the table.)

GINNY (to MOE). A class reunion. (CLANTON crosses to NORMA.)

CLANTON. I thought you lived out in Hollywood, a big important television producer. Jet set and stuff like that. I've seen a few of your programs. Read more than one magazine article about you, too.

NORMA. I'm flattered.

CLANTON. What brings you back to these parts?

NORMA. I heard they were tearing the hotel down.

CLANTON. First thing in the morning. Cutting a new spur road onto the main highway.

NORMA. I told my friends here so much about this charming old place that they had to see it. I couldn't disappoint them. (GINNY and MOE exchange an exasperated look.)

CLANTON (to GINNY and MOE). This hotel was quite a place.

GINNY. We heard. An unsolved murder and a haunting. (Sourly.) Whoopee.

CLANTON. I wouldn't put any stock in that haunting business. Folks get weird ideas. The murder was real enough. (He points to GINNY.) They found Mary Hallahan right where you're sitting. Strangled.

MOE. Gulp.

GINNY. *Oh!* (Alarmed, she jumps up and steps back from the “murder” scene.)

MOE. I could do with a breath of air. Murder is not my favorite topic - - can’t stand violence. I get upset when I see a kid eat an animal cracker. (He points D. L.) What’s over there?

CLANTON. The dining room and the kitchen. Couple of cabins out back.

MOE. Think I’ll do a little exploring. (He crosses D. L.)

CLANTON. Be careful. This place is on its last legs.

MOE. I know the feeling. (He exits.)

CLANTON. The floors sag and the ceiling can go any minute.

GINNY. I’m the famous television producer’s famous assistant.

NORMA. I am sorry. Harold, this is Ginny Albright.

CLANTON. Hi.

NORMA (pointing to exit D. L.). The nervous explorer is Moe Phillips, my business manager.

CLANTON. Young for a business manager, isn’t he?

GINNY. Not for the television industry. If you’re twenty-five, it’s time to think about retiring. If you’re twenty-six, they refer to you as “Wrinkles.”

CLANTON. I don’t know anything about television except what I watch on the boob tube.

GINNY. You’re telling the truth, aren’t you?

CLANTON. About the boob tube?

GINNY. Mary Hallahan. About ghosts.

CLANTON. I’ve never see her. Others claim they hear her crying or see a white mist moving on the hillside.

GINNY. Mary’s spirit?

CLANTON. Supposedly. The story goes that if you set eyes on her, you go mad. Ha. Ha.

GINNY. *What!*

NORMA (to GINNY). I’ve never known you to be so jumpy. (Matter-of-factly.) They found an old miner in here one morning long after the place closed down and he was raving mad. Nothing so unusual about that - - happens all the time with prospectors. It’s the loneliness that gets them.

CLANTON. Claimed he saw Mary’s ghost, one hand stroking her throat.

NORMA. A few years later the same thing happened again.

CLANTON. Another desert rat. Name was Ezra Benton. He'd been out to lunch for years. The power of suggestion does a lot to keep these stories alive. You'd better head back for town before the storm hits.

GINNY. Storm?

CLANTON. Desert storm. When the winds blow, they can strip the paint off a vehicle.

GINNY. Did you hear that, Norma? A storm. (Eagerly.) We'd better do as he says. Leave.

(A STATE ENGINEER enters U. R., clipboard in hand.)

ENGINEER. Everything checks out, Clanton. The first dynamite blast will go off right after sun-up.

GINNY. Dynamite!

CLANTON. That'll be the end of The Three Sisters.

NORMA. What a shame.

GINNY. That's one way of looking at it.

ENGINEER. I'll have this old hotel gutted before breakfast time.

GINNY. I never eat breakfast. Now I know why.

NORMA (preoccupied). Strange.

ENGINEER. Beg pardon?

NORMA. I thought I heard something.

GINNY. Like what?

NORMA (tentatively). You'll laugh.

GINNY. I doubt it.

ENGINEER. I didn't hear anything.

CLANTON. What did it sound like?

NORMA. Weeping.

ENGINEER. It's the wind. Gets into these old places and makes the boards creak and moan. Enough to scare a coyote.

NORMA (directly). It sounded like a woman crying.

CLANTON. There -- what did I tell you? The power of suggestion. Mention Mary Hallahan and her crying and the next thing you know you hear it. Ha -- ha.

NORMA (intensely). Listen. (All are tense. The sound of crying or mournful weeping is heard offstage, D. L.)

GINNY. I hear it.

ENGINEER. So do I.

CLANTON (in a professional manner). I'll handle this. (The others pull back as CLANTON draws his weapon and takes a step D. L.) All right. We know you're in there. Come out with your hands up.

NORMA. That's no way to talk to a ghost.

CLANTON. I don't believe in ghosts.

(GINNY points DL and screams. MOE enters, covered with a sheet, waving his arms and weeping loudly. He fools nobody.)

NORMA (annoyed). Moe Phillips, you've got an infantile sense of humor. (MOE tosses off the sheet.)

MOE. Trying to get a few laughs, that's all.

GINNY. You're a business manager, not a comic.

ENGINEER. He didn't fool me. We'd better be heading back into town. The sun's going down.

CLANTON. Right. (To NORMA.) Why don't you stop by the office in the morning, Norma? We could talk about our early days in this old town.

NORMA. Yes, I'd like that. (The ENGINEER exits. CLANTON moves to the door, then turns.)

CLANTON. Don't waste time getting back. The road can be treacherous in a windstorm. I wouldn't want to find your car at the bottom of the ravine.

GINNY. Who would?

CLANTON. One other thing.

NORMA. Yes?

CLANTON. If you run into a character by the name of Sutton, don't let him frighten you. He's harmless. I know he's around here someplace. I never can locate him. He's always hiding. I don't want him injured when the engineers start their blasting. If you do see him, tell him to head into town.

MOE. We'll do that.

CLANTON. Take care. (He smiles at NORMA, then exits.)

GINNY. I should have told him what you're planning.

NORMA. Run and tell him if you feel it's so important.

GINNY. You are stubborn.

NORMA. I prefer “tenacious.”

MOE. That quality’s okay for television, but it doesn’t work in everyday life.

NORMA. Can’t either one of you talk about something new for a change? I seem to be your sole topic of conversation.

GINNY. You’re not going to stay after what you heard from your old school friend?

NORMA. I make my own rules. I see no reason to change my plans and that’s that.

MOE. Norma, you have a steel backbone.

GINNY. She’ll take that as a compliment. (NORMA picks up the traveling bag from the registration desk, crosses to the bed roll and picks it up, talking as she goes.)

NORMA. I grew up in this town. I know how to take care of myself. Windstorms can be tricky, but they seldom last more than a few hours. I’ll be safe and snug inside these walls.

MOE. I never thought I’d see the day when Norma Corwin slept in a sleeping bag.

GINNY (incredulously). You’re actually going to stay in Mary’s room?

NORMA. I am.

MOE. What if something happens?

NORMA. Like what? (She crosses U. C. with the sleeping roll under her arm.)

MOE. I don’t like to think about it. Come on, Ginny. There’s no changing her mind once it’s made up. We ought to know that by now. “Tenacious” she is. (MOE and GINNY cross U. R.)

NORMA. Now you’re being sensible.

MOE. You don’t leave us much choice.

GINNY (adamantly). No! I can’t let you stay here by yourself. (MOE and GINNY are standing by the door.)

NORMA. You forget my childhood vow. I would spend the night here -- (With emphasis.) *Alone*. (She spells it out.) A-L-O-N-E.

GINNY. You’re going to spend the night in a place that may or may not be haunted?

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NORMA. Uh-huh.

GINNY. A place where an unsolved murder took place?

NORMA. Uh-huh.

GINNY. A place where two men have lost their sanity?

NORMA. Uh-huh.

GINNY. A place that's going to be dynamited in the morning?

NORMA. Uh-huh.

GINNY. In a storm?

NORMA. Sounds exciting.

MOE. In that case, there's only one thing more to say.

NORMA. What?

MOE. Pleasant dreams. (NORMA laughs and runs up the stairs.)

FAST CURTAIN

END OF SCENE ONE