
THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

(Play or Libretto)

Adapted from Oscar Wilde by Gordon Getty

Characters:

VIRGINIA	Soprano
MRS. OTIS	Mezzo-Soprano
1 st TWIN, 1 st BOY, and 1 st VOICE FROM TAPESTRY	Mezzo-Soprano
2 nd TWIN, 2 nd BOY and 2 nd VOICE FROM TAPESTRY	Mezzo-Soprano
CHESHIRE (Cecil)	Tenor
OTIS (Hiram)	Baritone
CANTERVILLE	Baritone
GHOST (Sir Simon)	Bass
FAMILY AT GRAVESITE, GUESTS, STAFF	Non-speaking

Composer's Notes:

Wilde's finest poetry is in his prose, and his finest prose is in his children's stories. Most are dark. Sacrifice and heartbreak are the themes. Frank homage is paid to Hans Christian Andersen, whose little match girl and little mermaid repeat their roles in Wilde's *The Happy Prince* and *The Fisherman and His Soul*.

The Canterville Ghost looks at the sunnier side. Virginia's sacrifice, and the ghost's heartbreak, reach the endings we hoped for. All of Wilde's ideas but one are inspired. He was never in better form. Not many writers could have sent up the stolid Otises or the indignant Sir Simon so richly while leaving us in on their side throughout.

While *Usher House* turns Poe upside down, the libretto for *The Canterville Ghost* follows Wilde's short story pretty closely. His one misjudgment was Sir Simon's murder of his wife, three centuries before, and his breezy justification of it to Virginia. That might have fit in many of Wilde's works. Here it grates against the wholesome and family-friendly theme. The libretto, like the 1944 movie with Charles Laughton, changes this detail. The bloodstain is also relocated from the floor to the armor, so that the audience can see it. Also Canterville and Cheshire are given more continuous roles, Washington

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Otis is left out, and Mrs. Umney is seen but not heard. These changes reflect no critique of Wilde. Stage and page have different needs.

The fidelity of the libretto to the original, these aside, led to twenty scenes averaging three minutes. These quick changes call for high-tech staging, with a minimum of bulk to haul on and off. A two-level set to distinguish bedrooms from the dining room and library should be considered, but not necessarily preferred. Any such structure would have to be able to retract quickly and silently for the outdoor scenes.

When *Usher House* and *Canterville* are staged as a double bill, or even separately, it is probably more effective to show the ancestors in the first, and most or all nonspeaking clambake guests in the second, as projections. This is all the more advantageous in that the ancestors must dance and the guests play sports. The time is past when actual performers, however adept, are likely to work better at this within limits of time and space. The staff in *Canterville* should be real actors, even so, as we want no suggestion that they are supernatural. They can double as family members in Scene 1, with a quick change to get them to the start of Scene 2.

With all respect to the principles of dramaturgy, we writers and composers lean to the view that a word or chord can be worth a thousand pictures. The wisest masters of stagecraft, from Aeschylus to Wagner, knew never to show what is deepest. Some things must be seen on the inside. Nothing visible should move as we hear of the flights of angels taking the sweet prince to his rest, or of Tristan's resurrection in the *Liebestod*, or Cio-Cio-San's faith in the humming chorus. What we see and what we hear are always a partnership where each needs the graciousness to allow the other its solos.

Cases in point would be Wilde's ancient almond, or what Virginia sees on her journey. The almond would make a wonderful logo to project on the front scrim as withered while the audience files in, and as blooming while they file out. But any attempt to show it during the action misses a fine opportunity not to. Leaving it to our imagination becomes more powerful in that all on stage see and describe it several times. The director who keeps it just out of our own view proves that she trusts her living and dead colleagues, respects the audience, and will not give in.

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Scene I

*Sir Simon's gravesite, afternoon, about 1960.
Virginia, Cheshire and their descendants of all
ages, as many as practical. Two baby carriages.*

- 1st BOY: [To Cheshire]: Great Grandpapa, is there really a ghost here?
- CHESHIRE: [Age 88] I have never seen the ghost, so you will have to ask Great Grandmama. On a day as beautiful as this, when she was only a little older than you, it was here that she led a troubled soul to rest. He was not quite family, as we are, but an old guest in her house. How she did so is a secret between them. It is secret even from me. His name was Sir Simon de Canterville. Ever since, we have come here to bid him safe journey, old and young together, some each year for the first time, and some perhaps for the last. Our trek will not be as long as his.
- 2nd BOY: [To Virginia]: Great Grandmama, is it really true?
- VIRGINIA: [Age 85] It is true. Do you know the poem on the stained glass window at Canterville Chase?
- BOTH BOYS: We do, Great Grandmama.
- VIRGINIA: Remember the line "When the barren almond bears"? There stands the almond, and there lies the bough from it that you and I just put on the grave. We have put one there each year. The tree was old in Queen Elizabeth's time, and had long been withered when we bought the Chase. No one remembers any almond to have bloomed so many years, or at all after once barren. The poem told the truth. That is why we inscribed it on his gravestone.
- CHESHIRE: You may all read it. It runs [*from memory*]:
- "When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin,
When the barren almond bears,
And a little child give away its tears,
Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville."
- VIRGINIA: So it happened, little children, seventy years ago.

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Scene II

*Library at Canterville Chase, night, about 1890.
Large windows at the back, a suit of armor
between. Door at one side. Staff except Mrs.
Umney lined up facing audience near the door.
Mrs. Umney opens it. Enter Canterville, Otis, Mrs.
Otis, Virginia (age 15), and Twins. Mrs. Umney
joins the line.*

CANTERVILLE: My dear Otises, you have met Mrs. Umney, Barbara, Richard and Mellows. [*They bow or curtsey.*] I trust they will serve you well. [*At a sign, the staff leaves.*] I also hope you will have better luck with Canterville Chase than I and my ancestors did. The ghost is real enough. He has worked his mischief for these three centuries. I fear your beautiful family may be treated no better. It is not too late to withdraw from the purchase now. Sir Simon has brought us Cantervilles in quite enough disrepute without my failure to warn.

1st TWIN: [*Delighted*] A ghost!

2nd TWIN: [*Delighted*] A real ghost! I'll spot him first!

1st TWIN: No, I will! [*Both giggle.*]

VIRGINIA: Poor lonely ghost! Poor Sir Simon, alone in the cold!

OTIS: My Lord, I will take the furniture and the ghost at a valuation. I come from a modern country, where we have everything money can buy; and with all our spry young fellows painting the Old World red, and carrying off your best actresses and prima donnas, I reckon that if there were such a thing as a ghost in the whole of Europe, we'd have it at home in a very short time in one of our public museums, or on the road as a show.

CANTERVILLE: Then let us hope Sir Simon accepts the overtures of your enterprising impresarios. If not, as I fear, Richard can ride the seven miles to the train station at Ascot for anything needed. I will do what I can if asked. I gather young Cheshire is in your corner too, and I would value his help in a pinch.

VIRGINIA: O, Father, do!

TWINS: [*Looking at the armor*] Is that the ghost's armor?

CANTERVILLE: It is indeed.

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- MRS. OTIS: Hiram, what is this mark on it?
- CANTERVILLE: If I may answer, it is the blood of Sir Simon's brother-in-law, murdered by him on this spot in 1585. Sir Simon survived nine years, and disappeared suddenly. No trace of him has ever been found. It seems that the victim fell against the armor, and the stain cannot be removed.
- 1st TWIN: A bloodstain!
- 2nd TWIN: All the better!
- BOTH TWINS: Let's hunt the ghost!
- OTIS: That is all nonsense! Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent will clean it up in no time! [*He produces some, and cleans briskly while we hear "Yankee Doodle."* The stain disappears.] I knew Pinkerton's would do it! [*Lightning visible through both windows, loud thunder after half a second. Rain pounds the windows.*] What a monstrous climate! I guess the old country is so overpopulated that they have not enough decent weather for everybody. I have always been of the opinion that emigration is the only thing for England. [*Now we have been hearing "Rule, Britannia." Armor salutes, British style, at the closing tonic, and returns to normal just before all look back.*]
- CANTERVILLE: [*Smiling*] Well, I shall emigrate home. Good night, good Otises. Remember to call on me in any need, and remember that I warned you.

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Scene III

Library, morning. Empty. Sun shining through the windows.

TWINS: *[From outside the door]* Daddy! Hurry! Bring the key!

OTIS: *[From upstairs]* We're coming down now! *[Running footsteps.]*

TWINS: Virginia! Hurry!

[Door opens inward. All enter, twins first.]

2nd TWIN: *[Rushing in to the suit of armor]* It's here again!

1st TWIN: As big as ever!

VIRGINIA: *[Right after them]* Daddy, Mommy, it's the bloodstain again! That's three times in a row!

OTIS: *[Pensively]* And twice with the door locked overnight after I cleaned it away.

MRS. OTIS: Hiram, dear, it might be the ghost after all.

1st TWIN: It is!

2nd TWIN: For sure!

BOTH TWINS: Let's find him! We'll pull his sheet!

VIRGINIA: It must be. Poor cold ghost.

MRS. OTIS: Hiram, perhaps we were a little hasty. Do you think I should join the Psychological Society? It would do no harm.

OTIS: Perhaps we were. Live and learn. If there is a ghost after all, it's only fair that he should pay us rent. I will draft a letter to the firm of Myers and Podmore on the matter, as well as an article on the Permanence of Sanguinous Stains when Connected with Crime. Meanwhile, we will clean it as fast as the ghost restores it, if the Pinkerton supply holds up, and at least be rid of it in between. We Yankees can be stubborn too. *[He motions them toward the door, and opens it. Through the doorway:]* Mrs. Umney, let us have some breakfast!

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Scene IV

A corridor upstairs, midnight. Clanking of chains. Ghost enters dragging chains and moaning, lurches slowly toward the Otis bedroom. He arrives. Door opens from inside. Otis emerges.

OTIS: [Composed, to Ghost]: My dear sir, I really must insist on your oiling those chains, and have brought you for that purpose a small bottle of the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator. [Holds it up.] It is said to be completely efficacious upon one application, and there are several testimonials to that effect on the wrapper from some of our most eminent native divines.

[Hands it to him and gently closes the door. Ghost is thunderstruck. Then he dashes the bottle on the floor, roaring indignation, and lurches back the way he came. Twins, emerging from a door at the opposite side of the stage, whiz pillows past his head. He reverses direction and flees.]

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Scene V

Ghost's room, immediately after. A door on one side wall, a window on the other. Back wall is covered by a large tapestry with a hunting scene. Ghost enters from the door in a rage, and begins throwing his chains on a ring hanging near it.

GHOST: Rising Sun Lubricator! Pillows! Never, in a career of three hundred years, have I been so grossly insulted! What of my achievements? I am an artist! Think of the wicked Lord Boxford choking in his dressing room with the knave of diamonds half-way down his throat, and confessing, just before he died, that he had cheated Charles James Fox of 50,000 pounds at Crockford's by means of that very card, and that I had made him swallow it. An artist! Think of my triumph as "Red Reuben, or the Strangled Babe"! My debut as "Gaunt Gibeon, the Blood-Sucker of Bexley Moor"! All the world was in awe! To see me was to take one's life, or die of fright, or babble in asylums! And now some wretched modern Americans offer me the Rising Sun Lubricator, and throw pillows at my head! An artist! It is not to be borne! An artist gives such an audience a performance worthy of himself, not of their thick perceptions. They have not heard my maniacal laugh, that turned Lord Raker's wig grey in a single night! They will! They will! [*Illustrates the laugh.*]

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Scene VI

Dining room, morning. Windows at one side and back. Two doors, one for staff leading to the kitchen, at the other side. Steps to a small empty alcove at the window at the back. Otises, Virginia, twins present eating breakfast. All but Otis mime conversation. Otis' attention is divided among this, a newspaper by his place, and a cup of coffee in his hand. Staff waiting. Otis puts down the coffee, turns the page, picks up the coffee again, takes a sip.

OTIS: I confess disappointment that my gift to the ghost has not been accepted. I have no wish to do him any personal injury, and I must say that considering the length of time he has been in the house, I don't think it is at all polite to throw pillows at him. [*Twins whoop with laughter.*] Upon the other hand, if he really declines to use the Rising Sun Lubricator, we will have to take his chains from him. It would be quite impossible to sleep, with such a noise going on outside the bedrooms. This would be the minimum step. The firm of Myers and Podmore assure me that eviction proceedings on the grounds of nuisance, let alone evasion of rent, would otherwise be quite in order. [*Resumes reading.*]

MRS. OTIS: But, Hiram, would that be fair? [*Otis looks up.*] Some consideration should be given an artist. His nightly movements are performances of a sort, and he has not actually done us harm. His manner of restoring the bloodstains each morning suggests that he has taken an interest in Paul Gauguin and the impressionists. Different colors every day!

TWINS: The ghost is colorblind! Let's bet on what he will pick next!
[*Giggles*]

VIRGINIA: That isn't funny at all!

OTIS: Dears, dears! We will take his chains if he does not use the oil, and that is quite enough. The house has room for all of us if he leaves us in peace. It is the oil or the chains. Artists are artists, but my guests must follow minimum rules.

MRS. OTIS: My dear, you are quite right, as always. [*To a servant*]: Barbara, could we have more toast? [*Servant hurries toward the kitchen.*]

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Scene VII

Midnight in the upstairs corridor again. Ghost enters. No chains, but he wears the suit of armor from the library. The bloodstain is emerald green. Moaning and groaning. He reaches the Otis' bedroom door as before, clears his throat, and lets loose the maniacal laugh again. The door opens as he finishes.

MRS. OTIS: I fear you are far from well, and have brought you a bottle of Dr. Dobell's Tincture. If it is indigestion, you will find it a most excellent remedy. Artists such as yourself are given to delicate constitutions, and owe the public due attention to their health.

[Closes the door gently as had Otis. Ghost dashes the tincture as he had the lubricator, with howls of indignation. Twins ambush him with pea-shooters. Again he flees as they shriek with laughter.]

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Scene VIII

Ghost's room, immediately after, but Ghost now already present and throwing off the armor.

GHOST: Insupportable! To be lectured on professionalism! On hygiene! On my duty to the audience! After being called an imitator of Gauguin! Performances of a sort! Of a sort! Do they think I don't listen? What is an artist to an audience of oysters? A public of poultry and potatoes! A clique of cucumbers! All euphemisms for Americans. They are what Americans hope to become if they are good. Death to all! Death and Thunder! Murder will walk abroad with silent feet. The twins first! They have not seen my "Dumb Daniel, or the Suicide's Skeleton"! None who have seen it are alive and sane. And the Otises! They will get my "Martin the Maniac, or the Masked Mystery"! They will beg for death! Only little Virginia, who has never insulted me, and is pretty and gentle, will be spared. A few hollow groans from the wardrobe should be enough. No ghost could honorably do less. Death and madness to the rest!

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Scene IX

Next night. Upstairs, as before. Ghost enters from the opposite side, with a rolling gibbet from which he contrives to hang. Strangled sounds as he approaches the Twins' room. They jump out in sheets, yelling "boo!" He screams and flees, dragging the gibbet, as Twins giggle.

Scene X

Next night. Enter Ghost in rags with a bell. He slouches toward the Twins' room shouting, "Unclean, unclean!" and ringing the bell. One Twin jumps out and hits him in the face with a huge cream pie. He falls back over the other who is on all fours behind him. He scrambles away howling as they break up and hug each other, jumping up and down.

Scene XI

Next night. Enter Ghost, this time as a hooded headsman with a huge axe. The Twins' bedroom door is slightly open. He bursts through with axe uplifted, is drenched by a bucket of water falling from above, and flees again as the Twins screech with laughter.

Scene XII

Ghost's room. Ghost sits wrapped in a blanket, a hot water bottle on his head, his feet in a steaming basin of water. He is morose.

GHOST: Fiasco! Disgrace! [*Sneezing*] A-choo! Hooted and hectored off the stage! Enough! No more! A-choo! Let them sleep like lumps! Let them do without me! Let them do without the bloodstain! Let them hang! I withdraw! I cancel! I abrogate! I quit! A-choo!

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Scene XIII

Dining Room, breakfast, a week later. Otises, Virginia, Twins at table. Again a newspaper by Otis' place. Staff serving.

- OTIS: *[To all the family as they eat]:* Again no bloodstain on the armor. It has been a week since the last.
- MRS. OTIS: And no noises or visits in the night. Might Sir Simon have gone?
- VIRGINIA: Mommy, where? This is his home.
- 1st TWIN: We miss him.
- 2nd TWIN: We need Sir Simon!
- OTIS: He may not have gone. I am missing a jar of the Rising Sun Lubricator.
- MRS. OTIS: And I a bottle of Dr. Dobell's Tincture.
- OTIS: And he put the armor back on its stand in the library, although the servants had to shine away the scratches and scuff marks. Possibly he has mended his manners.
- MRS. OTIS: An artist would need some pause for sabbatical or vacation.
- OTIS: Then let us hope it holds for tomorrow's clambake. All our friends and neighbors have accepted. I almost miss Sir Simon, to tell the truth, but we will have enough to manage without him.
- MRS. OTIS: Indeed we will. I do so look forward to seeing Lord Canterville again, and young Duke Cecil of Cheshire. And Cecil may also interest someone else here.
- VIRGINIA: Mommy, stop!
- TWINS: Sir Simon, come back! We promise to be afraid!
- 1st TWIN: *[Sotto voce]* But not too much! *[Giggles]*

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Scene XIV

Clambake. Afternoon, outside. House in background. Archery, badminton, riding, croquet. Canterville, Cheshire (age 18), Otises, Virginia, Twins, servants, guests.

CANTERVILLE: [To Otises]: I hear the ghost has packed his bags. Congratulations all round, and well done! He had done dreadful things in the Chase, and I would not have wanted any of them to have happened to you.

OTIS: My Lord, we are not so sure. A pause at least. We had grown accustomed to the old sinner, but welcome the extra sleep.

CANTERVILLE: Then let us hope for the best. Remember to count on me, and young Cheshire, if trouble comes back. [*Presses his hand. To a guest*]: Lady Harriet! [*Moves off.*]

MRS. OTIS: [*Joining Otis*] Dear Hiram! I'm happy to see that young Cheshire came by a few minutes ago. Did he ask for Virginia's hand again?

OTIS: He did, and got the same answer. They are both too young. And we Americans, for ourselves, are happiest with no titles other than Mr. and Mrs. I told him that that aside, if both become what I believe they will in a few years, I could imagine no finer match.

MRS. OTIS: My thoughts exactly. Have they been riding together?

OTIS: They have, and both took the third hedge cleanly. She just tore her habit on the fourth and is going inside to get Barbara to mend it.

MRS. OTIS: There she is at the service door now. Barbara will be making tea. I'll go help her. [*Starts off.*]

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Scene XV

Ghost's room, immediately after. Ghost sits looking out gloomily through the window.

- VIRGINIA: [Offstage] Barbara! Barbara! Does anyone hear me? Barbara!
[Enters carrying torn riding habit. To herself:] Sir Simon! [She approaches softly as he continues looking through the window. To Ghost]: I am so sorry for you, but my brothers are going back to Eton soon, and then if you behave yourself, no one will annoy you.
- GHOST: [Still looking out] Behaving oneself does not come easily to a ghost. For eight days now, I have oiled my chains, and taken my tincture, and kept my silence. I shall almost miss the twins, but they have abused me terribly. Let them be the terror of Eton, and not of old residents at Canterville.
- VIRGINIA: They have, Sir Simon, but you should not pretend innocence. Lord Canterville told us that you murdered your brother-in-law.
- GHOST: [Now looking at her] It is true, and I am justly sentenced. He tried to steal the jewels I had given his sister at our tenth anniversary, and taunted me when I caught him. But I should never have done it. She was the one pure soul in a wicked family, and my deed made me as wicked. They came nine years later, after she died, and captured me in this room. There are the chains by which they bound me to the wall, and there the bowls of food and water just out of my reach. They wanted her jewels, but never got them. I perished where they bound me.
- VIRGINIA: Starve you to death? Oh, Mister Ghost, I mean Sir Simon, are you hungry? I have a sandwich here in my pack. [Takes it out.] Would you like it?
- GHOST: No, thank you, I never eat anything now; but it is very kind of you, all the same, and you are much nicer than the rest of your horrid, rude, vulgar, dishonest family.
- VIRGINIA: Stop! [Stamps her foot.] It is you who are rude, and horrid, and vulgar, and as for dishonesty, you know you stole the paints out of my box to try and furbish up that ridiculous bloodstain on the armor. First you took all my reds, including the vermillion, and I couldn't do any more sunsets. Then you took the emerald green and the chrome yellow, and finally I had nothing left but indigo and Chinese white, and could do only moonlight scenes, which are always depressing to look at, and not at all easy to paint. I never

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told on you, though I was very much annoyed, and it was most ridiculous, the whole thing; for who ever heard of emerald green blood?

- GHOST: [*Rather meekly*] Well, there you have me. It seems I am not much of a ghost. I could frighten as well as the next, until your family bought the Chase, but I could never stand the sight of blood. Can you imagine? In a ghost? I could not look at my brother-in-law's, while putting on the armor, for three centuries until your father cleaned it away. My duty then was to restore it, and I could find no other way. [*Shrugging, palms out*] What good is a ghost who could never do worse than frighten, and now not even that?
- VIRGINIA: You could come to America. Once in New York, you are sure to be a great success. I know lots of people there who would give a hundred thousand dollars just to have a grandfather, and much more than that to have a family ghost.
- GHOST: [*Petulantly*] I don't think I should like America.
- VIRGINIA: [*Angered*] I suppose because we have no ruins and no curiosities!
- GHOST: [*Angered in return*] No ruins! No curiosities! You have your navy and your manners.
- VIRGINIA: [*Spinning toward the door*] Good evening! I will go and ask Papa to get the twins an extra week's holiday! [*Starts off.*]
- GHOST: [*Catching her hand, rueful*] Please don't go, Miss Virginia. I am so lonely and so unhappy, and I really don't know what to do. I want to go to sleep and I cannot. For three hundred years, I have not slept, and I am so tired.
- VIRGINIA: [*Kneeling by his side*] Poor, poor ghost! Have you no place where you can sleep?
- GHOST: Far away beyond the pine woods, there is a little garden. There the grass grows long and deep, there are the great white stars of the hemlock flower, there the nightingale sings all night long. All night long he sings, and the cold, crystal moon looks down, and the yew-tree spreads out its giant arms over the sleepers.
- VIRGINIA: [*Her face in her hands*] You mean the Garden of Death.
- GHOST: Yes. Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft, brown earth, with the grasses waving above one's head, and listen to silence.

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To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace. You can help me. You can open for me the portals of Death's house, for Love is always with you, and Love is stronger than Death is. [*Virginia shudders.*] Have you ever read the old prophecy on the library window?

VIRGINIA: [*Looking up*] Oh, often! It is painted in curious black letters, and it is difficult to read. It goes:

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

But I don't know what it means.

GHOST: You can see the tree through this window, on the hill past the meadow. [*Virginia looks.*] It withered on the day I murdered my brother-in-law. The words mean that you must weep with me for my sins, because I have no tears, and pray with me for my soul, because I have no faith, and then, if you have always been sweet, and good, and gentle, the Angel of Death will have mercy on me. You will see fearful shapes in darkness, and wicked voices will whisper in your ear, but they will not harm you, for against the purity of a little child the powers of Hell cannot prevail.

VIRGINIA: [*Rising*] I am not afraid, and I will ask the Angel to have mercy on you.

[Ghost rises, kisses her hand, leads her toward the tapestry. Images there whisper “Go back, little Virginia, go back! Beware, little Virginia, beware! We may never see you again!” At a sign from Ghost, a space opens to reveal a cavern.]

GHOST: Quick, quick, or it will be too late! [*They pass through as the wall closes behind.*]

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Scene XVI

Late afternoon, clambake site with house in background as before, guests gone.

- MRS. OTIS: [From an upstairs window]: Hiram, she is nowhere in the house. No one has seen her.
- OTIS: [Entering stage right] She is not on the property. Canterville and Cheshire have stayed to help. I will wire the police.
- 1st TWIN: [From another upstairs window]: She isn't anywhere!
- 2nd TWIN: We can't find her!
- CANTERVILLE: [Entering stage left with Cheshire] She is nowhere. The station master at Ascot has telegraphed up and down the line.
- OTIS: It may be the gypsies I let camp in the park. I will ride to see.
- CANTERVILLE: Richard has just come back from there. The gypsies left earlier in a rush.
- OTIS: They may have gone back to Bexley. I will look for them there.
- CHESHIRE: Let me help.
- CANTERVILLE: And me.
- OTIS: Willingly, good Canterville and Cecil. But there must not be a scuffle. We have no reason yet to suspect them. Richard will saddle the horses. I will wire the police now.

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Scene XVII

That night, Bexley Moor. Canterville and Cheshire emerge from gypsy camp in background as Otis enters to meet them.

CANTERVILLE: She isn't here. They had heard of our trouble and want to help. They had mistaken the date of Chorton Fair, and went off this morning in a hurry not to miss it.

OTIS: Richard overtook us just now and said that Mellows and his men have dragged the carp pond. There is no trace, thank heaven.

CESHIRE: Thank heaven! We must telegraph Scotland Yard in the morning.

OTIS: And hope for the best. There is nothing more to do until then. Back to Canterville Chase, where we will take supper and what rest we can.

CESHIRE: I cannot sleep.

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Scene XVIII

Canterville Chase, dining room, same night. Otis, Mrs. Otis, Twins, Canterville, Cheshire at table. Staff serving supper. All silent.

OTIS: Thank you, Mrs. Umney. You may all go to bed now, and sleep if you can. [*Servants leave. To the rest*]: As each of us finishes, we must do the same. We trust in a kind Providence, and whatever we can do to help it in the morning.

[All rise. The clock strikes one. A flash of light. Virginia appears in the alcove with a small box of jewels. She descends. All rush to her.]

MRS. OTIS: [*Flustered, out of breath*] Good heavens, child! Where have you been? We have been riding all over the country looking for you, and your mother has been frightened to death. You must never play these practical jokes any more.

TWINS: [*Gleefully*] Except on the ghost! Except on the ghost!

MRS. OTIS: My own darling, thank God you are found; you must never leave my side again.

VIRGINIA: Papa, I have been with the ghost. He is dead, and you must come and see him. He had been very wicked, but he was really sorry for all that he had done, and he gave me this box of beautiful jewels before he died. [*She leads them all to the Ghost's room. His skeleton lies in the chains. She kneels and prays silently.*]

TWINS: [*To the skeleton*]: We love you, Sir Simon.

MRS. OTIS: [*Seeing something through the window*] Hiram, look! The old withered almond tree has blossomed. It is clear in the moonlight. I have never seen such a thing. [*All but Virginia rush to see.*]

VIRGINIA: God has forgiven him. [*Cheshire squeezes her hand.*]

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Scene XIX

Morning, a few days later. Library. Otis and Canterville.

CANTERVILLE: My good Otis, thank you for putting me up again for the funeral of Sir Simon yesterday, and for attending yourself with your family and staff. It had been delayed three centuries, and mourners who knew him would otherwise have been scarce.

OTIS: My Lord, we were honored. He was an unruly guest, but one with grievances, and he was generous in the end. It is of that that I must speak to you. The jewels are your rightful property. I press you to take them. They would have passed in law to his heirs three centuries past, and so eventually to you. We Yankees have no need of them, and in this case, no right to them. Virginia entreats you only to let her keep the box, which seems to be of no value, as a memento of your unhappy ancestor.

CANTERVILLE: My dear sir, your charming daughter rendered Sir Simon a very important service through her marvelous courage and pluck. The jewels are clearly hers, and Egad, I believe that if I were heartless enough to take them from her, the wicked old fellow would be out of his grave in a fortnight, leading me the devil of a life. Besides, you forget, Mr. Otis, that you took the furniture and the ghost at a valuation, and own whatever comes of them. Trust your daughter, and Sir Simon's judgment, to put his gift to best use.

OTIS: But my Lord, my Lord...[*Canterville claps him on the arm good-naturedly as they exit.*]

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Scene XX

Gravesite, autumn afternoon, five years later. Otis, Mrs. Otis, Virginia, Twins, Cheshire, Canterville, baby carriages. Cheshire and Virginia now married. Twins, inches taller than before, are mimed by actors. An almond bough lies on Sir Simon's grave.

- VIRGINIA: "Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville."
- CESHIRE: And to Sir Simon.
- ALL: Amen.
- OTIS: At any rate, the almond is still bearing.
- CANTERVILLE: And the happy couple. Dear Otises, you are blessed.
- MRS. OTIS: We are, and in friendship no less, dear Lord Canterville.
- OTIS: In family and friendship too. Now let's all go in for tea.
- CESHIRE: Virginia and I will be there in a bit. [*Exeunt all but Cheshire and Virginia.*]
- Stay with me, beautiful, in my calling,
Autumn is here and the leaves are falling,
One by one,
Stay with me, beauty, until the night is done.
- VIRGINIA: Take me wherever the summer goes,
Carry it back again, rose by rose,
And song by song,
Stay with me, beautiful, all the night along.
- BOTH: Stay with me, beautiful, in my keeping;
Autumn is here and the woods are sleeping,
Rose and song,
Stay with me, beautiful, all the night along.
- CESHIRE: [*Takes both her hands, looks in her eyes.*] Virginia, a wife should
have no secrets from her husband.
- VIRGINIA: Dear Cecil, I have no secrets from you.

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- CHESHIRE: Yes, you have. You have never told me what happened to you when you were locked up with the ghost.
- VIRGINIA: I have never told anyone, Cecil.
- CHESHIRE: I know that, but you might tell me.
- VIRGINIA: Please don't ask me, Cecil. I cannot tell you. Poor Sir Simon! I owe him a great deal, I really do. He made me see what Life is and what Death signifies, and why Love is stronger than both.
- CHESHIRE: [*They embrace.*] You can have your secret as long as I have your heart.
- VIRGINIA: You have always had that, Cecil.
- CHESHIRE: Once upon a golden day
A golden girl went far away,
And what she saw, she did not say,
But she said "yes" to me.
- VIRGINIA: And when she went, a gallant band
Went hunting for her through the land.
One took her heart, and took her hand,
For all the time to be.
- BOTH: For all the time to be.
- CHESHIRE: And you will tell our children some day, won't you? Won't you?
Won't you? [*She looks away shyly. Their eyes meet again.*]