

#1: Trevor, Chris, Annie

~~The mantelpiece falls off the wall. Annie emerges from the wing.~~

~~ANNIE. (To the audience member.) You said that was fine.~~

TREVOR. (Aside to Annie.) Just leave it, leave it.

Annie starts to try and repair the mantelpiece. Trevor addresses the audience.

→ Okay, welcome to *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Can I kindly request that all your cell phones and other electronic devices are switched off and please note that photography of any kind is strictly prohibited. Also if anyone finds a Duran Duran CD box set anywhere in the auditorium, that is a personal item and I want that back. Please do drop it at my tech box end of the show. Enjoy the performance.

House and stage lights go down. Trevor exits s. l.

(On his radio but broadcast to the whole theatre.) Alright, can we prepare for lights up on Act One, note for the cast Winston is still missing, we need to find him before the guard dog scene—

CHRIS. Trevor! Trevor!

TREVOR. (Still over the speakers.) —we need him back in his cage as soon as possible. What's Annie doing onstage? Get her off so Chris can do his stupid speech—*oop!*

Trevor's microphone cuts off. Annie hasn't finished repairing the mantelpiece. Chris enters from the s. r. wing in the darkness.

CHRIS. Leave it. Just leave it.

ANNIE. You need it...

CHRIS. We don't have time.

Annie hurries off into the wings, taking the mantelpiece and tool kit with her. Spotlight comes up on Chris, cutting off his head.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and...

Chris steps forward into the spotlight.

...welcome to the Cornley Drama Society's presentation of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Please allow me to introduce myself; I am Chris, the director, and I would like to personally welcome

* If music by a different band is used on pages 45 and 78, change "Duran Duran" appropriately.

you to what will be my directorial debut (*Pronounced "day-boo."*) and my first production as head of the drama society.

Firstly I would like to apologise to those of you involved in our little box office mix-up. I do hope the six hundred and seventeen of you affected will enjoy our little murder mystery just as much as you would have enjoyed *Hamilton*.

We are particularly excited to present this play because, for the first time in the society's history, we've managed to find a play that fits the number of society members perfectly. If we're honest a lack of members has sometimes hampered past productions, such as last year's Chekhov play... *Two Sisters*. Last Christmas' *The Lion and the Wardrobe*. Or indeed our summer musical, *Cat*.

← end here

Of course this will be the first time the society has been able to stage a play of this scale and we are thrilled. It's no secret we usually have to contend with a small budget, as was evident in our recent production of Roald Dahl's classic *James and the Peach*. Of course during the run of that particular show the peach we had went off, and we were forced to present a hastily devised alternative entitled *James! Where's Your Peach?*

Anyway on to the main event, which I am confident will be our best show yet! So ladies and gentlemen, without any further ado, please put your hands together—

If the audience start to clap too early, Chris can say "not yet."
—for Susie H. K. Brideswell's thrilling whodunit—*The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

Chris exits into the s. r. wing. Spotlight down. Trevor takes up his position in his tech box. Darkness. Music.

Jonathan (playing Charles Haversham) enters through the darkness from the s. r. wing. He trips and falls over. The lights suddenly come up on Jonathan on the floor. He freezes. The lights go out again. Jonathan takes up his position: dead on the chaise longue, with his arm outstretched onto the floor. The lights come up again just before he's fully in position.

Knocking at the downstairs door. Robert (playing Thomas Colley Moore) and Dennis (playing Perkins the Butler) can

#3: Max, Sandra, Robert,
Dennis, Jonathan

~~SANDRA. I can't imagine!~~

MAX. It's madness! My brother was a good man. Who would kill him? I'm in shock, Thomas.

ROBERT. As am I, Cecil. As am I.

MAX. My brother murdered in his own home! This is unthinkable!

SANDRA. This is more than my nerves can take. I simply can't stand it. Thomas, I think I'm becoming hysterical!

ROBERT. No, Florence! Not another one of your episodes. Calm yourself. Here, take one of your pills.

MAX. Oh Florence, this is unbearable.

Sandra begins to scream and pound Jonathan's chest. Jonathan flinches.

Thomas, I feel I shall pass out.

ROBERT. Perkins! Pour that man a stiff drink!

Dennis arrives D.S. R. and offers a glass to Max.

MAX. Thank you, Perkins.

ROBERT. There, there, Florence, well done, deep breaths.

Dennis pours the white spirit into Max's glass. Sandra becomes calmer.

SANDRA. This is terrible, just a week after our engagement.

MAX. Well here's to a good brother.

Max raises his glass and drinks the white spirit. He quickly spits it back out.

That's the best whisky I've ever tasted.

ROBERT. Have another, to calm your nerves.

MAX. Make it a double!

Dennis pours Max another glass of white spirit.

SANDRA. Oh my Charles! My Charles! My head is spinning!

Max drinks it again. He spits it out again.

MAX. Calm down, Florence.

DENNIS. Another scotch, sir?

MAX. Yes!

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

Max drinks again and spits it out again, this time right into Jonathan's face, who sits up in shock. Beat. Robert pushes Jonathan back down onto the chaise longue.

MAX. My...

He lets out a throaty squeak, the white spirit burning his mouth.

My brother wasn't as happy as people were led to believe. Behind that cheery mask lay a darker side to the man that many didn't know about.

DENNIS. It's true, his smile was often merely (*Reads from his hand.*) a facade. (*Pronounced "fu-cayde."*) I was fortunate enough to be one of the few people who he really confided in. Damn it all, I've lost a true friend today.

ROBERT. We all have, Perkins. Hang it, I knew Charley ever since school.

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

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

MAX. Perkins is right, my brother was hiding a deep sense of melancholy and resentment. I have no doubt in my mind it was suicide.

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

MAX. Nonsense!

Max performs a gesture for "nonsense." If the audience laugh, Max can acknowledge them here by smiling and repeating the gesture.

Nonsense! My brother was paranoid and jealous and I can prove it. Perkins, hand me his journal, it's there on the mantelpiece.

Annie's hand reaches through the door and holds the journal against the wall where it should have been above the fireplace.

Dennis passes it to Max.

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

#4 - Dennis, Robert, Chris, Jonathan

of the upper level.

DENNIS. It's such a tragedy for a man to die just three months before he is to be married.

ROBERT. I can't stand it. Just look at him lying there.

DENNIS. This is most (*Checks hand.*) morose. (*Pronounced "more-ous."*)

ROBERT. Morose indeed.

Lights shift downstairs.

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

MAX. We were having an affair, so what? It doesn't mean—

Max slips on a puddle of white spirit.

It doesn't mean we killed the man.

SANDRA. Of course not, but that's what the Inspector will think.

MAX. It's fine, we'll just carry on as if every-thing!

Max sits on the chaise longue but feels something hard under the cushions.

—is just as it was. Except—

*Max lifts the cushions and discovers a ledger underneath.
Max puts it under the chaise longue.*

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

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

MAX. Soon my love, but first, with Charley finally out of the picture I must ask you one question.

Max goes down on one knee in front of Sandra, D.S. of the upper level. Lights shift to upstairs.

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

Jonathan opens the upstairs door and creeps in, carrying the stretcher canvas with him. He moves forward to try and take up his position: dead on the floor. The others don't notice him standing behind them.

He was such an influence on all our lives.

← start here

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

DENNIS. His stillness unnerves me.

CHRIS. Seeing a cadaver for the first time can be unsettling!

Chris sees Jonathan and jumps in shock. Dennis and Robert let out a scream in surprise. Jonathan quietly moves in front of them and lies down on the front edge of the upper level. As he puts his head back, he bangs it on the bottom of the elevator door.

Check his pockets, Thomas.

ROBERT. Inspector.

Chris produces a tin of powder and a brush.

CHRIS. I need you to pull yourselves together and help me to dust his body for fingerprints.

Chris passes Dennis the tin and brush.

DENNIS. Yes, Inspector.

Robert searches Jonathan's trouser pocket but cannot find the prop letter he is supposed to find. After a few moments, Jonathan reaches into his inside jacket pocket and produces the letter and passes it to Robert. Robert quickly pretends to have taken the letter from Jonathan's trouser pocket and holds it up.

ROBERT. A letter?

Robert passes the letter to Chris, who puts it in his pocket.

CHRIS. Now to dust the body for fingerprints.

ROBERT. What was that?

DENNIS. Sir?

ROBERT. I could have sworn I just saw him breathing.

DENNIS. Breathing, sir—

Dennis drops the tin of powder onto Jonathan's face. Jonathan tries to hide his coughing.

CHRIS. Nonsense, Colleymoore. This man is dead.

Lights shift to downstairs. Robert, Chris and Dennis freeze in a group pose, each with their right hand on their chin.

Jonathan continues to cough.

5 - Sandra, Max, Robert, Dennis

MAX. Florence, will you do me the honour of becoming my wife?
Marry me!

Jonathan coughs again, more violently, which causes him to slip off of the upper level. He grabs hold of the edge, his legs dangling down. Robert, Dennis and Chris try to haul him back up. Vamp. After a few moments they lose their grip, and Jonathan falls down to the floor, landing in between Max and Sandra. Robert, Dennis and Chris put their hands back on their chins.

Charles is dead. He can never come between us again.

Jonathan slowly gets up, retrieves the canvas, hides behind it and moves back towards the door. Unable to see, he opens the door into his own head and then exits, closing the door behind him.

Florence, Charles is gone and he's never coming back.

Lights shift to upstairs. Max and Sandra freeze.

CHRIS. Thank you, gentlemen. Now that I have finished examining the body, perhaps you would take it down to the service quarters for the coroner to collect in the morning.

DENNIS. Yes, Inspector.

Robert and Dennis mime lifting the body again.

CHRIS. Check all of the doors are locked, Perkins.

DENNIS. Inspector.

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

ROBERT. ~~Naturally.~~

Jonathan reenters upstairs, holding up the canvas to hide himself. He peers over the top and sees the others.

(Ad libs.) After you, Charles.

Jonathan, Robert, Dennis and Chris exit. The lights shift downstairs as they go.

SANDRA. Oh Cecil, I can't resist you! I shall, I shall marry you.

MAX. Oh Florence, come into my arms.

Max pushes Sandra away.

SANDRA. I shall!

MAX. Kiss me!

SANDRA. Oh Cecil!

Max and Sandra go to kiss, but Robert bursts in.

ROBERT. The Inspector requires a pencil. What on earth's going on in here?

SANDRA. Sorry, I felt flustered. Cecil was cooling my brow.

ROBERT. Very well, now I have the pencil I'll be on my...

Robert sees that there is no pencil on the D.S. R. table. He picks up the set of keys instead.

Well now I have the... well now I have the... Now I have the *pencil*. I'll be on my way.

Robert exits, closing the door.

MAX. Thank God he's gone!

SANDRA. Oh, Cecil! Kiss me a thousand times; I'm yours.

Dennis bursts in.

DENNIS. Sorry to interrupt, Miss Colley Moore, Mr. Haversham. I've come to collect the keys to lock us all inside.

MAX. Thank you, Perkins.

Dennis sees the keys gone, and instead he picks up the Inspector's notebook.

DENNIS. I shall lock the doors at once.

Dennis exits with the Inspector's notebook.

SANDRA. You don't think Perkins suspects us, do you?

MAX. That old fool, of course not.

SANDRA. Oh, enough words. Take me!

Robert bursts in.

ROBERT. I forgot the Inspector's notebook... what in God's name?

SANDRA. I was about to faint. Cecil caught me.

ROBERT. I haven't time for this. Now...I...have...the Inspector's notebook, I'll be on my way.

#6 - Annie, Chris, Robert, Dennis

~~poles. Max grins at the audience; Robert and Dennis quickly lower him out of view. Max stands up in the window and grins at the audience again. Robert grabs him and pulls him out of sight. Max smacks his head on the edge of the window as he goes.~~

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, my fiancé and my lover killed on the same eve.

CHRIS. Remember your breathing, Miss Colley Moore, now is not the time for another of your episodes.

ANNIE. *(Calm.)* I am having an episode, Inspector. I cannot help it.

CHRIS. *(Under his breath.)* Have an episode. Have...an...episode. *(Loudly.)* Have an episode.

Annie tries to scream and shake as she has seen Sandra do in rehearsals. Vamp. Annie builds the episode bigger and bigger until it reaches a climax and she flops onto the chaise longue.

No, Miss Colley Moore.

Robert and Dennis reenter.

ROBERT. Florence, control yourself girl.

DENNIS. She's having another one of her hysterical episodes.

ANNIE. *(Calmly reads.)* They're dead. They're gone and they're never coming back.

ROBERT. I will not tolerate another tantrum, Florence.

ANNIE. *(Calm.)* Get away from me, Thomas. You don't understand my grief.

ROBERT. That's enough, take one of your pills.

ANNIE. No. Not more pills.

Annie takes a pill with no hesitation.

Oh, they're mints.

ROBERT. But who could have killed...

Annie upstages Robert by sinking back onto the chaise longue, pretending to be knocked out by the pill.

But who could have killed him?

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colley Moore.