

The Darkness Inside

By Billy W. Boone

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DEDICATION

For MM, RG, & NH

STORY OF THE PLAY

In 1890s London, a recent night of fatal violence has terrorized the city. Scotland Yard fears that the infamous Jack the Ripper, has finally returned home. Inspector William Wright has staked his career on bringing the killer to justice, and believes he finally has his man. Wright will stop at nothing to make sure that George Bessel, goes to the gallows for the crime. However, Bessel's partner and friend, Theresa Vincey, protests his innocence. As the key witness to the crime, Vincey holds the key to Bessel's fate. As the investigation unfolds with interviews, flashbacks, and a haunting ripper chorus, we learn about Vincey and Bessel's life work as a Spectral Scientists, seeking to prove that the truth exists beyond this physical realm. Vincey testifies that it was through their experimentation in the disassociation of the conscious mind from the earthly body, that led to these horrific events. Wright and Vincey are pitted against each other in their search for truth, and Vincey must choose between validating her scientific reputation or proving Bessel's innocence. The tension mounts as the identity of who- or what -is truly responsible is finally revealed, proving that the truth is indeed stranger than fiction. This show is an adaptation of the short story, "The Stolen Body," by H.G. Wells, that weaves mystery and intrigue with humor, to create a suspenseful, yet comedic theatrical production that will leave the audience wanting more.

PREMIER PRODUCTIONS

Special thanks to Dr. Norman Bert, Dr. Marti Runnels, Lisa Huntsman, Michelle Benson, Randall Rapstine, Ron Higdon, and the students of Mooresville High School.

Staged Reading: November 29th, 2016. Texas Tech University. Readers: Teak Forney, Carter Estes, Diana Martel, Allaina Capili, Taylor Sines, Matthew Cubillos, Skylar Freeman, Opal Gonzales, Cameron Blackmun, Collin Vorbeck, Lauren Carlton.

Staged Reading: December 8th, 2016. Mooresville HS, Mooresville, NC. Performed by the students of Mooresville HS, under the direction of Ron Higdon.

Staged Reading: May 8th, 2017. Wayland Baptist University. Readers: Jordan Sisson, Ian Kirk, Tammy Brooks, Lillie Cooper, Edward Funderburke, Mark Kirk, Marti Runnels, Joshua Watters.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 M, 8 W with doubling)

(7 M, 13 W, 10+ M/F without doubling)

THERESA VINCEY: (W) 30's, English, single, pseudo-scientist. Obsessed with proving astral projection. Yorkshire Dialect.

INSPECTOR WILLIAM WRIGHT: (M) 40's, English, Scotland Yard Inspector, former Chief Inspector, demoted after his failure to capture Jack the Ripper. Estuary English Dialect.

CONSTABLE TUBBS: (M) 20's, English, Scotland Yard police officer, timid, craven. Birmingham Dialect.

GEORGE BESSEL: (M) 30's, English, pseudo-scientist. Existing as himself, a disembodied presence, and a madman possessed by an invading entity. Obsessed with astral projection. RP Dialect.

ENSEMBLE CHARACTERS

PORTER: (M) 20's, English, a porter in the Albany, limited education, dim. Cockney Dialect. (Scenes 7, 8, 9, & 10)

MADAME BULLOCK: (W) 50's, famed psychic and medium. Romany English Dialect. (Scene 11)

MAGISTRATE CARSON: (M) 60's, Magistrate of the London Judicial System. Cantankerous. RP Dialect. (Scene 12)

BUTCHER: (M) Patient of a London Asylum. (Scene 2)

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: (W) (Scene 2)

WOMAN: Poor merchant of London. Cockney Dialect. (Scene 9)

SPIRIT 1: (W) Desperate apparition. (Scene 11)

SPIRIT 2: (M) Angry apparition. (Scene 11)

CITIZENS CHORUS: Citizens. (Scenes 2, 4 & 9)

SPIRITS CHORUS: Spirits in various stages of decay. (Scene 11)

RIPPER CHORUS: (W) Spirits, in various stages of decay. (Scenes 7, 9, 11, & 12)

Doubling is suggested as follows:

ENSEMBLE 1: (M) Butcher, Porter, Spirit 2, Magistrate Carson.

ENSEMBLE 2: (W) Research Assistant, Woman, Madame Bullock.

ENSEMBLE 3: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirit 1, Ripper Chorus.

ENSEMBLE 4: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirits Chorus, Ripper Chorus.

ENSEMBLE 5: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirits Chorus, Ripper Chorus.

ENSEMBLE 6: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirits Chorus, Ripper Chorus.

ENSEMBLE 7: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirits Chorus, Ripper Chorus.

ENSEMBLE 8: (W) Citizens Chorus, Spirits Chorus, Ripper Chorus.

SETTING

Although traditional scene breaks are utilized in the script used for ease of formatting and to assist in the rehearsal process, hard transitions (fadeouts and blackouts) should be avoided. To achieve the desired effect of the seamless flow between the past and present, scenes should flow into each other without stoppage. Each flashback scene should be set while the lighting and focus is on the preceding "interview" scene. The interview room should be set down stage right or down stage left. A fully rendered set is not required. The various settings of the "flashback" scenes are suggested using minimal set pieces.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

(Scenes are only noted for rehearsal purposes the show should flow seamlessly without breaks.)

Scene 1 - Late 1890's London, England. Scotland Yard Police Station. Interview room.

Scene 2 - Flashback. August, 1888. Academy of Sciences, Lecture Hall.

Scene 3 - Interview room.

Scene 4 - Flashback. Park, near Picadilly, London, England.

Scene 5 - Flashback. Staple Inn, London, England. The home of Theresa Vincey. Evening.

Scene 6 - Interview room.

Scene 7 - Flashback. Albany, London, England. The home of George Bessel. Evening.

Scene 8 - Interview room.

Scene 9 - Flashback. Market. London, England. Night.

Scene 10 - Interview room.

Scene 11 - Flashback. Sitting room. London, England.

Scene 12 - Interview room.

Chronological Timeline: 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12

*Additional production notes can be found at the end of the script.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The setting is suggested through use of simple and plain wooden table and chairs. SFX: A horse neighs as hooves pound on the cobble stone streets. A woman, THERESA VINCEY, enters, with a leather-bound tome clutched in her arms.)

VINCEY: Hello, can someone help me? I'm looking for Inspector Wright.

(A young policeman, TUBBS, enters, swinging his baton.)

TUBBS: Well, hello. Can I help you?

VINCEY: Yes, hello. Would you happen to be Inspector Wright? I was summoned to speak with him. It's urgent business.

TUBBS: Who I am, depends on who's asking. Let us adjourn to the interview room, so that I might better acquaint myself with your... urgent business.

(VINCEY and TUBBS cross to the table and chairs.)

TUBBS: Please be seated, Mrs....

VINCEY: Miss Vincey. Theresa Vincey of Staple Inn, how do you do?

TUBBS: Well, Miss Vincey, much better now. Your face is strangely familiar. Might you be an actress?

VINCEY: Me? Heavens no. I wouldn't know the first thing about being on a stage. I'm a scientist.

TUBBS: *(Stifles a laugh.)* Science, you say? I don't think I've ever seen a woman scientist before. What a pity! With a face as sweet as yours, you should be on the stage, for all to see.

VINCEY: Yes, well there are actually many accomplished and acclaimed women scientists in the world, believe it or not.

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TUBBS: Well, if they all look like you I've definitely been looking in all the wrong places! So, tell me about this urgent business.

VINCEY: You summoned me here. I can only assume that it is about my friend, George Bessel. May I see him?

TUBBS: Ah! The mad man of the market! I knew that I knew you from somewhere. Here we are again. You and me. Still thinking you can save that maniac?

VINCEY: I'm sorry, I did not recognize you. The hit to my head made things... hazy in regards to that night.

TUBBS: I wondered what happened to you after that blow to your head. Well, I'm glad to see that the shot you took didn't leave any permanent damage to that pretty face of yours. Now that would have been a real crime.

VINCEY: Your concern... is quite touching.

TUBBS: Just part of my charm. Funny, I didn't know you were the one that ole' loony Bessel has been asking to see.

VINCEY: Look, I can help show you the truth of what happened that night, to prove Mr. Bessel's innocence and free him from this place. Please, will you let me see him?

TUBBS: No, no, my dear. You simply may not see him. He's shackled hand and foot in a holding cell. After what he did we can't be too careful!

VINCEY: But it's a matter of life and death!

TUBBS: Yes, I've heard that before. No, you won't be seeing Bessel anytime soon. What is that you are holding?

VINCEY: It's my research. Well, my partner's and mine.

TUBBS: Oh, research you say?

VINCEY: Yes, in the spectral sciences.

TUBBS: Right, a scientist. I've often thought why can't all you scientists go out and get real jobs? Always searching to figure out this or that. Can't you leave this life well enough alone? Maybe you just need some strong, handsome man to show what's really important in this life...

(An older policeman, WRIGHT, enters. TUBBS goes to attention.)

End of Freeview

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