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Dramatic Publishing

HONEYMOON AT GRAVESIDE MANOR

A Ghostly Farce
by
PAT COOK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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PAT COOK

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(HONEYMOON AT GRAVESIDE MANOR)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-236-X

HONEYMOON AT GRAVESIDE MANOR

A Play in Two Acts
For Four Men and Six Women*

CHARACTERS

MYRON THORNCRAFT in his late thirties
THE WOMAN a ghost, mid-thirties
TYLER THORNCRAFT a young writer
MARIAN THORNCRAFT Tyler's new bride
SOPHIE a cleaning woman
MADGE PERKINS a publishing editor, late thirties
DURWARD a sophomore
JUDY another sophomore
SUZANNE Judy's right-arm girl
OFFICER BLAIR a police officer

*Officer Blair can be played by a woman.

TIME: The present, Halloween night.

PLACE: Graveside Manor, a one-time funeral home.

ACT ONE

SETTING: *The rather dusty living room of what was once a very stately house.*

AT RISE: *All is quiet in the room. Outside a whining wind whips around the eaves, setting the scene perfectly for the one night of the year it becomes appropriate—Halloween. Slowly the front door creaks open and MYRON enters. He shuts the door against the wind and turns to survey the room. He places his briefcase on a sofa table and walks around, lost in memories.*

MYRON. Goodness, goodness, goodness. Look at this place. Ah, the same old fireplace. *(He crosses to it and rubs the mantle.)* Hasn't changed a bit. *(He moves C.)* That old desk is still...And that heavy staircase. My, my. Just like I remember it. Ah, the memories. Oh, well...*(He sighs deeply and exits back out the front door. After a short pause, he re-enters carrying a small crate marked "TNT".)* This ought to blow this barn to toothpicks. Let's see. *(He looks around.)* If I was dynamite where would I want to be? Ah! *(He crosses to the front of the staircase and opens the closet. After depositing the crate inside the closet he starts going through his overcoat pockets.)* Timer, timer, my kingdom for a timer. Oh! *(He starts taking items out of his jacket, announcing them as he places them on the dining table.)* Keys...handkerchief...wallet...fingernail clippers... bus ticket...silly putty...*(His pockets are empty.)* Brother,

that's just like me. Bring the explosives and forget the timer. *(Suddenly, he becomes someone else.)* I told you to bring the timer. *(Back to himself.)* I heard you, I just forgot, that's all. *(Someone else.)* What're you gonna do now? *(Himself.)* I dunno. You got any suggestions? *(Someone else.)* You never listen to me anyway. *(Himself.)* Oh, shut up! *(Someone else.)* See? *(Himself.)* Oh, silly me! *(He slaps himself on the forehead and becomes someone else.)* Ow! *(Himself.)* I told you to shut up, didn't I? Suppose somebody hears us. *(He crosses to his briefcase.)* It's in the briefcase, sure. *(He tries to open it.)* Now what is that combination? *(Someone else.)* It's the doctor's birth date, remember? *(Himself.)* Oh yeah. *(He turns the dials and opens the case. From it he extracts a large alarm clock attached to a metal mechanism.)* Here we are. *(He closes the case and moves back to the closet.)* Let me just attach it...*(He places it in the closet on the dynamite and works to attach it.)* Now, to set it. Better give myself plenty of time. *(Someone else.)* Oh, good idea. *(Himself.)* Thank you. I figure...an hour and a half. *(He sets it and we hear it begin ticking.)* There. *(He closes the closet and the ticking becomes inaudible.)* Well, the time has come, the Walrus said...*(He begins to cross the room to the front door. His left hand grabs his coat lapel and pulls him to a stop. Again he becomes someone else.)* Aren't you forgetting something? *(Himself.)* Huh? *(He turns back.)* Oh yeah! *(Quickly, he rushes to the dining table and scoops his belongings back into his overcoat pockets.)* Well, good-bye, Graveside Manor. May you rest in pieces. *(He bolts out the front door, gently shutting it behind him.)*

(A medium pause. Almost floating down the stairs, a ghostly WOMAN enters and surveys the room.)

WOMAN (*in an ominous monotone*). Cyrus? Is that you, Cyrus? No one here. Pity. Always a pity. One would think they'd leave the dead alone. Especially tonight. Toni-i-ight. Toni-i-i-ght! Ooh, that was good! (*She "floats" back up-stairs.*)

(Another medium pause. The front door bursts open and TYLER carries MARIAN over the threshold and into the living room. MARIAN has her eyes closed.)

TYLER. Well, here we are, hon. Our honeymoon cottage!
(*He places her on her feet.*)

MARIAN (*opens her eyes*). Oh, Tyler, it's...(*She looks around. She laughs.*) Okay, Tyler. Pick me up and let's get out of here.

TYLER. No, this is really it. Charming, isn't it?

MARIAN. Charming? Obviously some obscure meaning to the word I wasn't previously aware of. Let me see that brochure again. I'll bet you even money it never mentioned the word "blood curdling."

TYLER. That's two words.

MARIAN. Would you like to hear two more words?

TYLER. Honey, no!

MARIAN. That's not the two words I had in mind.

TYLER (*cooly*). Yeah? (*He cuddles with her.*) What were your two words? (*A knock at the front door.*)

MARIAN. Answer that.

TYLER. Now, Marian, this place looks much better when it's cleaned up. (*He crosses to the door.*) I can't believe that hasn't been done yet. Someone was supposed to be here this morning and...(*As he gets to the door he hears someone trying a key in the door.*) Wait. Somebody's trying their key. (*The key rattling stops. TYLER opens the door.*)

(SOPHIE enters, fumbling with a large ring of keys. Ever single-minded, she puts another key in the door and tries it.)

SOPHIE. One a'these has got to work.

TYLER. Hello.

SOPHIE (*snapping*). You shouldn't talk to strangers.

TYLER. You are.

SOPHIE. Don't correct your elders. (*She picks another key and tries it. TYLER indicates the woman to MARIAN and then watches her for a moment, almost gleefully.*)

TYLER. What're you doing?

SOPHIE. Fine, thank you.

TYLER. That's not what I asked.

SOPHIE. That's not what I answered. Thought you *had* me that time, didn't you? (*She tries another key.*)

TYLER. I'm on my honeymoon.

SOPHIE. And you're standing here talking to me? Your wife's a lucky woman. And he asks me what *I'm* doing!

TYLER. You're trying to get the door open.

SOPHIE. I'm trying to get the lock open. The door's already open, lame-o. (*She tries another key.*)

TYLER. Then why're you trying to get the lock open?

SOPHIE. Because when I leave here I have to lock up. Am I going too fast for you?

TYLER. Oh, you must be the cleaning lady.

SOPHIE. So?

TYLER (*indicates MARIAN*). This is my wife.

SOPHIE. She looks like she's already been cleaned.

MARIAN. Hello.

SOPHIE. Don't talk to strangers.

TYLER. I just introduced you!

SOPHIE. Yeah? What's my name?

TYLER (*sarcastically*). You don't know?

SOPHIE. Hey, good one. *(She hands the keys to TYLER.)*

Make yourself useful, will you, Skee-zix? *(She very slowly shuffles over to MARIAN.)*

TYLER. Tyler. Oh...*(He takes the keys and tries them one by one on the lock.)*

SOPHIE *(to MARIAN)*. I'm Sophie. I'm the cleaning woman. You can call me Sophie.

MARIAN. My name's Marian. You can call me a cab.

SOPHIE. Oh, you've seen the place. Well, wait'll I get it cleaned up.

MARIAN. It'll look better?

SOPHIE. I don't know. I said wait till I get it cleaned up. Kids! Always in a hurry.

MARIAN. You're supposed to clean? And you're just now getting here?

TYLER. Maybe she walked.

SOPHIE. I heard that. I got twenty-twenty hearing. That's what my doctor said.

MARIAN. Twenty-twenty.

SOPHIE. He's an eye doctor. But he's right you know. I'll prove it. Take out a twenty. *(MARIAN takes a bill from her purse. SOPHIE pauses to listen, cupping one ear.)* Yep, that's a twenty. *(She snatches it and puts it in a pocket.)*

TYLER. You're just now getting here?

SOPHIE. Just now? I was supposed to be here, ready to work, at eight o'clock.

TYLER. That was eight o'clock this morning.

SOPHIE. What time is it now?

TYLER *(looks at his watch)*. Eight o'clock.

SOPHIE. Then quit griping.

TYLER. It's eight o'clock at night.

SOPHIE. It is? Bye. *(She begins to shuffle a bit faster toward the door.)*

MARIAN. Wait a minute. You're leaving?

SOPHIE. You got it, kiddo. I have to catch Jake before he gets the truck started.

TYLER. Jake your husband?

SOPHIE (*sarcastically*). No, he's my chauffeur. I just dress like this during the hunting season. Have you found the right key yet? I don't want to get struck here after dark.

TYLER. But you haven't done anything yet.

SOPHIE. Made twenty bucks.

MARIAN (*crosses to SOPHIE*). Hold it one second. Why are you afraid to get stuck here after dark?

SOPHIE. Why?

MARIAN. I asked first.

SOPHIE. I'll tell you why. 'Cause the place is haunted, that's why.

MARIAN. Haunted?

SOPHIE. You don't understand the word "haunted"?

MARIAN. Oh sure. I think it means "charming." (*She glares at TYLER.*)

SOPHIE. Whatever you say. But the place scares the terwillikers out of me. I only took the gig so I could get my cat fixed.

TYLER. Why?

SOPHIE (*snapping*). 'Cause he's broken, Curly. Have you found the right key yet?

MARIAN. Wait a minute, this place is haunted?!

SOPHIE. You heard that, too?

TYLER (*to MARIAN*). Baby, it's not really. (*MARIAN pulls away from him.*)

SOPHIE. You're a real estate salesman, aren't you?

MARIAN. You *knew* about it. And you brought me here? For our honeymoon?

TYLER. Oh, all old houses like this get a reputation. A door creaks, some boards settle and right away it's haunted. (*Offstage, a woman screams. MARIAN rushes into TYLER's arms.*)

SOPHIE. 'Course, the screams help, too.

TYLER. You heard that?

SOPHIE. Sure, I got twenty-twenty hearing. Drop a twenty.

MARIAN. Don't do it. It's a trick.

TYLER. That came from outside. I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation.

SOPHIE. Yeah, somebody saw a ghost.

MARIAN. Well, that's an explanation but I wouldn't call it reasonable. (*TYLER pulls free from MARIAN.*)

TYLER. Just settle down. Wait here and I'll go check it out.

MARIAN. You must be kidding.

TYLER. You'll be okay.

SOPHIE. He's lying.

MARIAN. I know.

TYLER. How can you tell when I'm lying?

MARIAN. 'Cause you're talking to me. (*To SOPHIE.*) Notice he didn't deny that he lies?

SOPHIE. Yeah, I caught that. (*To TYLER.*) Politician, right?

TYLER. I'll be right outside. (*He exits out the front door.*)

MARIAN. He doesn't inspire me with confidence.

SOPHIE. Yeah, I wouldn't let him unlock any doors either, if I were you. You two just got married?

MARIAN. That's right. This afternoon.

SOPHIE. You got married today? On Halloween?

MARIAN. Well, we thought it would be a different kind of wedding. See, my husband's a writer.

SOPHIE (*appalled*). A writer? (*She takes out the twenty and gives it back to MARIAN.*) Here. (*Sympathetically.*) I didn't know.

MARIAN. You mean, say for argument's sake, there's a problem staying the night here?

SOPHIE. Are you kidding?! (*She leans in.*) Ask me again.

MARIAN. You mean, say for argument's sake, there's a problem staying the night here?

SOPHIE. Are you kidding?! *Nobody* stays the night here. Whenever people say they don't want to go nowhere, *this* is the nowhere they're talking about. People line up for miles just to miss this place.

MARIAN. They do?

SOPHIE. Those that know about it.

MARIAN. What about those that don't know about it?

SOPHIE (*logically*). If they don't know about it, they don't come. (*To herself.*) City people, I don't know...

MARIAN. But Tyler says it's part of the family estate.

SOPHIE (*aghast*). His family owns Graveside Manor?

MARIAN. Graveside Manor?

SOPHIE. That's the name of the place.

MARIAN. Why do they call it that? (*SOPHIE moves MARIAN over to the window.*)

SOPHIE. Well, it's a manor, right?

MARIAN. Right.

SOPHIE (*pulls curtain back*). And what's out there?

MARIAN (*fearful*). Graves!

SOPHIE. You got it. Hence the name Graveside Manor. Can't exactly call it the Hyatt Recently Deceased.

MARIAN. I'm going to kill him.

SOPHIE. Good place for it. Didn't you see all those tombstones when you drove up?

MARIAN (*moves to sofa*). I had my eyes closed.

SOPHIE (*shakes her head*). And you found it anyway.

MARIAN. My husband drove.

SOPHIE. Next time take the bus. *(She begins removing some of the canvasses.)*

MARIAN. A bus comes out here?

SOPHIE. No. City people. Listen, Toots, you'll be all right until the sun goes down.

MARIAN. The sun's already gone down.

SOPHIE. I thought it was awful dark for eight o'clock in the morning.

(TYLER enters carrying MADGE.)

MARIAN. Tyler!

SOPHIE. Look, he's married another one.

TYLER. Honey, help me get her to the sofa. *(MARIAN helps TYLER put MADGE on the sofa. MADGE is coming to.)*

SOPHIE *(disgusted)*. They got a word for guys like you.

TYLER. What?

SOPHIE. Writers.

MARIAN. What happened?

TYLER. I don't know. She was coming out of the cemetery.

SOPHIE. That's all I need to hear! *(To MARIAN.)* You got a hammer and a wooden stake?

TYLER. Of course not.

SOPHIE *(to TYLER)*. What about garlic?

TYLER. That doesn't work.

SOPHIE. No, I'm hungry.

MARIAN. This is Madge Perkins, Tyler's editor.

SOPHIE. Just as long as her name isn't Thorncraft.

TYLER. My name's Thorncraft. *(SOPHIE steps back, suddenly afraid.)*

SOPHIE. No! Then it's coming true! The legend, it's...

MADGE. Oh, I...Tyler! You're here! *(She sits up.)*

TYLER. Take it easy.

MADGE. Did you see it? It was horrible!

TYLER. Calm down, Madge, I'm right here.

MARIAN (*pointedly*). I'm right here, too.

TYLER. What did you see?

MADGE. I don't know, I...It seemed to come from somewhere deep in the graveyard. It was huge and looked like it was covered with moss! A man or something! It was...it was...

SOPHIE (*ominously*). Cyrus Thorncraft.

MARIAN. Who?

SOPHIE. You sure you want to hear this?

TYLER. Well, I don't think...

MARIAN. Shut up, you! (*To SOPHIE.*) Go ahead.

SOPHIE. Cyrus Thorncraft. The way I get it, this happened over a hundred years ago, just after this place was built. The owner, the man who built this place, was a large... (*She stops and looks around.*) This ain't working. (*To TYLER.*) You. Give me (*She imitates spooky music.*) "Ooo-OO-ooo..." (*TYLER, obeying her, continues the music all through SOPHIE's tale.*) Cyrus Thorncraft, the owner, the man who built this place, was a large brute of a man. Cruel. Unfeeling. You know, a man. He wanted a house next to that old cemetery. Nobody asked why, he had that much money. It was just him and his wife who lived here. Her name was Lydia. Then one night, one Halloween night, they say old Cyrus went mad...and killed Lydia! With an ax! Then he turned the ax on himself and did himself in!

TYLER (*stops "oo-ing"*). How could he kill himself with an ax?

SOPHIE. He couldn't find a fork. You want to hear this or not?

MADGE. Can we vote?

SOPHIE (*to TYLER*). "Ooo-OO-oo."

TYLER (*begins the music again*). “Ooo-OO-ooo...”

SOPHIE. And they say that from that day to this, every Halloween night, from twilight till dawn, his ghost still roams these premises searching...*searching* for the wife he murdered. Some say Lydia's ghost is here, too, waiting for him. See, she can never leave this house.

TYLER (*winds down to “oo’s”*). Why is she waiting for him?

SOPHIE. No one knows. But (*She leans in to TYLER*) there are those that say she wants to kill old Cyrus...and any other Thorncraft that sets foot inside this house.

MARIAN. Does that include people that marry into the family?

MADGE. Or visitors?

SOPHIE. And only when she has had her vengeance, only when she has righted the wrong done her, can she rest in peace. You want me to make up your beds now?

MARIAN. You know, I saw a quaint little motel just down the road...

TYLER. We're staying here tonight, right, Chief?

MADGE. Let's not skirt the issue. (*She rises and moves warily toward the window*.) I saw something out there. Or someone.

TYLER (*moves to MADGE*). Oh, you're letting your imagination run away with you.

MADGE. Just as long as it takes me with it.

TYLER. There could be a hundred explanations for what you saw.

MADGE. Yeah? What?

TYLER. It was probably a bear. (*He moves back to MARIAN*.)

MADGE. And *that's* supposed to make me feel better?

SOPHIE. Why *are* you two staying here tonight, anyway?

TYLER. I don't believe it's any of your business.

SOPHIE. Of course not, why are you staying here?

MARIAN. For a stupid book he's writing.

TYLER. That's right. (*He turns back to MADGE.*) Actually, it was my editor's idea.

MADGE. Who, little old me?

TYLER. The same lady who's supposed to be taking pictures of this place, right?

MADGE (*holds up her camera*). Lead me to your ectoplasm.

TYLER. You sure you can focus?

MADGE. Focusing is easy. It's remaining conscious I'm worried about.

SOPHIE. What kind of book do you think you're going to write about this place?

TYLER (*to SOPHIE*). A best seller, I hope. You've probably heard of some of my books.

MARIAN. He writes horror novels and yes, I knew that when I married him. (*MADGE moves tentatively around the room, snapping pictures as she goes.*)

SOPHIE. Yeah?

TYLER. I'm sure you've heard of me. Tyler Thorncraft? (*No response from SOPHIE.*) I wrote "Grave Circumstances."

SOPHIE. Never heard of it. (*She puts her hands in her pockets.*)

TYLER. "Cadavers Are People Too"?

SOPHIE. Nope.

TYLER. "Don't Look For A Pulse, Hand Me The Shovel"?

SOPHIE. Ooh!

TYLER. You've heard of it?

SOPHIE (*takes a key out*). No, I found the key that goes to the front door. (*She crosses to the door. She tries the key and it fits. She shuts and locks the door.*)