


Audition Selections




THE ONE-ACT PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

BY HENRY LEWIS,
JONATHAN SAYER
& HENRY SHIELDS

★



★
DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



Reading 1

-Chris

~~CHRIS: Leave it, just leave it.~~

~~ANNIE: We need it.~~

~~CHRIS: We don't get it.~~

~~Annie runs off behind the flats, taking the manuscript and tools with her. Spotlight comes up, Chris looks into it.~~

Start

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to The Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society's spring production of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

I would like to personally welcome you to what will be my directorial debut, and my first production as head of the drama society.

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

It may interest you to know that this will also be the first time the society has been able to stage a play of this scale. There's no question that usually we have to contend with a small budget, such as in last year's presentation of Roald Dahl's *James and the Peach*. Of course, during the run of that particular show the peach went off, and we were forced to present a hastily devised alternative entitled *James! Where's Your Peach?*

Finally we can afford to stage a play as it should be, and which, may I say, has been exceptionally well cast. I'm sure no one will forget the problems we've faced with casting before, such as our presentation of *Snow White and the Tall, Broad Gentlemen*, or indeed our previous year's pantomime, another Disney classic: *Ugly...and the Beast*.

But now, on with the main event, which I am confident will be our best show yet! So without further ado, please put your hands together for Susie H. K. Brideswell's thrilling whodunit—*The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

End

*Chris exits around the flats and the stage lights fade to black.
Jonathan (playing Charles Haversham) enters through the*

Reading 2

Max + Sandra

The notebook is nowhere to be seen. Robert takes the vase instead and exits.

MAX. Blasted interruptions!

SANDRA. Kiss me Cecil!

MAX. I want you Florence! You make my heart beat out of my chest!

SANDRA. Your eyes send me into a dream! Kiss me Cecil, I can't wait a second longer!

Pause. Dennis is supposed to have burst in. They look at the door. Vamp. Until eventually Dennis bursts in, late, holding two candlesticks.

DENNIS. Sorry to interrupt again Mr. Haversham, Miss Colleymoore. I've just come to prepare the room.

MAX. Thank you Perkins. Put them on the mantelpiece.

Dennis walks to the mantelpiece with the candlesticks. He goes to put them down and Annie leans through the window and holds the mantelpiece in position. Dennis exits and Annie remains, staring at the others.

At last we're alone.

Start

~~Annie stances awkwardly from the window.~~

SANDRA. Oh Cecil! Let's run away from here! Far away! Together!

MAX. Soon, my love, but we must be careful. We mustn't arouse suspicion.

SANDRA. Cecil, tell me, who do you think killed Charles!

MAX. There's no question in my mind Florence, he was killed by your brother, Thomas Colleymoore!

SANDRA. My brother! What a devil of a situation this is!

~~Jonathan suddenly bursts through the door holding a pistol~~

~~JONATHAN. I've come for you!!~~

~~MAX and Sandra stare at Jonathan, who says he has come in much too early and that they~~

SANDRA. But, why would Thomas want Charles dead?

MAX. Isn't it obvious? He was always bitter and possessive when it came to you! He didn't like the idea of his best friend marrying his

sister. He saw you together at tonight's engagement party and it drove him half mad and he snapped and killed Charles!

SANDRA. But, if it is Thomas, what if he finds out about you and I?

MAX. I don't think there's any doubt. He would try and kill us, just like he killed Charles!

SANDRA. Oh, I feel faint again!

MAX. Don't worry Florence! Just follow my lead...

Chris enters.

CHRIS. I'm sorry to have kept you, but now I have inspected the body more closely, our interview can proceed. (*Calls through the door.*) Perkins! Bring in Charles' personal effects.

Dennis enters with several props, including a letter.

DENNIS. Where would you like them, Inspector?

CHRIS. Set them down on the mantelpiece.

DENNIS. As you wish, Inspector.

Chris realises what he's said. Dennis carries the props over to Annie, who is still holding up the mantelpiece. Dennis hands her all of the items carefully. Annie struggles under the weight of the mantelpiece throughout the next exchange.

Silence. Dennis is supposed to leave but doesn't.

CHRIS. Don't go, Perkins,

Dennis goes to leave and then stops. He sits down on the chaise longue.

I'd like to ask you a few questions first. Mr. Haversham, Miss Colley-moore, perhaps you'd be so kind as to give us a moment's privacy.

MAX. Naturally.

Max and Sandra exit.

CHRIS. Don't just stand there, Perkins. Take a seat.

Dennis remains sat.

I don't smoke.

Dennis offers his cigarette case to Chris.

But you go ahead. How are you feeling, Perkins?

DENNIS. A little shaken sir, but I'll be fine.

Reading 3

Christ + Sandra

CHRIS. If you'll be so kind as to send in Florence Colley Moore on your way out.

Sandra enters in, followed by Robert. Dennis exits.

SANDRA. No need, I'm already here! Don't ask too much of me Inspector, I feel fragile as glass.

ROBERT. Don't harass her Carter, she's been through a lot tonight.

CHRIS. At last Colley Moore, you found a pencil?

ROBERT. Yes, Inspector.

Robert hands Chris the keys.

CHRIS. Thank you and my notebook?

Robert hands Chris the vase.

I knew I'd left them somewhere. Now I must go speak to Miss Colley Moore alone.

ROBERT. Very well. I'll be in the morning, Inspector.

Robert exits. Chris questions Sandra, making notes with the keys and vase.

CHRIS. Don't fret Miss Colley Moore, my questions will be brief and to the point and then you can get some rest. Firstly, how old are you Miss Colley Moore?

SANDRA. Twenty-one.

CHRIS. I'll make a note of that.

He tries to make a note on the vase.

How long ago did you first meet your fiancé?

SANDRA. Only seven months ago. But my brother has known him years.

Chris writes on vase again.

CHRIS. When were you due to be married?

SANDRA. In the new year.

CHRIS. Well, that's enough notes for now, I think Miss Colley Moore. Did y...

Sandra comes in a line too early.

SANDRA. When you love someone there's no such thing as rushing, Inspector.

CHRIS. Did you ever think you were rushing into this marriage?

SANDRA. Why wouldn't I love him?

CHRIS. ...did you love him, then?

SANDRA. *How could anyone have benefitted?*

CHRIS. Can you think of anyone who might have benefitted from your fiancé's death?

SANDRA. *Cecil?!*

CHRIS. Not even *Cecil?*

SANDRA. *(Slaps Chris.)* Don't tell me to calm down!

CHRIS. Calm down Miss Colley Moore. *(Reacts to slap.)*

SANDRA. I wasn't having an affair! Don't raise your voice to me, Inspector!

CHRIS. YOU WERE HAVING AN AFFAIR!

SANDRA. *What letter?*

CHRIS. Then, how do you explain the letter on the mantelpiece?

SANDRA. I *didn't* write that letter!

CHRIS. You wrote that letter!

Annie has taken the letter offstage and she passes it back through the window.

SANDRA. You've read my letter? Where did you find it?

CHRIS. Addressed to Cecil, written in your hand, declaring your love for him and how the thought of marrying Charles repulsed you.

SANDRA. Charles read it...

CHRIS. *(Does Sandra's line for her.)* You've read my letter? Where did you find it? *(His own line.)* In Charles' pocket!

SANDRA. Charles read it?! Then it *was* suicide!

CHRIS. Or a murder, conceived by you and Cecil Haversham so you could run away together!

SANDRA. How could you even say such a thing! It's true; Cecil and I were having an affair! We loved each other! But that's all; neither of us wanted to hurt Charles, let alone kill him.

CHRIS. It's my job to ask difficult questions Miss Colley Moore, I'm sorry if this upsets you.

SANDRA. *Upsets me?* How dare you! My fiancé was murdered in this very room, a matter of hours ago! I find your manner most unbecoming! I shall make a formal complaint to Scotland Yard.

CHRIS. Scotland Yard will not listen to the complaints of a murderess!

~~SANDRA. You did it! You beast! How can you? I would have died for this!~~

END

Robert bursts in, followed by Max; the door hits Sandra sharply on the head and she collapses, unconscious.

ROBERT. What's all this shouting!

MAX. What is this, Inspector?

All register that Sandra is on the floor.

CHRIS. I'm merely interviewing Miss Colley Moore, nothing more.

MAX. Florence, calm down, stop shouting!

Sandra remains unconscious.

ROBERT. She's having one of her episodes. Snap out of it, you're hysterical!

Sandra remains unconscious.

MAX. Florence! Where are you going?

Sandra remains unconscious.

ROBERT. Come back here this instant!

Sandra remains unconscious.

She's run off. I'll fetch her back. You stay here Cecil, I daresay the Inspector has some questions for you; you were Charles' brother after all.

Robert exits.

MAX. I'm sorry, Inspector, she's badly shaken, we all are. It's been quite a night and it's getting late.

CHRIS. *(Looks at clock.)* Eleven o'clock already.

The clock says 5:30.

MAX. Well Inspector? Do you have any questions for me?

Robert peers through the curtains to see if Sandra is alright.

CHRIS. Oh yes Mr. Haversham, similar questions to those I asked Miss Colley Moore.

Reading 4

Max + Robert

~~shall report you to your superior. What was I speaking with? Mr. Fitzroy. I'll write that name down.~~

Robert writes the name in his handbook with a lot of difficulty.

~~Fitzroy, I'll have you know this telephone number put me in a very important position. I shall hang up the phone this instant!~~

Robert throws the phone to Max, who hangs it up.

Start

MAX. What is it, Colley Moore?

ROBERT. Money, stolen from my accounts!

MAX. Good lord!

ROBERT. Nine thousand pounds stolen from my private savings.

MAX. Most irregular!

ROBERT. What a ghastly business. First my oldest friend murdered in cold blood and now I find myself on the edge of financial ruin! This evening could get no worse!

MAX. Thomas, I have a confession. I wasn't going to say anything, but well, the Inspector seems to have found out and blast it, I'm tired of keeping secrets.

ROBERT. Spit it out, Cecil.

MAX. Well... Florence and I are having an affair!

ROBERT. WHAT?!

Robert launches himself at Max, who dives downstage. The portrait, clock and barometer mysteriously all stay hung in their positions. Robert and Max double-take.

You and my sister?!

Robert throws Max over the chaise longue.

MAX. Now, calm down, Colley Moore.

ROBERT. I knew it! You always were a snake in the grass.

Robert drags Max up by his hair, accidentally slamming him into the side of the set.

MAX. It's not what you think! We're in love!

ROBERT. My sister does not love you. How dare you lay a finger on her; your own brother's fiancée! It's disgusting! No wonder your father hated you!

END