

# THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

By Pat Cook

*Based on the short story by Oscar Wilde*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Hiram and Lucy Otis can't wait to move into their pastoral English manor house ... just as soon as the ghost moves out. That's right, Canterville Hall comes complete with a howling, green ghoul, but only if Sir Simon (the ghost) can remember to bring the green mist with him. This classic Oscar Wilde tale spins the Otis family through a maze of dithering maids, blustering bosses and an English realtor who's always looking for a free lunch. And who does Sir Simon take pity on? Certainly not anyone from America.

"Never heard of it," he tells Virginia, the daughter. "We're over two hundred years old," she proudly tells him. "I've got socks older than that," he answers.

What follows is something of a mystery, which unfolds amid flashes of thunder and disappearing guests. "Wait'll I get out my water balloons," Durward Otis threatens. Only when the Otises can figure out the curse of Canterville Hall can Sir Simon rest in peace...but there's an awful lot of noise getting there!

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 M, 4 W)*

**HIRAM OTIS:** A 40-year-old American businessman who's anxious to start a new job, but a bit afraid of ghosts.

**LUCY OTIS:** Hiram's wife, also around 40 and a bit of an occult freak.

**VIRGINIA OTIS:** A 15-year-old girl who misses home but wants to help out when she can.

**DURWARD OTIS:** A 12-year-old-brat and that's about it.

**MRS. UMNEY:** An English housekeeper in her 50s, has seen it all and is afraid of most of it.

**DAPHNE CANTERVILLE:** Sort of an upper crust English type, but always looking for a quick meal.

**JOSHUA R. BARRINGTON:** A blustering American boss, he is hiding some secret.

**MATT BARRINGTON:** Joshua's 18-year-old son, a brave young man.

**SIR SIMON de CANTERVILLE:** The Canterville ghost, quarrel-some and over 400 years old, but not without a sense of humor.

**TIME:** The present, early spring.

**PLACE:** Canterville Hall.

**ACT I**

Scene 1: Early spring day.

Scene 2: Later that night.

Scene 3: The next afternoon.

Scene 4: Later that afternoon.

Scene 5: The next morning.

**ACT II**

Scene 1: The next morning.

Scene 2: Later that afternoon.

### **SETTING**

The setting for this little ghost story is the main room of Canterville Hall, an old manor house somewhere in England. While there is an air of past dignities, it is also, nevertheless, somehow foreboding.

There are three doors utilized in the room. The front door is located just inside an arch, USR. The second door is located on the USC wall which leads to the kitchen and dining hall, and the third door, located SL, leads to the library and other rooms. There is an L-shaped staircase located near the USR corner. Near its first step is a small, bloodstained throw rug. A imposing fireplace is on the SR wall. Above it is an old painting, a large portrait of Simon Canterville.

The furniture in the room is of much the same style as the house, old but comfortable. A large sofa rests in the center of the room with an adjoining wingback chair near the fireplace. There is a settee against the SL wall. A large bookcase is located on the US wall between the stairs and kitchen door and a desk resides DSL near the library door.

### **PROPS**

UMNEY: suitcases, broom, dustpan, feather duster, 2 trays of sandwiches.

DAPHNE: lease, purse.

HIRAM: candle, overcoat.

LUCY: candle, plunger, radio, spice bottle with powder, chip and dip.

DUWARD: soda, fright mask, butterfly net, pots and pans.

SIMON: cloak.

JOSHUA: coat.

VIRGINIA: clipboard.

**NOTE:** A complete listing of sounds effects can be found at the back of the playbook.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Loud WAILS AND MOANS are heard throughout the room. These horrific voices sound as if they are coming from somewhere deep in the heart of the house. Suddenly, the front door shudders as if someone is trying to open it. The voices then shush each other with several HISSING noises. Finally the door opens and DAPHNE enters, looking around.)*

DAPHNE: Well, I knew I could get that old key to work. Just needs a bit a wicks oil and it'll be as good as new. *(SHE looks out the door.)* Here we are, Mr. Otis, step lively now. Well, don't step in that! There you are. *(SHE enters through the arch and looks up the stairs.)*

*(HIRAM enters through the arch and looks at one shoe.)*

HIRAM: Place needs a little work.

DAPHNE: Oh, it's just a bit sad, sir. A bit a the old elbow grease, as you Yanks say, a dollop of brass polish here and there, a couple of throw pillows ...

HIRAM: *(Looking around.)* Some angry peasants carrying torches ...

DAPHNE: Well, you did inquire for something with scads of history, chock-a-block full of atmosphere and English countryside at a reasonable price.

HIRAM: It is scrumptious, ain't it?

DAPHNE: Ain't it, though. *(SHE taps HIS shoulder.)* And just the place for you to finish that novel of yours, eh?

HIRAM: And Lucy can keep busy fixing the place up.

DAPHNE: Why, sure, your lovely wife can find many a nook and cranny that needs mending. Look at all you have here, sir. *(SHE ushers HIM around the room rather quickly.)* A lovely chair here near the fireplace, right cozy that.

HIRAM: Yes, it is.

*The Canterville Ghost*

-6-

DAPHNE: (*Moves SL.*) And here is the library. (*SHE indicates the SL door.*) And here is a lovely desk where you can work. Here is the kitchen door next to the bookcase. Here's the stair landing and a bloodstained rug. (*SHE moves HIM suddenly away.*) Over here we have this lovely settee. There's a bit of history behind this particular ...

HIRAM: Wait, hold it. What did you just say?

DAPHNE: About the settee?

HIRAM: No, back here. (*HE moves back to the desk.*) A desk!

DAPHNE: Yes sir, for your very own, comes with the estate. Why, it's practically just begging for you to sit and work, can't you just feel it?

HIRAM: I can feel something, I ... bloodstained rug! Heeeey! (*HE moves to the stairs and looks at the small carpet.*) What, is that supposed to be left over from the Crusades?

DAPHNE: Oh, it's nothing, pay no mind, part of the atmosphere.

HIRAM: Yeah, if you're Stephen King. (*HE picks up the rug.*) What happened here?

DAPHNE: Oh, that was originally owned by Sir Simon de Canterville. He murdered his wife and she fell there. Now, this settee has been reupholstered in some very nice brocade just recently, and ...

HIRAM: This is horrible!

DAPHNE: No, sir, it's the finest brocade, as I said, brought all the way in from France and ...

HIRAM: The rug, the rug! Somebody killed his wife here?

DAPHNE: Well, actually he killed her at the top of the stairs and she fell there. (*SHE moves to the fireplace.*) Now, just look at the fine craftsmanship of this fireplace. Why, I bet you could look over the whole of the countryside and not find another ...

HIRAM: Excuse me. Uhm ... I hope you don't think I'm being nit-picky, but what about this Simon Canterbury guy?

DAPHNE: Canterville. An ancestor of mine.

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