

Excerpt Terms & Conditions

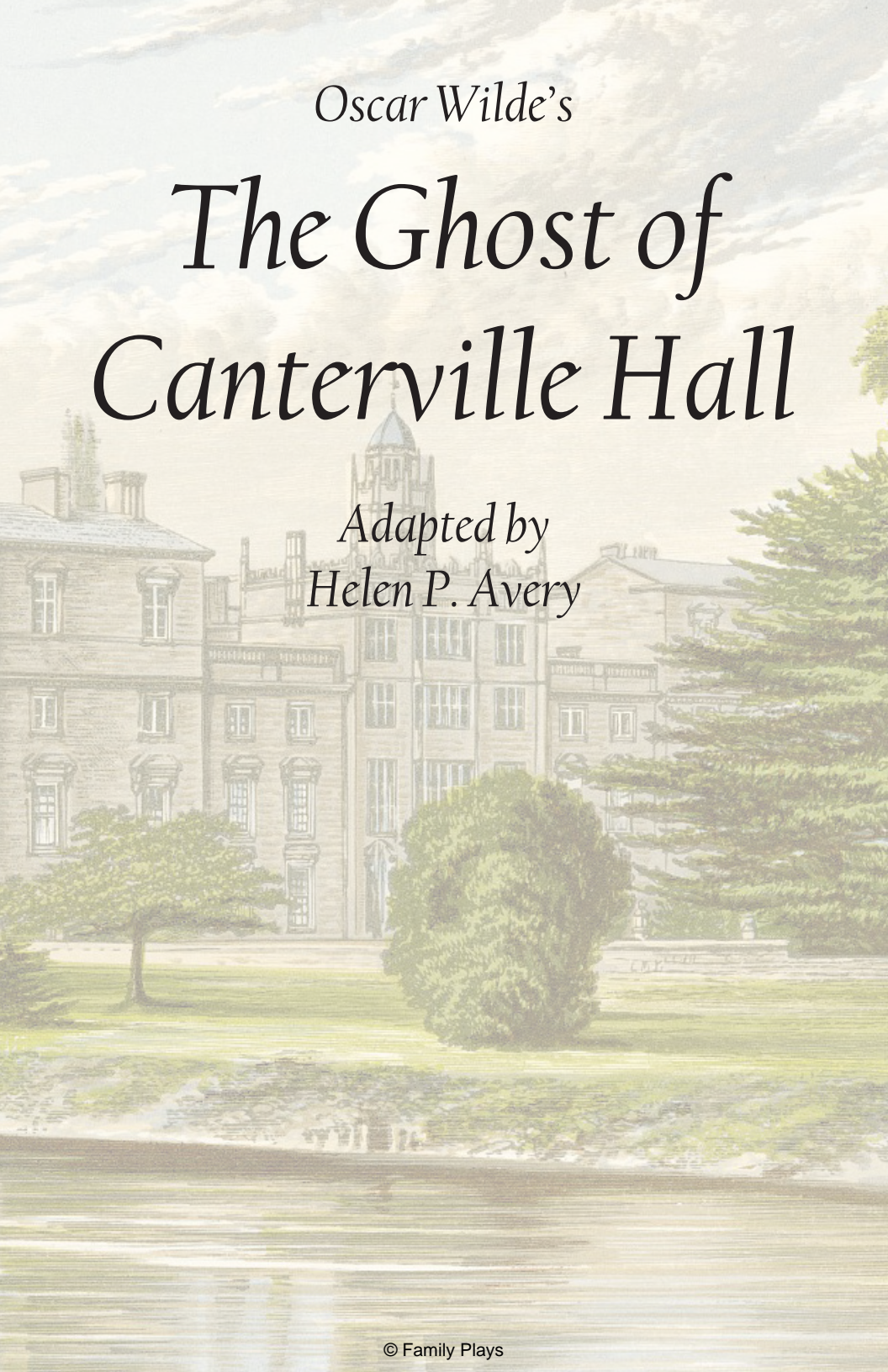
This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity of scripts.

Family Plays



Oscar Wilde's

The Ghost of Canterville Hall

*Adapted by
Helen P. Avery*

The Ghost of Canterville Hall

Comedy. Adapted by Helen P. Avery. From Oscar Wilde's story. *Cast: 5m., 5w., 1 boy, 1 girl.* From page to stage, discover this adaptation of Oscar Wilde's whimsical, shivery and moving story about a ghost who is tired of haunting. A 16th-century ghost named Sir Simon, haunts his family mansion, periodically terrifying its inhabitants. Around 1900, the house is sold to an American businessman and his family who refuse to be scared by strange apparitions. Mr. and Mrs. Otis offer the ghost oil for his chains and medicine for indigestion, and the children pester him with mischievous pranks. Only Virginia, the courageous older daughter, attempts to understand the ghost's problems. After Sir Simon helps rescue her from some thieving gypsies, Virginia is able to assist him in finding rest at last. *One set. Period costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: G92.*

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

www.FamilyPlays.com

ISBN-13 978-0-87602-441-6



The Ghost of Canterville Hall

The Ghost of Canterville Hall

Adapted by

HELEN P. AVERY

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by FAMILY PLAYS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website www.FamilyPlays.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: FAMILY PLAYS, 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© 1977 by
ANCHORAGE PRESS, INC.

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE GHOST OF CANTERVILLE HALL)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-441-6

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author(s) of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

Dedication

This adaptation of THE CANTERVILLE GHOST is dedicated to the Assistant Director of Adventure Theatre's premiere production, Elizabeth Goodwyn, and to the members of the Cast and Production Staff, all of whose help and forbearance made possible its realization on the Theatre's stage at Glen Echo, Maryland.

MRS. UMNEY	Francine Oscar
LADY CANTERVILLE	Eugenia Sorgnit
MARIO	David Lisansky
MAGDA	Ruth Moss
LORD CANTERVILLE	Spike Parrish
SIR SIMON DE CANTERVILLE	Dr. Omar Pancoast, Jr.
CECIL, the Duke of Cheshire	Dennis Scharf
BUD	Brad Oscar
BETSY	Melanie Metzger
HIRAM B. OTIS	John F. Pellant
MRS. OTIS	Katherine Deikel
VIRGINIA OTIS	Sonja Gill

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer	Terry H. Smith
Set Design and Technical Director	Tyron Huber
Costume Design	Evelyn Dobbins
Stage Manager and "Little Man"	Antoinette E. Pineau
Director of Sound and Production Photographs	E. Pen Stephens
Lighting Design	David Shack
Mask Design and Properties	Jill Metzger, Rose Wilson
Program and Flyer Design	Joni Wall
Publicity	Betty Crummel
Publicity Photographs	F. N. Rothberg
Assistant Stage Manager	Ilene Lockman

FOREWORD

In one of his barbs of epigrammatic wit Oscar Wilde claimed that "morality is simply an attitude we adopt toward people whom we personally dislike." Yet he used wit constantly in a moral way — for the exposure of deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, pettishness and cruelty. In *Sir Simon de Canterville* Wilde created a character of crudely pagan instincts, who would murder his wife in a moment if she displeased him, faced with Christian morality in the form of a young American girl. He frequently hides behind a mask, but Virginia sees through it, and because of her sincerity and courage brings about his reform.

Sir Simon represents something else also. Wilde subtitled his story "a Hylo-Idealistic Romance." It seems likely then that he conceived of Sir Simon as "the spirit of place" in the family mansion, and Virginia as a young person so spellbound by this "spirit" that she is willing to risk her life exploring the depth of its ancient walls.

As much as possible the inner meaning of Wilde's story and the feeling of his subtle wit have been incorporated into this adaptation. Full advantage should be taken in production of the contrast between the 16th-Century British Ghost and the thoroughly American family. It is important, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Otis be kept sympathetic characters in order for young audiences to identify them as parent figures, as well as to identify themselves with the children. For older audiences this interpretation is also valid so that the spirit of the original story will take life on the stage.

Helen P. Avery

Silver Spring, Maryland

CHARACTERS

MRS. UMNEY, A Cockney Housekeeper

MARIO, A Gypsy

MAGDA, A Gypsy

LADY CANTERVILLE

LORD CANTERVILLE

SIR SIMON DE CANTERVILLE

CECIL, the Duke of Cheshire, a young man

MR. HIRAM B. OTIS, an American Businessman

MRS. OTIS

BUD

BETSY

} Twins, about 12 years old

VIRGINIA OTIS, a young girl, preferably blonde

TIME and PLACE

The early Twentieth Century, Canterville Hall, England.

ACT ONE

Scene One, a Midsummer Evening

Scene Two, Evening a Week Later

ACT TWO

Scene One, near Midnight

Scene Two, the next Morning

The single set shows the Tudor entrance hall of Canterville Hall. There is a large tapestry upstage center with a medieval chest beneath it. SR is a small desk with an inkwell, and to the right of that the front door of the Hall. There is also a fireplace with a portrait of Sir Simon above it. At SL is a window with a bench or window seat under it. At the extreme SR and SL of the proscenium are steps leading up to small balconies with hallways leading offstage to bedroom areas. There is a mirror downstage right, and a suit of armor near the tapestry. Gas lamps gleam from sconces in the wall. Two antique chairs, a small Oriental rug, and a table with a large silver candelabrum on it complete the set. There must be a movable panel back of the tapestry and a space behind it where Sir Simon and Virginia can exit through the wall.

ACT I, SCENE 1

A Midsummer Evening

(A gloomy light glows from the gas lamps. No one is in the Hall as the scene opens. Suddenly, with the sound of eerie music, the suit of armor starts to glow with a green light. The light then detaches itself from the armor and appears to "walk" about the room. The armor ceases to glow as the light leaves it. The light stops at one point and seems to hesitate as to which way it is going. Then it approaches the front door, which opens mysteriously, and exits as the door closes after it. The green light appears momentarily in the window, then vanishes. Shortly there is a jangle of the front door bell, and Mrs. Umney appears from SL and crosses toward door SR. Lady Canterville enters on balcony SL in evening dress and calls down to her.)

LADY CANTERVILLE: What was *that*, Mrs. Umney?

MRS. UMNEY: The front door, me Laidy.

LADY C. (relieved): Oh . . . I was afraid it might be . . .

MRS. U.: Oh no, Laidy Canterville. Not one of them strange sounds. Thank the good Lord for that! (She shrugs, shakes her head, unbolts the door, starts to open it, then half closes it, peering out.)

MRS. U.: Oh, it's you! (sighs) I suppose you be wanting to set up camp again at the end of the deer park.

(The Gypsies appear in the doorway.)

MARIO: Si, si! Zat ees vat ve vish — eef it please his Lordship. Uh — as long as ze Fair ees in town.

MAGDA: Igen — please!

MRS. U.: For several days, then. (sighs) Well, you'll 'ave to stay right there till I ask 'er Laidyship. I fancy you're up to no good.

(Mrs. U. closes the door — but not quite shut — muttering something about "They'll steal something for sure.")

LADY C.: Mrs. Umney! You must not talk like that about anyone.

MRS. U. (ascending stairs to Lady C.): It's them gypsies, me Laidy, as were 'ere last July, and they be wanting to camp again. I don't like the look of them, I don't.

LADY C.: His Lordship let them camp last year, Mrs. Umney. I'm sure it's all right. They'll be well out of sight in the hollow beyond the woods.

MRS. U.: But it's a 'ole band of them, me Laidy. Very dirty-looking they are, and sort of evil, in *my* opinion.

LADY C.: Tell them they can camp there if they clean up when they leave, as they did before.

(While this conversation goes on, Mario pushes open the door, listens, and tiptoes into the Hall a short distance. Magda pokes her head in. Mario looks covetously toward the silver candelabrum on the table and moves a step or two toward it. He looks toward Magda and they nod at each other significantly.)

They both duck back behind the door and close it noiselessly as Mrs. Umney descends.)

MRS. U.: Y-yes, me Laidy. Uh — for how long?

LADY C.: Tell them for no more than a week. That will be quite long enough.

MRS. U.: Very good, me Laidy. (she returns downstairs and grumblingly opens the door part way. Lady C. exits to bedroom.) 'Er Laidyship says you can camp in the same place as last year. But for no more'n a week, mind. And don't leave any rubbish about.

MARIO: Zank ye, ma'am. No, no indeed, ma'am.

MAGDA: Nem — ve keep everything speec and span. (Mrs. U. starts to close the door, then opens it again.)

MRS. U.: And mind you don't set the grass afire. (she shuts the door firmly and bolts it. Lady C. comes down the stairs, putting on her long white gloves.)

LADY C.: Have they gone?

MRS. U.: They've gone from 'ere, me Laidy — not from *there*. They be setting up camp.

LADY C.: Very well. Fetch my wrap, will you please, Mrs. Umney? His Lordship and I are going out for the evening.

MRS. U.: Yes, me Laidy. (Exit Mrs. U. Lady C. turns the gas lamp down very low. Mrs. U. returns.)

MRS. U. (helping her with wrap): Will you be out late, me Laidy?

LADY C.: Not very, I think. It's just a reception.

MRS. U.: To speak the truth, me Laidy, I don't like the goings-on at night lately. The noises is getting worse.

LADY C.: I know, Mrs. Umney — but his Lordship says a few noises won't hurt us.

MRS. U.: But . . . even the new butler 'as . . .

LADY C.: See if my necklace is well fastened at the back, will you please, Mrs. Umney?

MRS. U.: Yes, it is, me Laidy, but beggin' your pardon, it's this time of year that fearsome things 'ave 'appened in Canterville 'all. Sir Simon gets restless in 'is grave, he does.

LADY C.: There must be a simple explanation. You may go now, Mrs. Umney. His Lordship will be down directly.

(Exit Mrs. U. shaking her head. Lady C. crosses to mirror SR and checks the necklace herself; also her hair. As she does so, two ghostly green hands appear at the window. They make a scratching sound as though writing something on the glass. Ghost music is heard.)

LADY C.: (to herself, without turning) There's that noise again, as though someone were writing.

(A greenish face of very strange aspect appears at the window above the hands. Lady C. turns slowly, sees it and shrieks.)

LADY C.: Help! Philip... quick! Help He... elp!

(She sinks to the floor and faints. His Lordship appears from above in evening dress and descends.)

LORD C.: Great Scott — what is it? What happened? My dear, wake up!

(Mrs. U. appears from SL. They both shake her, slap her cheek, etc., to awaken her.)

MRS. U.: O... Lord save us! She must 'ave seen something.

LADY C. (waking slowly and looking toward window. The face has disappeared.) Oh... it was the Ghost, Philip. I — I saw it... at the window there.

LORD C.: Now, now, it's all right. (They help her rise and cross to chair.)

LADY C.: It was all green — a terrible face... and hands that were scratching on the glass.

MRS. U.: That must 'ave been the greenish light that Cook saw...

LORD C.: My dear, perhaps it was just...

LADY C.: It was the Ghost of Sir Simon. I know it was. The Ghost your Great Aunt Prudence saw, — a-and never recovered her wits afterward. oh... oh!

MRS. U.: Are you sure it warn't one of them gypsies? (Fans her with apron)

LADY C.: No, no. Not possibly. Now I know what those strange noises were.

MRS. U.: She's right, me Lord. Cook and I 'ave been scared balmy by a lot of knockings and groanings — worse'n usual. And then there was this greenish glow only yesterday.

LADY C.: I will not stay here another night! Not even tonight, Philip!

LORD C.: Very well, my dear. I know you are much too upset to attend the reception. We will go to the Stag's Head Inn, where you should have a good rest.

LADY C.: And I shall never return here. We must sell the place. Can we get in touch with those Americans who were so enthusiastic about it?

LORD C.: Well, well, we'll talk about that later. The Americans were certainly interested in buying it. Come, take my arm and we'll get ready to leave. (Lady C. is assisted by Lord C. up the stairs. Mrs. U. holds the cloak of Lady C. at the foot of the stairs.)

LADY C.: We *must* sell it. We must. You remember what happened to Madame de Trouville here six years ago?

LORD C.: Yes, I know she saw a skeleton sitting in an armchair by the fire reading her diary — all her fancy, my dear, I'm sure.

LADY C.: And the terrible night your Grandfather choked to death on the Knave of Diamonds!

LORD C.: Yes . . . uh . . . there *was* that.

LADY C.: I shall never return here — never! (They exit to bedroom.)

MRS. U.: Ghosts or no, I've lived here too long to move anywhere else.
(Exits with cloak.)

(Enter Sir Simon de Canterville through fireplace SR. He has on a bright green mask, a long black cape and green gloves. There is a clanking of chains as he moves, as he has long lengths of chain around each wrist. He moves toward the window, chortling exultantly to himself; then removes the mask and places it facing the audience on the table.)

SIR SIMON: There! Methinks that is the most fearsome disguise I have yet fashioned.

(He walks about, chuckling, and, removing his gloves, puts them in the chest UC. He wears Elizabethan dress, with white ruff, velvet jacket, etc., and his gray hair falls to his shoulders.)

SIR SIMON (admiring head): Yea, 'tis a true masterwork. And — thanks to my artistry — ha-ha — the last of the Cantervilles are leaving the Hall forever! Perchance I may rest now undisturbed (Sighs happily.) This is not to say that I have not enjoyed scaring people till they scream, faint or run away in fright. (Chuckles again, savoring his memories.) During the brief time at Midsummer when I am able to be seen, I have achieved some marvelous hauntings! I remember the evening when I played at ninepins with the skull and bones of old Lord James de Canterville. (He pantomimes the game.) Whoosh! Strike! The servants fled shrieking from the Hall and never came back. Ha-ha-ha! It was most amusing. But I tire of rattling chains and groaning the rest of the year — with never an appearance. It grows wearisome.

(He sighs again and starts to disappear through fireplace, with mask. Enter Mrs. Umney, coming down the stairs. He raises his arms, makes a dreadful face and groans.)

SIR SIMON: ooo!!!

MRS. U.: Oh! Oh! Oh! Sir Simon! (She shrieks and exits SL hysterically. Sir Simon with a nod of triumph toward audience exits in a puff of smoke through fireplace.)

ACT I, SCENE 2

Evening, A Week Later

(Lord Canterville is sitting near the table, which has a cloth with dishes on it and two wine glasses. The young Duke of Cheshire is seated opposite him. The candelabrum has been removed; also the mirror SR and the Oriental rug. As the scene opens, Mrs. Umney enters with a tray to clear the table.)

MRS. UMNEY (to the Duke): Good evening, your Grace. (He nods.)

LORD C.: A very savory mutton chop, Mrs. Umney. And, by the way, the Otises are dining in the town, but they may be tired and want a cup

of tea when they arrive. (He takes a pipe from his pocket and prepares to smoke.)

MRS. U. (clearing table and folding cloth): Americans *never* want tea, me Lord. They just drink it by force, as you might say — for lack of anything else.

LORD C.: Never mind. They fell in love with this place.

MRS. U.: That they did.

LORD C.: They bought it practically the first minute they saw it.

MRS. U.: (nodding): Mrs. Otis said to me, she did, "It's perfect!" And those twins — they're a caution — shouted, "This is just dandy!" (laughs) "Just dandy," they said. And now the Otises' motor car is coming up the drive, me Lord. Except for Miss Otis, who is riding 'er 'orse.

LORD C.: The horse can be stabled shortly. You'll take their luggage upstairs?

MRS. U.: Yes, me Lord. (Exits with tray.)

DUKE (rising): I wish you had not sold Canterville Hall, Uncle Philip.

LORD C.: I know, Cecil, but Lady Canterville flatly refused to return here. It was a case of having her, or the Hall. I chose *her*. We'll leave here as soon as we have made the Otises comfortable. (Mrs. U. returns, taking some bags toward the stairs.)

DUKE: I'll see that Miss Otis's horse is provided for. (Exits)

(There is a jangle of the front door bell and a sound of young laughter beyond the door. Mrs. Umney drops bags and opens it. She makes a low curtsey as the Otis family bursts in, the twins dashing ahead of their elders. Lord Canterville rises.)

BUD: Hello, Mrs. Umney. Hi there, Lord Canterville!

BETSY: We just can't wait to live in a house as big as a castle!

LORD C. (genially): Welcome to Canterville Hall. (There are greetings all around. Mrs. U. continues upstairs with bags.) I'll see that you settle in and then be on my way.

MR. OTIS: I just reckon we're goin' to have a great time here, Mr. . . uh . . . Lord Canterville. (He wears a Western hat and carries a cane.)

MRS. OTIS: I've always dreamed of living in a place like this!

VIRGINIA: So have I. It's heaven! Too good to be true. (She looks around in admiration. She is dressed in a skirted riding habit.)

LORD C.: Please sit down and rest for a bit. Mrs. Umney is taking your luggage upstairs. (Mrs. Otis sits, removing hat and gloves. The twins have been looking about the room eagerly.)

BETSY: There must be a secret panel somewhere. Isn't there, Lord Canterville?

BUD: Or a closet with a skeleton in it?

LORD C.: There are lots of strange things at Canterville Hall. It's a very large house, as you know, with several floors. It really needs a lift.

BUD: Needs a lift? It would take a giant to lift this house!

MRS. OTIS: Oh Bud, a lift means an elevator. They call it a lift in England.

BUD: Oh!

LORD C. (laughing): The English and Americans really have almost everything in common these days — except the language, of course. Take a look about the house with your sister, Bud, if your parents don't mind.

BETSY: We'd love to. (They dash upstairs in glee.)

BUD: Boy, oh boy!

MRS. OTIS: But be careful, children.

LORD C. (to Mrs. Otis): Mrs. Umney would like to stay here with you. She says she is too old to move to another household. Will that suit you, Mrs. Otis?

MRS. OTIS: Yes, indeed. She will be a great help.

MR. OTIS: It's swell that she comes with the house.

LORD C.: Uh — I'm afraid I have to tell you that there is a Ghost that comes with it also.

VIRGINIA: A Ghost? Why, I think that's so exciting!

MR. OTIS: We'll take everything that comes with the place, Lord Canterville. Thanks to my business in America, "Otis's Oats — Food for Family and Beast," I can afford to buy the place lock, stock and barrel.

MRS. OTIS: We'll just make your Ghost one of the family.

MR. OTIS: But we don't believe in ghosts, you know. If they existed here, I reckon some American would have brought a couple of 'em to our country and put 'em in a circus, sure as shootin'.

LORD C.: But this Ghost has been haunting the Hall for 300 years, and is very real. (The Duke of Cheshire enters SL.) Isn't he, Cecil?

DUKE: Yes. Indeed he is.

LORD C.: This is my nephew, the Duke of Cheshire. He sometimes stays with Lady Canterville and me and is fond of the place. Mr. and Mrs. Otis and Miss Virginia Otis, His Grace the Duke of Cheshire.

DUKE: How do you do?

VIRGINIA: Grace? Is your name really Grace?

DUKE (amused): No., but that's what people call me sometimes. My name is Cecil.

VIRGINIA: Mine's Virginia, and I hope you'll call me that.

DUKE: It will be a pleasure.

MRS. OTIS: We're all pleased to meet you, your — uh — Grace. Perhaps

you would like to stay here at the Hall with us now and then.

CECIL: Thank you, Mrs. Otis.

MR. OTIS: Howdy, Duke. You'll be welcome.

CECIL: Thank you very much.

VIRGINIA: Have you seen the Ghost?

CECIL: No. But I've heard it. He's rather restless, you know.

VIRGINIA: I want to hear *lots* more about him.

CECIL: You shall. Would you care to ride around the park with me, Miss — Virginia? You have a horse, and so have I.

VIRGINIA: I'd love it.

CECIL: Let's go then. We can reach the stables this way.

MRS. OTIS: Remember it will get dark soon. (They exit.)

LORD C.: This time of year it seldom grows dark until very late.

(Mrs. Umney descends from upstairs.)

MRS. U.: Begging your pardon, Lord Canterville. It appears to be clouding up a bit. (She looks apprehensive.)

MRS. OTIS: I'm so glad you're going to stay here with us, Mrs. Umney.

MRS. U.: (curtseying): Thank you, Madam.

LORD C.: Mrs. Umney will bring you a cup of tea if you like.

MRS. OTIS: Thank you, I'd just love some! (Exit Mrs. U.)

LORD C.: My nephew and I must be leaving soon — unless there are problems. . . .

MRS. OTIS: What makes you think there is a ghost here, Lord Canterville?

LORD C.: It is quite noisy at times. Several Cantervilles have seen it.

MR. OTIS: Well, we'll be happy to take care of it.

MRS. UMNEY (entering with tea tray which she puts on table): It's a fearsome thing, Sir.

LORD C.: Frankly . . . Mrs. Umney saw it last Tuesday — and so did Lady Canterville.

MRS. U.: 'Twan't one of them gypsies. I'm sure enough of that.

LORD C.: Oh yes, there are some gypsies camping beyond the woods for a few days, but they are harmless.

MRS. UMNEY: Huh — 'armless as serpents, they are! (Exits)

(CECIL and VIRGINIA return.)

VIRGINIA: We're not going for a ride after all. It's about to rain cats and dogs.

LORD C.: Well — (laughs) — whatever comes down, it is time for me to say farewell to you and to Canterville Hall. Lady Canterville and I are leaving for Australia shortly. The house is all yours — and everything in it.

MRS. OTIS: Good-bye, then, and thanks a heap for your help.

MR. OTIS: 'Bye, Lord Canterville. You and Lady C. have a good trip.

LORD C.: Cecil, you can ride home as soon as the storm is over. I hope all of you are happy here — including the twins.

VIRGINIA: Good-bye, Lord Canterville. We'll take good care of the Ghost.

(Lord C. picks up his hat from the chest and exits by front door.)

MRS. OTIS: Let's have some tea. May I pour you some, your Grace?

CECIL: Thank you, Mrs. Otis.

MR. OTIS: None of that stuff for me, thanks.

(Bud and Betsy lope down the stairs.)

BETSY: We haven't found a secret closet yet.

BUD: But we haven't been all the way to the top. It gets spooky up there. Boo-ooh! (to Betsy. He chases her around the table.)

MRS. OTIS: Children! Children!

BUD (stopping at tapestry and flipping it back): What's behind here? (A wall of wood panelling is revealed) Oh, nothing but a wall. (He examines suit of armor, "Hello, Sir Knight!," grabs a gauntlet, as though to shake hands, then can't seem to get free of it.) Help, it's pinching me! Ouch! Let me go!

MRS. OTIS (rising to extricate him): Don't be silly, dear. You just got caught in a piece of the armor, that's all.

MR. OTIS (helping): There.

BETSY (who has gone over to the window): Look! This is funny! There's some sort of writing on this window.

BUD: What's it say? (Goes to window.)

BETSY: I dunno. It's funny-looking writing. (Cecil and Virginia cross to look.)

CECIL: How curious.

VIRGINIA: Let's see.

CECIL: I think it's old English script.

VIRGINIA: Yes — but backward, like mirror writing. See, there's an "A", turned around, and I think that says "when" — n, e, h, and a capital "W."

BUD: Then it must have been written on the outside of the window.

CECIL: Right enough. Let's go and see, Virginia. (They go out. Bud and Betsy start to follow but —)

BUD (stopping downstage at sight of spot on rug): Golly, what's this big spot on the rug?

BETSY: Ooo! I don't like the way it looks.

MRS. OTIS: (crossing to rug): How horrid! It looks like a bloodstain.

MR. OTIS: That's mighty peculiar. In a fine house like this...

MRS. OTIS: I don't know anything that would make that kind of stain except for blood.

MR. OTIS: Don't make sense for them to leave a rug here with blood on it. Must be somethin' else. But I'm dashed if I know why they wouldn't send it out to the cleaners.

MRS. OTIS: Or buy a new rug. Let's ask Mrs. Umney about it. (Goes SL and pulls bell-pull. Enter Mrs. Umney.)

MRS. UMNEY: Yes, me Laidy... uh... Madam.

MRS. OTIS: Mrs. Umney, I'm afraid something has been spilled on the rug here. Shouldn't it be sent to the cleaners?

MRS. U. (shaking head): 'Twon't do an ounce of good, Madam. 'Tis blood, that is, that's been spilt on that carpet.

MR. OTIS: Well, what if it is? It'll come out with proper treatment.

MRS. U.: Not this blood, Sir. This is very special blood. It cannot be removed.

MR. OTIS: Betsy, you and Bud run upstairs, please, and bring down my stain remover. (Bud & Betsy exit up.) (Mrs. U. looks very apprehensive. Virginia and Cecil return.)

VIRGINIA: It really is old English writing on the window.

MRS. U.: Is that wot it is, Miss? The Ghost put them scribbles there the night Lady Canterville saw his green hands as though he was writing something.

MR. OTIS: Now, how do you know the Ghost wrote it, Mrs. Umney?

MRS. U.: Because I keep them winders sparkling clean, Sir. They was clear as crystal afore last Toosday. I been trying to scrub the marks off ever since, but they won't scrub.

MR. OTIS: Possibly the marks were cut into the glass with a diamond.

CECIL: That's true, Mr. Otis. The writing must have been cut with a diamond, and very recently.

MRS. U.: Just a week ago it was.

MRS. OTIS: And what does it say?

VIRGINIA: Tell them, Cecil.

CECIL: I wrote it down here in my pocket notebook. (Reads.)

"When a golden girl can win
A Lord's black heart from sin,
Then shall this house be still
And peace come to Canterville."

MR. OTIS: What can *that* mean?

MRS. OTIS: It's very mysterious.

MR. OTIS: Well, Virginia, old pal, you're a golden *haired* girl.
Wouldn't that be a golden girl?

CECIL: Perhaps it means a girl with a heart of gold. I feel certain that Virginia is going to help the Ghost in some way.

VIRGINIA: I'd be happy to help him if I knew how.

MRS. OTIS: We have another mystery, too. There is a bloodstain on the rug which won't come out. Mrs. Umney, why can't it be removed?

(Children appear, top of stairs.)

MRS. UMNEY: 'Tis the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville, who was murdered on that very spot.

VIRGINIA: How eerie!

BETSY (breathlessly): Oooo... Who murdered her?

MRS. U.: Sir Simon de Canterville, Miss, way back in 1575 — three hundred years ago.

BUD: *That* long ago? And the spot's still here?

MR. OTIS: Impossible! The rug's not all that old.

MRS. UMNEY: It comes through any carpet put there, Sir.

CECIL: Sir Simon is the Ghost. That is his portrait there over the fireplace.
(Virginia looks at it curiously.)

MRS. UMNEY: That's right, your Grace. He disappeared mysteriously some time after he killed his wife, but his Ghost still roams the place about this time of year.

VIRGINIA: Does he haunt the Hall because he feels guilty about his crime?

MRS. U.: It must be so, Miss.

VIRGINIA: Poor Ghost! He must be very tired of haunting by now.

BUD: What a lark! I'll shoot him with my pea-shooter.

MRS. U.: I would leave him alone if I was you. And the bloodstain also.

BETSY: We could put some linoleum over it. It couldn't come through that.
(There is a sudden clap of thunder, and an angry sound as though coming from Sir Simon. Rain is heard coming down in torrents.)

MRS. UMNEY: I wouldn't try that, Miss.

BETSY: Then try this. (She holds up a bottle.)

MR. OTIS: That's right, Betsy. Beside Otis's Oats there is Otis's Champion Stain Remover. Thank you, Betsy. That'll do the trick. (He takes the bottle from Betsy and holds it up affectionately.)

MRS. U.: Oh no, Sir, don't, I beg of you. You will bring trouble here!