

Drama

1st Place

Five For Fighting by Stephen Kyle Roelfsema

Cast of Characters:

- Rocky:** Enforcer for blue team. Has black eye.
- Red Player:** Enforcer for the red team. Has teeth missing from fights.
- Coach Blue:** Losing coach, frustrated at the Refs. Loves to yell.
- Theo:** Starts off in penalty box.
- Doug:** Sits on the bench with Cliff and Theo.
- Cliff:** Sits with Theo and Line Mate 1.
- Bobby:** Gets called for roughing early in the game.
- Mandy:** Very masculine female fan.
- Brandy:** Mandy's friend. Also masculine.

Scene

This play is set in a Hockey rink somewhere in North America. Two teams are playing, one with red jerseys and the other with blue. The blue team is losing.

Time

This is set in modern times.

Act I

Scene i

Setting: The setting is arranged so that only the blue players' bench, the penalty box and center ice can be seen. The players' bench will be in the far left (from audience perspective) corner set diagonally while the penalty box will sit front right and does not have to be tilted.

At rise: Lights, curtain opens and the scene starts with three players and Coach Blue on the bench, and one player in the penalty box. Ice cutting sounds, slap shot sounds will be heard. Coach is pacing on the benches, screaming instructions at the players.

Blue: SKATE JIMMY! SKATE!
(Whistle blows) OH COM'ON REF!
THAT WAS A LOVE TAP! WHAT?
WELL I TELL YOU WHAT MISTER,
WHY DON'T YOU TONE IT DOWN?
YEAH YOU HEARD ME (whistle
blows again) GIVE ME A F*%\$ING
BREAK! THERE'S NO WAY. AND
YOU, COACH! YOU CAN WIPE
THAT STUPID GRIN OFF YOUR
FACE!

(enter Bobby from stage left. He skates to the box accompanied by the Ref)

Blue: HEY THAT'S A CLEAN HIT
BOBBY! NOTHING TO WORRY
ABOUT. THESE "REFS" (as ref skates
by) NEED TO OPEN THEIR GOD
DAMN EYES! (Angrily pacing back
and forth on bench) COM'ON BOYS
PENALTY KILL LETS
GO!

Bobby: (Gets into penalty box, sits down takes his helmet off, grabs a water bottle takes a swig and spits it out)

Theo: What happened out there?

Bobby: Oh that? Number sixteen had a smudge on his visor and I was just trying to clean it off for him.

Theo: Well, that was sweet of you. Hey, are those new pants?

Bobby: Yeah, they just came out this fall, I wasn't going to wear them this game but I couldn't resist trying them out. Do you think they make me look fat?

Theo: No, not at all, they look great. I love how they're one tone black with the white stripe as an accent, it really slims you up.

Bobby: You really think so?

Theo: Oh yeah, it makes a huge difference. It looks like you've lost ten pounds.

Bobby: Oh thank goodness. I was worried. I saw them at the shop and I thought "fantastic," but then I got home and tried them on, and you know how that goes
(Theo nods his head).

Theo: Well take my word for it, you look incredible. I'd kill for a butt like that.

Bobby: You know what my favorite part is? They accessorize so well. I can wear these with both my home and away jerseys. They look good with everything.

Theo: How much did you pay?

Coach Blue: CLEAR THE PUCK!
AHHH!!! (drags hands down face)

Bobby: Don't ask (they giggle). I tell you what though; while I was at the shop they had a great sale on protective cups. I got three pairs; you know how the elastics in those things go after a while.

Theo: Tell me about it, I went through four sets last season. How do they fit?

Bobby: Like a dream, here look (holds his pants open).

Theo: Oh yeah I can tell. It really keeps everything snug.

Bobby: Yeah, sometimes I get really sweaty and sticky down there, but other than that I have no complaints

Theo: Oh! You know what I do for that?

Bobby: I didn't know you could do anything.

Theo: Oh yeah, if you grab some baby powder before you get dressed and just pat the boys down, you'll never have that problem after that. It almost eliminates the smell too.

Bobby: Really? I don't believe it.

Theo: Try it . . . trust me, you'll love it.

Bobby: Well, I'll have to now.

(An air horn sounds, fan noises)

Coach Blue: JESUS CHRIST!

Theo: Would look at that? Maurice just scored.

Bobby: I saw. He's an incredible skater; I wish I had his legs.

Theo: I know, aren't they fantastic? Makes me wish I was a Rookie again.

Coach Blue: OH WHAT? WE'RE ONLY CALLING OFFSIDES ONE WAY NOW? (ref skates over, trying to explain) Nope, No I don't want to hear it. Ya messed up there stripes, I'm down three goals and it's your fault so just go drop the goddamn puck.

(Mandy and Brandy walk into the theater, each is holding a keg beer cup and some other snacks.)

Mandy: (panicking) What's the score!?

Brandy: I dunno. Let's find some good seats where we can really see the action.

Mandy: Oh! Oh! I see a couple good ones right up there; hurry up we're already late!

(They climb up the their seats)

Brandy: Dude, I'm sorry we're late ok? We're here now, we get to see a solid period of hockey, drink some brews, have a good time and get away from the husbands for a while.

Mandy: We wouldn't have been late in the first place if you'd have just grown some ovaries and told him that we were going to the game.

Brandy: I did the best I could alright? I don't know if you've noticed but it's kinda tough to wiggle your way out with him.

Mandy: (laughing) Dude you're totally whipped.

Brandy: Just watch the game and shut up.

Mandy: I wanted to start drinking anyway (takes a sip) . . . I bet he makes you watch home and garden network (starts to chuckle)

Brandy: One more word and you're getting a boney five to the snot box bitch! Besides, it's not such a bad channel.

(The two begin to drink and eat while watching the game and conversing)

Mandy: Whatever! That stupid channel has extended my honey-do list to infinity. He wants to. . . sorry he wants ME to paint the walls a different color every month because of that stupid channel. God forbid he ever learned to do anything himself. There's something I'm supposed to remember today, what

was it?---Hey! Would you look at the ass on number 7? He's a stone cold fox; I'd do him.

Brandy: Ha! You wouldn't even know what to do with a guy that hot; besides, you'd get busted so fast it isn't even funny.

Theo: Well, my penalty's up; when you get out we'll start planning the spa retreat for the team.

Bobby: Yeah, I still have to tell you about the fantastic masseuse out at Herbal Magic.

Coach Blue: (angrily) Theo, what in the hell were you thinking, taking a penalty like that!

Theo: Uh. . . Sorry Coach, I really wanted to stick it to the guy, you know, send a message. God! I just hate losing to this bunch of no-talent pussies!

Coach Blue: Easy kid, easy. You're playing with heart, I respect that. Next shift get out there and show me what you can do.

Theo: Let me out there coach; I wanna crush some heads.

Coach Blue: That's it! Arghhh!!! (pats him on the back enthusiastically) Show me what you're made of boy! (walks to opposite side of bench)

Doug: What happened? I missed it.

Theo: Number nine tripped on my stick over in the corner there.

Cliff: Oh my Gosh! Is he alright?

Theo: I think so, but I still feel bad.

Cliff: Oh don't feel bad it's not your fault.

Doug: Yeah Theo, accidents happen. He was playing fine last shift.

Theo: I know. Still... (kind of puts his head down)

Cliff: I know what we can do. We'll get him a card after the game and everybody can sign it! What do you think?

(The others begin to nod in agreement; everyone feels better. Coach scowls

down the bench)Uh, I mean. . . Kill HIM. . . (brief pause coach still looking) AHHH!!!! (fake sounding, everyone else joins in late.)

(There is an awkward moment of silence on the bench as players look back and forth. A whistle blows)

(Bobby is released from the penalty box. As he begins to skate back to the bench Coach Blue yells at him)

Coach Blue: No Bobby! You stay out there and take the face-off. Win it for your team son!

(Bobby skates to center stage where he is met by another tough looking Red player and the Ref. They get ready to take the face-off when Bobby speaks)

Bobby: Nice stick! What is that? Wood?

(Red player gives him an inquisitive look. The puck is dropped; Bobby wins the face-off and moves off stage followed by the ref and red player)

(Theo's line stands in the bench, Rocky sits down at the end, looking very intimidating and mean. Theo and line begin chant)

Theo, Doug and Cliff: SHOOT IT HIGH, SHOOT IT LOW; COM'ON BOBBY GET A GOAL. SHOOT IT LOW, SHOOT IT HIGH; COM'ON BOBBY GET US TIED. YAY!

(Coach Blue's jaw just drops)

(Air horn sounds, fans make noise. Bobby just scored)

(Mandy and Brandy cheer loudly. They turn to face each other to do a chest bounce; they rub their breasts in pain afterwards.)

Brandy: Did you see that shot?

Mandy: It was incredible. . . I'd do him! (Brandy looks at her) What? . . . Well I would.

(Bobby comes skating over to the bench, Theo and the two Line Mates start hugging him and patting him on the back)

Theo: Great shot Bobby!

Cliff: It was beautiful!

Doug: Hey, are those new pants?

(The three team mates begin to converse)

Coach Blue: E-NOUGH! Does someone want to explain to me just what in THE HELL IS GOING ON AROUND HERE!? I mean this is a professional Hockey club for Christ's sake! Do we not do this for a living? I mean if I'm wrong let me know right now and we'll pack up and go home because I'm not going to sit behind this bench and watch a bunch of sissy boys pretend to play Hockey!

(as Coach is speaking, Cliff gets emotional and angry. Theo and Doug notice and try to comfort him right before Coach Blue stops talking)

Theo: Hey Cliff it's alright, he doesn't mean it

Cliff: No Theo! This has got to stop! My therapist tells me that I have to stand up for myself otherwise people are going to walk all over me, people like YOU! (Points at Coach). (Fighting sobs) It

hurts when you say these things to me and I'd appreciate it if you'd consider my feelings before making comments like that.

Doug: Remember what she said Cliff? Deep breaths; lets stay relaxed. Come on big guy, say it with me.

(both start to speak)

Doug/Cliff: (deep breath in) Ahhh (relaxed) (Deep breath in) "I am in control of my universe; I have self worth."

Coach Blue: Am I caught in the freaking Twilight Zone or something? I don't think two you realize how ridiculous you look. The only person who's acted even remotely sane this entire game is Rocky. I don't know where you guys get off trying to pull this on me now? Seriously, you are the most pitiful display of athletes I've ever seen.

(Cliff begins to sob and runs off stage)

Bobby: (scowls at Coach) Now look what you did. How could you be so cruel so such a gentle hearted soul? . . . You're a bully.

Coach Blue: I am not a bully!

Bobby: Yes you are Coach. Let's take a vote; who here thinks Coach is being a bully?

(Theo, Bobby and Doug all raise hands)

Coach Blue: I am not a . . . you know what? Screw it! Yes! Yes I am a bully.

Bobby: Good for you coach. That took a lot of courage and I'm proud of you.

Theo: Admitting you have a problem is the first step to recovery coach; and we're behind you all the way.

(Players try to hug their coach)

Coach Blue: (pushes his players away)
Stay the hell away from me! I don't care
if I'm a bully! And I sure as hell am not
trying to recover! Bobby, sit down.

Rocky...

Rocky: Yeah Coach.

Coach Blue: Go out there and drop the
mitts with number 11. Let's show these
girls how to play Hockey.

Rocky: Will do Coach.

(Rocky skates to center ice and lines up
for a face off with the tough looking red
player. They both give each other a
menacing look. When the puck drops
neither makes an attempt to go for it.
Instead, they drop their gloves at center
ice and proceed to fight. They start
playing "My Sherrona" while the two tilt
at center. The girl fans are going wild;
they try to start a wave. The players
move off stage while the audience
continues to hear them fight; they move
back on stage and Finally, the Red
player drops to his knees and the Ref is
able to step between them, taking each
one to the penalty box)

Brandy: Hey, let's start a wave!

Coach Blue: WAY TO GO ROCKY!
THAT'S A GOOD TILT SON, WAY
TO SHOW SOME HEART!

Mandy: That was worth being late for.

Brandy: That was seriously the best
fight I've ever seen. (They continue to
drink and eat)

(Rocky sits down, grabs the water bottle
and takes a swig, both players sit in the
box quietly for a moment, staring
intensely at one another with heavy
brows)

Red player: Hey! (gruffly)

Rocky: Yeah, what do you want?

Red player: Great fight.

Rocky: Oh, thank you; you too.

Red player: Yeah you've got a great
right, you pretty much dominated me.

Rocky: Oh don't be so hard on
yourself; you're a great fighter. You just
need to work on a few things. For
instance, don't worry about throwing so
many punches, just try and get my jersey
over my head first, then you'd have all
the time in the world to work me over.
Come over here and try.

(Red player goes over to Rocky's side of
the penalty box and begins to jersey
Rocky. Coach is watching and get even
more excited.)

Coach Blue: See girls, that's a man
over there. They're even scrapping in the
box. (gets no response, looks over along
the bench and sees his players decorating
the bench)

Theo: Good call on the pink curtains
Bobby; it really brightens up the place.

Doug: Yeah and adds a feeling of space
as well.

Theo: Oh and I just noticed the perfect
little spot for a breakfast nook.

Bobby: Theo? Will you help me go and
get the flowers for the centerpiece?

Theo: Sure! I hope they're as lovely as
they were in the catalog.

Doug: I'm sure they will be. Martha
had a tip on her show last week for
priming centerpieces and I'm pretty
sure I remember most of it.

Coach Blue: What the hell is wrong
with you! We've got Rocky over in the
box fighting for this team,

Red player: Thank you so much for
showing me these tricks Rocky. It really
means a lot.

Rocky: Hey, for a friend, it's no
problem. (They hug, lose balance and
the Red player falls on top of Rocky)

Red player: Sorry.

Coach Blue: And you're sitting in here decorating the bench?

Bobby: We just thought the place needed some sprucing up. With the game on halt, we decided to keep ourselves busy and give the place a little TLC.

Doug: We even installed an espresso machine.

Coach Blue: (In disbelief) Really?

Bobby: Yeah. We were going to do a hot chocolate machine but we couldn't find one that would go with the ambiance we were trying to create in the room; they're all too big and bulky.

Theo: And brown.

Doug: Brown was so last season.

Bobby: Here Coach, this will warm you up. (Hands him a cup of espresso)

Doug: Is it good?

Coach: (nods his head) Yeah, it's uh, it's pretty good actually. Wait a second, what the hell am I doing! Get this crap out of here right now before I . . . Well I don't know what I'll do but you won't like it!

Doug: (holding back tears) I can't believe you just said that! (puts head in his hands and begins to weep, Bobby rubs his back consoling him)

Theo: So this is how you thank us for all our hard work?

Bobby: I think we should take his espresso. (Theo grabs espresso from Coach who doesn't really want to part with it)

Theo: You won't get this back until you apologize. (Bobby and Theo look at each other and nod in agreement)

Coach Blue: Listen, I don't care if you want to act like fruit cakes on your own time but this is not the place for it. Rocky takes his job seriously and . . . (glances over to the box) what the hell?

(Rocky and the Red player are looking at a *Good Housekeeping Magazine*)

Rocky: That's a great recipe, and look! Only 15 calories from fat!

Red player: And so simple to make too!

Rocky: I'm glad you keep one of these in your pants.

Coach Blue: That's it I forfeit! I can't handle this anymore. (walks off, throws his clipboard behind him)

Mandy: Well, looks like that's the game. Are we going to the pub?

Brandy: Sure Just let me call Steve first to make sure it's all right. (she dials, finger in one ear) Hi honey. . . Yeah, the game just finished . . . no we forfeited . . . no that's a penalty shot, forfeiting is when a team quits because they can't finish a game . . . Listen me and Mandy are going out to the pub and I was . . . seriously! . . . Uh Oh, well I guess we'll probably be heading back now then . . . Sure . . . Slim fast and shaving cream . . . the scented kind? . . . Alright . . . ok honey, I'll see you later. . . Yup, love you too . . . bye.

Mandy: What was that about?

Brandy: I've got to pick up some stuff at the store for him.

Mandy: Funny how that works isn't it? You run to the store for his stuff but when you need beer and tampons he's too busy; you're so whipped! (laughing)

Brandy: Speaking of whipped, you're in for it when we get back.

Mandy: From you? Not a chance!

Brandy: No from Tom! It's your anniversary today!

Mandy: Oh Crap!

(scene)

2nd Place

The Meeting

by Amy Tahran

Cast of Characters

Frieda--the veteran of the group, older woman, early 50s

Marnie--attends meetings regularly, but has trouble maintaining her abstinence, early 30s

Nita--also in her 30s, relatively new to the group, a bit overzealous in her attempts at living without sex

Phoebe--late 20s, court ordered to attend group, bitter about being there

Gary--late 20s, obviously gay, but not overly flamboyant

Pete--early 40s, has been attending group for some time, but doesn't take his addiction very seriously. Dresses like he thinks he is God's gift to women--hair slicked back, button-down shirt with half the buttons open, gold necklace.

Brad--mid 20s, mistakenly joins meeting already in progress. Brad is dressed in brown. This is important.

Scene opens at a meeting of "Sexaholics Anonymous." The entire play takes place in a meeting room which attempts to portray warmth and welcome, but succeeds only in looking like a typical group meeting room. There are slogans on the wall, a sofa, a couple of armchairs, a coffeepot, a meeting table and tin chairs. Attendees are greeting one another, getting coffee, claiming their seats and preparing for the opening of the meeting. Being the veteran of the group, Frieda chairs the meetings. Those present include Frieda, Marnie and Phoebe.

Cast members on stage ad-lib greetings and small talk with one another while busying themselves getting coffee, setting chairs in a semi-circle, etc.

Gary enters wearing a hot pink t-shirt with Cher's "Farewell Concert Tour" on it, listening to his MP3 player, singing LOUDLY to Bette Midler's "You are the wind beneath my wings." He flits about the room, singing to each of the women in turn until the song ends. Phoebe is disgusted, Frieda is indifferent, and Marnie is all smiles.

Marnie: (Clapping) That was wonderful, Gary!

Gary takes a bow/curtsy and puts away his coat.

Phoebe: Do you really think it's wise to encourage him?

Frieda: Hi, Gary. How're you doing?

Gary: Fabulous! I spent Saturday night at the concert of a lifetime! (*proudly displays his t-shirt*) Omigod! You should have been there! Cher was amazing! That woman has a gorgeous body...and after having two children! I can't imagine how she does it! And her voice! Oh! I swear she just gets better with age! Ooooooh! And look at this! (*Gary removes the matching hot pink scarf he has tied around his neck*) She even autographed this for me! Look! Look!

Frieda: How nice for you, Gary.

Marnie: Wow, Gary. Good for you. You must have been in 7th heaven.

Gary: You have NO idea! It was fabulous! Simply fabulous! I nearly fainted because she touched my hand when she gave me the scarf. Cher! Cher touched my hand!

Phoebe: Oooh. Better not wash it...ever!

Gary: Shut up, Phoebe. You're just jealous.

Phoebe: (*dryly*) Yeah. Whatever. So, are we gonna get this party started or what?

Gary: Don't you suppose we should wait a few minutes? All of our regulars aren't here yet.

Marnie: (*looking out window*) Oooooh. I think I see Pete's car. Is that Nita riding with him? Ah! It is! What are they thinking? Pete knows better than to put himself in a situation like that! Think of the temptation!

Phoebe: Aw, Marnie. You're jealous because Pete won't "ride" you around town. Pun intended.

Marnie: Phoebe! That is SO not true! I can't believe you would say that!

Gary: Pheebs, really. That was unkind.

Phoebe: Shut up, fairy!

Gary: Why don't YOU shut up, evil woman!

Phoebe: You shut up.

Gary: You shut up!

Phoebe: No.

Gary: Yes.

Phoebe: No.

Frieda: BOTH of you knock it off!

Gary: She started it.

Frieda: Enough! Behave, both of you. Let's try to act our age, shall we?

Pete and Nita arrive. Pete is behind Nita, checking her out all the way. He offers to hang up her coat for her. Pete is quite the charmer.

Nita: Thanks, Pete. How nice of you.

Pete: (*makes a "giddy-up" clicking sound*) Not a problem, sweetheart.

Marnie: (*throwing herself between Pete's line of vision and Nita*) Hey, Pete! How's it going?

Phoebe: Dear God, make her stop.

Marnie: Shut up, Phoebe! (*takes her seat*) So, Pete, how have you been?

Pete: (*his eyes never straying from Nita*) Fine, Marnie. How 'bout yourself?

Marnie: I've been lonely, Pete. Every day is a new struggle, ya know? Sometimes, I think about you to help me through the rough spots. I think about you a lot, Pete. Pete?

Pete: Oh, yeah. That's great. Nita, can I get you a chair?

Gary: Hey Pete! Nita. I think we've got the chairs already, Pete. Nice to see you guys.

Pete: Gary. Wish I could say the same.

Frieda: Let's get this meeting going, shall we? It seems that everyone is a bit edgy this evening. Take a seat, please.

Phoebe: Edgy? It's called sexual tension, Frieda.

Everyone takes a seat. Pete is trying to sit next to Nita, and Marnie is trying to sit next to Pete. Seeing this, Frieda takes charge and shakes her head at Marnie to indicate she is aware of what Marnie's up to. Marnie dejectedly takes a seat next to Frieda. Pete succeeds in sitting next to Nita, who is visibly uncomfortable with his closeness. Gary brings another chair to the semi-circle and wedges himself in between Pete and Nita. Nita appears relieved; Pete is irritated.

Frieda: Shall we begin with the ground rules?

Phoebe: Can we skip the ground rules tonight, Frieda? I would appreciate it if you would just sign my paper for the judge and let me go home. I don't feel so hot.

Pete: *(to himself)* You look hot, though. I bet I could make you hot. Hot and bothered, that is!

Frieda: I think it's best that we cover the ground rules. Seems there are those of us who could use a reminder. Anyone interested in reading them aloud for us?

Nita: I will, Frieda! *(Frieda hands Nita the ground rules and Nita reads aloud)*

1. Sexaholics
anonymous relies on confidentiality in order to achieve individual and group success and growth. It is expected and necessary that

everything that is said here, stays here.

2. The only requirement for membership in this group is the personal desire to refrain from sex in any and all forms.
3. Feedback is appreciated, but should not be judgmental in nature. Shared experiences are welcome; criticisms are not.

Would you like me to read the 12 steps, too, Frieda?

During the following lines, Marnie is gazing intently at Pete. She is trying to look alluring, batting her eyes, etc. obviously vying for his attention.

Frieda: I think we'll move on, but thanks. Everyone is aware of the twelve steps of our program. Tonight, we will focus on a daily struggle, which we all need to work on. Please recall that last week, we ran out of time, but were about to delve into the difficulties we face when socializing with others outside of this group. Marnie, I think we left off with you last time. Would you like to share first? Marnie? Marnie!

Marnie: Huh? *(snaps back to reality)* Oh, yeah, sure. What am I doing?

Gary: Sharing, honey.

Marnie: Oh, okay. Meeting new people? Oh! You should have seen the guy I met at the Laundromat last week!

Gary: I just LOVE hearing these stories! I have a *really* good story about a guy I met at the Laundromat a couple of years ago. He was young. *(pointedly*

speaking at Phoebe) But he was *legal!* He was at that “experimental” stage. Our eyes met across the room, we started talking, and the next thing we knew, we were both covered in fabric softener, lubricating one another’s naked bodies in the men’s room. To this day, the scent of Downy reminds me of our rendezvous.

Nita: Gary! Behave! These are serious cries for help and salvation. These are confessions of our deepest, darkest sins! Don’t treat them so lightly!

Pete: Yeah, fairy boy. Nita’s right. This is serious business.

Gary: Ya know what? I am growing weary of your constant put downs. You are a cold, mean spirited person. I don’t care for you one bit.

Phoebe: Relax, Gary. You know what they say. Those guys who behave like complete homophobes are secretly gay. You’re one step above him. You’ve come out!

Pete: Keep it up, Phoebe. That smart mouth of yours is going to get you kicked out of here yet.

Frieda: Would you stop!?! I’ll kick you both out if you don’t zip it right now! *(silence ensues, but Pete and Phoebe glare at one another for a while)* That’s better. Marnie, you need to get your thoughts in order, so we’ll let someone else go first. *(Gary raises his hand and Frieda tries to ignore him)* Anyone? *(Gary begins waving his hand in the air like an excited first grader who knows the answer)* Come on. Someone needs to share. Oh, all right. I’ll go first. *(Gary drops his hand disappointedly)* I’m Frieda, and I am addicted to sex.

Group: Hello, Frieda.

Frieda: I have remained abstinent for 16 years.

Unimpressed applause from group.

Frieda: My addiction caused three divorces because I was unable to remain faithful to my husbands. I have no relationship with my children because they were disgusted with my insatiable sex drive.

Nita: What? Your children? What have they got to do with anything?

Frieda: In my moments of weakness, I slept with my son’s two best friends. That wouldn’t have been so bad, but I also have a daughter. I slept with a five of her boyfriends. Or was it six? No. That one doesn’t count. Anyway, she doesn’t trust me. I can’t blame her.

Gary: Go Frieda, go Frieda!

Group members give Gary dirty looks. He stops, ashamed of himself.

Frieda: Even after all these years, not a day goes by that I don’t desire intimacy, but with the support of my fellow addicts along with prayer and meditation, I have managed to maintain my abstinence. It’s been difficult, but somehow I’ve managed.

Pete: *(under his breath)* Yeah, well, when you get all shriveled and old, it can’t be easy to find a willing partner!

Frieda: What was that, Peter?

Pete: Huh? Oh, nuthin. Just clearing my throat.

Frieda: UmHmm. Ok. Who’s next?

Gary volunteers. Marnie is still trying to flirt with Pete, who is oblivious to her antics. Pete remains focused on Nita, who is growing uncomfortable under the weight of his stare. Frieda avoids Gary.

Frieda: Phoebe?

Phoebe: Oh, fine. I’m Phoebe, and I have no idea why I’m here.

Gary: You’re here because you have a problem, honey.

Phoebe: I have a strong sexual appetite. I like sex. I enjoy sex. I strive to have sex as much as humanly possible. It's fun. What's wrong with that?

Frieda: There's plenty wrong with it when it involves 17-year-old young men.

Phoebe: Come on! He TOLD me he was 19! Am I supposed to check id's before going to bed with someone!?! Really!

Nita: If that would solve the problem, maybe it's not such a bad idea.

Phoebe: Puhleez! Ok. Sign my paper. I wanna go.

Frieda: Sorry, dear. Not yet. Did you have any struggles this past week that you want to talk about?

Phoebe: No struggles. Can I go now?

Nita: Oh, dear Phoebe. Stick around. Maybe someone else will share something that will provide you with some insight.

Phoebe: I'm sure that will happen. Look around at all the insight and intelligence oozing from the people in this group. I'm not worthy.

Frieda: Okay. Who's next?

Gary: I'll go!

Marnie: Gary, you're way too eager.

Pete: We could skip Gary's sexcapades for one meeting, couldn't we?

Gary: You're just jealous, Pete.

Women love me, men fear me.

Pete: Whatever, queer boy. If anybody's jealous, it's you.

Phoebe: Oh, yeah. Because Pete is SO cool.

Pete: People say I remind them of "The Fonz."

Gary: I can see that. The Fonz in the last season. He was really cool then. He still lived with the Cunninghams and he had an office in the men's room at Al's.

All laugh, except Pete.

Pete: Why, I oughtta...

Frieda: Enough! Lord, I feel more like a referee at these meetings than a leader! Gary, you need to sit down and shut up. Pete, cool off. Let's hear from Marnie.

Marnie: *(in a sultry voice)* I'm Marnie, and I am addicted to sex.

Group: Hi, Marnie.

Marnie: I have been abstinent for 6 days. Six long, agonizing days.

Group: Congratulations, Marnie.

Marnie: I have never refrained from sex for this long, and I don't know how much longer I'll last.

Nita: Ooooh. Let's pray for Marnie.

Frieda: That's a good idea, Nita.

Phoebe: Dear Lord, please shoot me now!

Nita: Phoebe! Stop! This is serious. Marnie is in need, and it is our responsibility as her fellow addicts to help her through this!

Marnie: I don't need your help! I need Pete!

Marnie lunges at Pete, pushing him backwards in his chair and falling on top of him, attacking him with her kisses. She means business. Pete, who is also addicted to sex, can't help himself and returns her affections.

As the rest of the group works to untangle Pete and Marnie, Brad arrives. He is on his cell phone in the hallway, peering into the meeting. Unaware of Pete and Marnie's little escapade, he continues talking on his phone. The group quiets but continues separating Pete and Marnie while Brad talks. During his conversation, they eventually get back to their seats and resume their meeting.

Brad: Oh, ok. I think I found it. You said room 212, right? Yeah, there's a

few people here. I'm pretty sure this is the right place. I'll check it out and let you know if I meet anybody. What? No, there's a couple guys and a couple of chicks. One older lady. Wonder what she's doing here. Creepy. Ok, man. I'm going in. Later.

Brad enters the room. All is quiet. Marnie, Gary and Phoebe are checking Brad out.

Brad: *(looking self-conscious)* Hi. Sorry I'm late.

Marnie: No need to apologize.
Marnie jumps up to get him a chair. Gary does so at the same time. They silently battle over the placing of the chair, each wanting Brad to sit next to them.

Nita: Welcome. Can I get you some coffee?

Brad: No, thank you.

Frieda: *(takes the chair and placing it between herself and Nita while Gary and Marnie dejectedly retake their seats)* Join us. Have a seat. I'm Frieda.

Brad: Thanks. I'm Brad.

Group: Welcome, Brad.

Brad: *(a bit shaken at the group welcome)* Yeah. So, how does this work?

Nita: We're taking turns discussing our struggles. Tonight, we're talking about how scary it is to socialize with new people.

Gary: *(to Phoebe)* I could definitely see myself "socializing" with this guy!

Phoebe: No way. He doesn't play that game, Romeo.

Gary: Don't be so quick to judge, my dear.

Marnie: I saw him first. He's mine.

Frieda: Brad, would you be interested in sharing with us?

Brad: Ummm. I'm Brad. I'm new. I guess I have trouble meeting new people, too. That's why I'm here. Dating is really scary for me.

Frieda: Oh, yes. We can all relate to that. We normally don't advise dating until you've got several *months* of serious group work under your belt.

Brad: Months? Really? Wow.

Nita: It's just not safe, ya know?

Phoebe: Yeah. God forbid you have a little fun now and then.

Pete: Hi, Brad. Don't let these losers scare you. My name's Pete.

Gary: *(winking at Brad)* And I'm Gary. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Brad: Ok.

Frieda: Nita, would you like to share next?

Gary: Come on! You've been ignoring me all night! When is it going to be my turn?

Frieda: Fine. Gary?

Gary: Ok, ok. So, I'm at the Cher Farewell Concert, right? And I am surrounded by all these hot guys. Hot, sweaty guys. And we're all whooping and hollering because we are so excited to be there. We're jumping around, singing, dancing, strangers are "accidentally" rubbing up against one another--

Frieda: Thank you, Gary. Pete, would you like to go next? We haven't heard from you yet this evening.

Pete: *(stands, combs back his hair and sticks his comb into his back pocket, unbuttons one more button on his shirt)* Ok. So, I'm Pete.

Group: Hi, Pete. *(Brad is startled by the group response)*

Pete: So, I've got this friend. This friend likes to frequent a strip club on Vine Street, right? *(Phoebe is growing uncomfortable)* Well, this friend of mine...we'll call him Fred...

Frieda: A friend, huh?

Pete: (*defensively*) Yeah, a friend. Anyway, so he goes to this club a lot. One night, he gets propositioned by one of the dancers. Her stage name was Bambi. So, of course, he takes her up on her offer and they go back to his place. Now, this chick was into some kinky stuff (*glances at Phoebe who looks like she wants to crawl out of her skin*) but Frank doesn't mind that.

Marnie: I thought you said his name was Fred.

Pete: Yeah. Well, so they have their fun. And it was fun, I understand (*winking at Phoebe*). But when he wakes up in the morning, "Bambi" is gone. She left him with something to remember her by, though. The next day, Phillip...or, crap, I mean Fred, develops a distracting, uncomfortable itching sensation in his nether regions. Come to find out, she gave him crabs!

Marnie: No way!

Phoebe: Really? 'Cause the way I heard it, he's the one that gave her crabs!

Pete: No, no. I'm sure it was the other way around.

Phoebe: You are such an ass!

Pete: (*laughing*) What are you getting so upset about, Phoebe? It's just a story about a friend of mine!

Frieda: Oh, okay. I think we can all see what's going on here. Pete, why are you sharing a story about your "friend?" We only want to know what's going on with you.

Pete: Sorry. Just thought it might be relevant.

Marnie: Well, I guess there's a lesson in it.

Gary: Yeah. Don't sleep with strippers. (*to Pete*) Moron.

Frieda: Please don't start in again, you two! Let's see. Oh! Nita! Let's hear

from you, dear. Would you share with us?

Nita: Of course. (*Nita rises*) I'm Nita. I am addicted to sex. (*At this announcement, Brad is shocked and looks bewildered*)

Group: Hi, Nita. (*Brad jumps at the group greeting, his eyes wide*)

Nita: I have not had sex for two weeks, four days and eleven hours.

Phoebe: Overachiever.

Nita: I am scared to death of meeting new people. I'm scared to go to work. I'm scared to leave my house for fear of what I might be tempted to do.

Brad: (*perplexed*) What are you talking about?

Nita: Sex, Brad. Sex is the enemy. Why, just the other day, the UPS truck pulled into my driveway, and I immediately began fantasizing about the things the delivery guy would do to me if I let him in.

Pete: Go on.

Gary: Yeah, go on.

Nita: Well, you see, I've always had a fantasy about the UPS man. There's just something about that brown uniform. It drives me wild.

Phoebe: That's it. I've had enough. I'm outta here. Forget that damned court order. I'm going to the singles bar to find someone old enough to take home with me! (*Phoebe exits*)

Pete: (*taking notes*) So, Nita, is it just the UPS uniform, or uniforms in general?

Gary: I have a stunning little French maid uniform at home. Those fishnet stockings make my legs look amazing.

Brad: What the hell are you talking about?

Pete: Uniforms, buddy. Keep up with the rest of the class, man.

Frieda: I think we're getting a little off track here...

Marnie: UPS doesn't really do it for me. Fed Ex, on the other hand...now there's a hot outfit. And their trucks are so much nicer. But what really drives me wild is when it's hot outside and they wear those navy blue shorts and show off their muscular, manly legs, their calves and thighs bulging under the exertion of carrying those heavy packages. Ummm, hmmm.

Gary: Really? I guess I would say that they're both pretty hot. Delivery guys in general are hot. I once had a boyfriend who was a Schwan guy. We often had sticky, sweet sex, with the aid of their premium, over-priced ice cream. I miss him.

Pete: Nita? You didn't answer me. Is it just the UPS uniform that gets to you, or do you have a thing for uniforms in general.

Nita: *(unable to take her eyes off of Brad's brown outfit)* I don't know that it's really the uniform at all. No, I think it's just the color. That earthy tone. It's primal. It's instinctual. It's...*(moving in on Brad)*, it's...*(stroking his hair)*. What did you say your name was?

Frieda: Nita! Control yourself!

Pete: Nita, I have brown underwear on! And a brown jacket! *(grabs his jacket)* See, Nita? Brown! You like brown.

Brad: What is going on!? I came here to find a date! I thought this was a singles group. Will someone please tell me what kind of a group this is? You guys are a bunch of freaks!

Gary: Relax, honey. You've walked in on a meeting of Sexaholics Anonymous. Aren't you addicted to sex?

Marnie: He's a twenty-something year-old guy. Of course he's addicted to sex!

Nita: Brad, you are so hot. I can't control myself any longer. Oh, take me!

(Nita tackles Brad)

Frieda: Dear God, you people are a disgrace! Is no one willing to take this meeting seriously? *(no one is listening to her)* You should be ashamed of yourselves! Come on, people! Pull yourselves together! *(Brad is struggling to free himself from Nita's advances, but after a while, he give up and goes along with it)* All right. That's it. You're on your own! *(Frieda leaves)*

Marnie: Come on! The new guy was mine! Nita! *(No one pays attention. Pete is gawking at Brad and Nita. Gary is cleaning his nails.)* Nita, come on! This is so unfair! Nita! Fine! *(calling after Frieda)* Hey, Frieda! Wait up! Can I get a ride? *(exits)*

Brad: *(coming up for air long enough to speak)* Uh, Nita. Wanna go back to my place?

Nita: Huh? Oh, okay! Let's go!

Brad: *(cell phone rings on the way out and he answers)* Hey, dude! You were right! You have got to check out one of these meetings! It is a great place to meet chicks! *(Brad and Nita exit, unable to keep their hands off each other)*

Gary is now eyeing Pete. Pete realizes he has lost his chance with Nita and notices that Gary is staring at him. Pete considers his options for a moment before speaking. He shrugs.

Pete: Oh, what the hell. You really got a French maid outfit?

Gary: *(giggling)* Peter! I just knew that you'd come around sooner or later! Did you get those crabs cleared up?

Pete: Yeah. No worries, big guy. *(They exit holding hands)*

Lights out. End Play.

The Case of the Phantom Familiar

by Mitchell Mackechney

Cast of Characters

Lucien Belmont: A respected explorer and historian who dabbles in solving mysteries whenever they appear. He is an older yet lively gentleman with an odd sense of humor.

Henry Wernstrom: A wealthy young man who has just recently married. He is a sensible young man and is also a good friend to Lucien, who he deeply yet quietly respects.

Linda Wernstrom: Henry's wife and one of Lucien's biggest fans. She is a lively, high spirited young lady who loves hearing stories about Lucien's many adventures.

Farnsworth: Lucien's butler and personal assistant when traveling to exotic locales. He is around Lucien's age and acts very conservatively, yet Lucien treats him more like a close friend than a servant.

Nathaniel Belmont: Lucien's young nephew who has a taste for danger. He recently has become very interested in a new but dangerous sport that's sweeping across England. His most notable feature seems to be his arrogance in thinking that he can cheat death.

Matilda Belmont: Lucien's niece and Nathaniel's older sister. She has been married many times despite her age, and is very beautiful. She is haughty, arrogant, and sarcastic. A typical man-eater.

Walter Belmont: Lucien's cousin. He is around Lucien's current age and looks somewhat like him, yet has a polar opposite personality. Unlike Lucien, Walter is cold, meticulous, and humorless. He is a bit of a neat freak with a tongue that can be as sharp as a sword stroke.

Joseph Pennbrook: The lawyer of the deceased. He is a short and round middle aged man with wire glasses. He appears to be a very uptight man, much like Walter, yet speaks in a monotone most of the time.

Scene

The play takes place in the study of Lucien Belmont but during two different times. The first scene depicts Lucien telling stories of his adventures to Linda, Henry, and Farnsworth. However, the second scene goes back in time five years to the reading of the will of Lucien's late uncle.

Time

The time is around the middle of the 17th century in the English countryside.

The first scene begins in the study of Lucien Belmont, the famed mystery solving historian. Lucien is seated in his favorite plush leather chair and is finishing recounting another adventure to a group of his friends. Mr. Henry Wernstrom is seated on the couch opposite of Lucien. His wife, Linda, is seated next to him. Both of them appear to be very interested in the tale being told. Lucien's close friend and assistant Farnsworth is at the table pouring drinks for everyone.

Lucien: And that's how I solved the mystery of the Jade Scorpion. All it took was knowing the difference between a Babylonian vase and a Mesopotamian one. For one who is fluent in such ancient lore, such as me, the case was actually quite simple.

Linda: *((leans forward interested)) Remarkable, Mr. Belmont! Simply remarkable. I would never have guessed that a vase would have a hidden compartment like the one you described. I mean. . . How could such a thing even be possible?*

Henry: Yes, my thoughts exactly. To be perfectly honest, I had already pinned Baron Gorbachev as the culprit. But then, I suppose an old warhorse like him wouldn't have very much interest in archaeology.

Lucien: *((laughs)) Oh, you wouldn't believe just how crafty those Mesopotamians could be. Why, did you know that the ziggurats they had built contained some of the most deadly traps ever devised at that time? We're talking spiked pits, murder holes, swinging pendulum blades that could cleave right through you down the middle. . .*

Farnsworth: *((interrupting)) Come now Lucien, no need to go into all of the ghastly details. ((approaches group,*

hands everyone a glass)) I'm sure that Mesopotamian devilry is very fascinating, but some of us want to sleep tonight. ((stands next to Lucien's chair.)) Can I get anyone anything else?

Henry: No, thank you.

Linda: Oh, do sit down and have a drink with us, Farnsworth. You've done enough for us already.

Farnsworth: *((smiles, nodding)) Very well, Mrs. Wernstrom. ((sits in chair next to Lucien))*

Lucien: *((laughing)) Oh Farnsworth, I'm sure it's not as bad as anything we've already heard before. Why, I remember this particular experience when I was deep in the Amazon jungle looking for the lost temple of Pazuzu. It was a particularly wet summer and the local mosquito population was booming. As a result, most of my party and I had contracted a rather bad case of a rare disease the natives affectionately called Chiprikanictua. Or in English, the Dripping Madness. Our bodies swelled to balloon-like proportions while our pores were dripping with a putrid yellow slime. The stench was so awful that I. . .*

Farnsworth: *((covers mouth like he's sick)) Please! No more! I beg of you!*

Lucien: Whoops! My apologies, Farnsworth.

Henry: *((thoughtfully)) Gentlemen, please. Let's try to keep the conversation at least somewhat appropriate. Besides, there's still something about your last tale that I can't really figure out, Lucien.*

Lucien: Oh? What's that, Henry?

Henry: Why the devil would anyone go through all the trouble of stealing a tiny little statue like that Jade Scorpion? I can't see why anyone would want such a repulsive item. Even it *was* taken from some musty old temple.

Farnsworth: Yes, I was wondering the same thing.

Lucien: Well, maybe I forgot to mention this particular detail about that relic, but I shall do so now to make up for it.

Farnsworth: What detail is that, Lucien?

Linda: Oh yes, please tell us.

Lucien: Well. . . *((leans forward in his chair))* Please keep in mind that I am a historian by trade, not an appraiser. But, I've been lead to believe that the approximate monetary value of the Jade Scorpion is. . . thirty million pounds.

((Shocked gasps from Linda, Henry, and Farnsworth))

Farnsworth: Great Scott! Why that's enough to buy your own island! Maybe even two!

Linda: Indeed! All that money over some little green statue of a repulsive insect.

Lucien: Arachnid, my dear.

Linda: Oh, whatever!

Lucien: *((to Henry, grinning))* Now do you see why, Henry?

Henry: I. . . I believe so. But even so, I don't think I would ever try to steal something like that. I'd never know what to do with all that money.

Linda: I know exactly what I'd do if I had a fortune like that!

Farnsworth: Really? What's that?

Linda: I'd use it to travel all over the world and see everything there is to see. Just like Lucien has.

Lucien: Bravo, Linda! Bravo! *((claps))* I can see that my words have not fallen on deaf ears.

Henry: *((yawning))* Well, in any case, I'd say its about time to leave, friends. It's getting awfully late.

Farnsworth: Yes, you're right. It was a pleasure as always, Mr. and Mrs.

Wernstrom. *((starts to rise, but Linda pulls his hand back down))*

Linda: Oh, come on now! I'm sure it can't be that late, you two. Besides I still want to hear another one of Lucien's stories.

Henry: But you've already heard every single one of his stories ten times over, dear! There's nothing left for him to tell tales about.

Lucien: *((grins, crosses arms over chest))* Oh, I wouldn't say that. I've still got one more that I haven't told to anyone yet.

Linda: *((excitedly))* Really!? *((looks up at Henry))* Can we please stay, Henry? After this, I promise we can leave.

Henry: *((groans, then sits along with Farnsworth))* Oh, all right. If it'll make you happy.

Linda: *((embraces Henry))* Thank you, darling! *((to Lucien))* What story is this one about, Lucien?

Lucien: Well, this one is the most recent story so far. *((strokes chin))* This all took place. . . five years ago. When I first moved to London, actually. You all remember don't you? It was during that dreadful winter where the snow was so high the mail couldn't get through.

Linda: Yes, I believe so.

Henry: Me too.

Farnsworth: Same here.

Lucien: Well, I had actually inherited this house from a distant uncle of mine named Julius after he had died about a month before when the story begins. It was also the spot where the reading of my uncle's will would be taking place. Naturally, I came as quickly as I could when I received the summons, along with all of my closest living relatives. However, nothing could've prepared me

for what happened after the reading had finished.

Henry: Why? What happened, Lucien?

Lucien: Murders! Three of them, to be exact.

Linda: Murders!? Here!? In this house!?

Lucien: Oh yes. Terrible, ghastly ones too.

Farnsworth: Oh my. . . *((stutters))* I think I left the water running in the kitchen! I'd best go see to it.

Lucien: *((watches Farnsworth leave, shakes head))* Anyways, let me start from the beginning. I was seated in this very room and in this very chair while the will was being read.

((As Lucien's voice fades, the lights dim until completely dark. Lucien removes his jacket and carries a pith helmet in his lap. Henry, Linda, and Farnsworth exit and Gertrude, Emily, Nathaniel, Walter, and Joseph enter. Joseph is seated behind the desk and reading the will. Gertrude and Nathaniel are seated together on the couch. Emily is seated in the chair next to Lucien's. A spotlight will briefly shine on a person when their names are read from the will.))

Joseph: To my grandson Nathaniel *((spotlight on Nathaniel briefly))*, whom I adore but sometimes question his sanity, I leave the sum of fifty thousands pounds. It is my hope that this money will convince him to settle down into a quiet life away from those dangerous stunts he loves to perform so much. Why anyone would want to slide down a staircase banister upon a single bike wheel is beyond me. Please my boy, I wish you to be a father someday.

Nathaniel: *((chuckles))* Even in death my uncle scolds me for trying to live a little.

Gertrude: *((scoffs))* Please, brother! You almost killed yourself with your last little stunt. Why must you continuously do that with that damnable toy?

Joseph: *((rolls eyes))* First of all, it's called a unicycle. Second of all, I like it.

Walter: *((interrupting))* Please, you two! There will be plenty of time to discuss the pros and cons of this "unicyle" soon enough. *((to Joseph))* Please continue, sir.

Joseph: Thank you. *((glares at Gertrude and Nathaniel))* To my darling granddaughter Gertrude, I leave the sum of thirty thousand pounds and the jewels of my beloved late wife, along with the hopes that she will find a good man to hoodwink into marrying her, and then divorce him for all he's got.

((sardonically)) Again.

Gertrude: *((huffs))* Well! I never!

Joseph: *((chuckles))* Please, you've married more people than a priest.

Lucien: *((laughs))* I hate to say it but I think he's got you there.

Joseph: *((glares at everyone))* If you all don't mind. . . *((they fall silent))* To my sister's son Walter *((spotlight briefly highlights Walter))* I leave the family factory that enabled my father before me to live happily and prosperously.

Walter, my boy, the Lord has blessed you with a sharp mind and a keen intellect. I feel that you would've made an excellent teacher, but I pity the poor children in your classroom.

Walter: *((confused))* What the devil does my uncle mean by that?

Lucien: Walter, I believe our dear uncle is trying to tell you to lighten up. No one can be happy if they take everything so seriously all the time. You're very smart, dear cousin, but your tongue is also quite sharp.

Walter: Shut up, Lucien!

Lucien: *((shrugs))* See what I mean?

Joseph: Finally. . . To my brother's only son Lucien, I leave this house and all within it. Lucien, you have the passion of an explorer and have been to more exotic locales than I could ever dream. You have made me and the rest of the family proud, but now I think its time you settled down and let the younger generation of explorers take over. I leave you this house in the hopes that you will come to think of it as your home.

Nathaniel: *((rises))* Well, I do believe that's everybody. I wish you all the best of luck with your new spoils, but I really must get going. See you at the next family reunion! *((heads for the door, but Joseph calls out))*

Joseph: Wait, young sir! There is still more to be read.

Gertrude: There is? Oh my, how exciting.

Walter: *((impatiently))* What are you waiting for, man? An invitation? Spit it out, already!

Lucien: Walter, remember what our dear uncle told you. . .

Walter: Shut up, Lucien!

Joseph: *((hesitates))* Yes, well... Anyhow. . . *((clears throat before reading))* By now I'm sure that young Nathaniel has already risen and is planning on leaving so he can go back to those god-awful stunts of his. *((Nathan looks shocked, everyone else snickers except Walter))* But before any of you can collect your new properties, there is still something that you must do.

Gertrude: Do? What's this all about?

Nathaniel: I don't like where this is going.

Walter: Nor do I.

Lucien: Oh poppycock! Where's your sense of adventure?

Walter: *((sardonically))* I fear I left it in my other pair of pants.

Joseph: *((Lucien laughs, Joseph continues))* As I'm sure you all know, this house has been in the Belmont family for many generations. It is a symbol for our family as well as a treasure. But, I fear this house is also quite haunted. *((shocked gasps from everyone))* The task that I ask of you is this. Each of you must spend one whole night within this very house in order to lawfully receive what I have willed to you. Anyone who leaves before sunrise will have their assets from me revoked and divided equally among those remaining. I ask you of this not for a practical joke, but as a sign of your commitment to the family. The ghost that haunts this house is the spirit of who I believe to be Sir Francis Belmont, my great grandfather. He and I have shared this house for many years and it was my goal to find a means to release him from his earthly bonds so that he may finally ascend. But, I have failed. It is my hope that one of you will succeed where I have failed. My lawyer, Mr. Joseph Franklin *((spotlight briefly shines on Joseph))* will arrive back at this house precisely at sunrise to see which of you still remains here. I wish you all the best of luck and give you all my blessings. *((Joseph looks up from the paper))* There is no more.

((There is a brief silence, Nathaniel returns to his chair, everyone has confused expressions. Lucien starts putting papers into a briefcase.))

Lucien: *((cheerfully))* Right then, so who wants a drink? *((rises, crosses to drink table))*

Nathaniel: *((raises hand))* Yes, I'll take one. Make it a strong one, please.

Walter: *((wipes brow))* Same here.

Gertrude: Oh, listen to the two of you! You're acting like you really believe that load of hogwash.

Nathaniel: I do not! I'll have you know I'm just thirsty, that's all.

Grandfather Julius was always superstitious, you know that.

Walter: Of course, he was! I always thought his imagination was highly overactive for a man his age.

Gertrude: Well of course *you'd* think so, Walter. After all, you have no imagination whatsoever.

Walter: I beg your pardon!?

Lucien: *((turns away from table))* Now now, come on everyone. I hate it when family members squabble like this.

((crosses to the center and hands Walter and Nathaniel their drink, then sits on his chair.)) Tell me, Gertrude. Why don't you think this house could be haunted like my uncles says? *((sips drink))*

Gertrude: Why the whole idea is just preposterous. There is no such thing as ghosts, pure and simple.

Lucien: *((thoughtfully))* Uh huh. . . *((taps chin))* And what proof do you have that there is no such thing as ghosts?

Gertrude: Proof? What proof do I need? I have never seen a ghost nor has anyone else for that matter. Therefore, they don't exist.

Lucien: I see. *((smiles))* So does that mean that mean you don't believe in the wind, either?

Gertrude: *((blinks))* Excuse me? What on earth do you mean?

Lucien: Well, if what you say is true, then the wind must not exist either. *I* have seen it, and I suppose that neither of you have seen it either.

Walter: Why that's just absurd. Of course the wind exists. *((rises and*

crosses to window, points outside)) I can see it right now through that window. Look at how that trees is swaying back and forth, for example.

Lucien: No, still not enough evidence for me. How do you know that the tree isn't simply doing that on its own?

Nathaniel: *((laughs))* Come now, Lucien. Now you're just being silly.

Lucien: *((laughs))* That may be, my boy. But do you see the point I'm trying to make? Just because you can't see something, that doesn't mean you should say it isn't real.

Gertrude: Please, I hardly think comparing the souls of the departed to a stormy breeze is stretching things a bit far.

Lucien: Is it, Gertrude? I seem to remember discovering many strange things during my travels. I remember this one expedition in the Valley of Kings I was a part of where I helped discover the tomb of Pharaoh Karnatep. I still remember looking at the old mummy and feeling that some sort of presence was still behind those hollow eye sockets.

Gertrude: But I hardly think that mummy suddenly lurched forward in his grave and uttered a curse on you. Please Lucien, stop trying to scare us.

Lucien: *((laughs))* Ah, its true what they say. Youth is wasted on the young.

Joseph: *((closes briefcase, comes out from behind desk))* Well, if you all will excuse me, I'm heading off. I'll be back in the morning according to Mr.

Belmont will and we'll see who is still here by sunrise. *((laughs))* I hardly think any of you have anything to worry about. Good night. *((exits))*

Nathaniel: *((rises and stretches))* Even if there is no ghost, this is still bloody inconvenient for me. I was supposed to be meeting a lady friend for a late dinner

tonight, but I suppose I'll have to cancel. Does anyone know where I can find a phone?

Walter: I believe there is one somewhere down the hall. I'll go with you. I have to make some calls and cancel my board meeting tomorrow.

Nathaniel: Ah, very well. *((they both leave, Gertrude and Lucien watching them.))*

Lucien: *((rises, crosses to bookshelf))* I wonder. . .

Gertrude: *((curiously))* What do you wonder, Lucien?

Lucien: Hm? Oh. I was just wondering if I could find out more about this distant relative of ours. Julius's story about him has got me wanting to do a little research.

Gertrude: Why would you want to research such a morbid topic?

Lucien: It's not necessarily his death that I'm interested in, but rather his life. I'm just curious about what kind of man could leave such an impression on dear Julius after so many years had passed. *((picks up a book, examines it))* You know, you should try reading every once in a while, Gertrude. You're bound to find some fascinating topics.

Gertrude: *((scoffs))* I have no use for books.

Lucien: *((snickers))* No, I suppose not.

((Gertrude huffs angrily, rises and exits. Nathaniel enters, passing Gertrude, and glances at her before shaking his head.))

Nathaniel: *((laughing))* What's gotten her so riled up?

Lucien: *((puts away book))* Oh, she's just got to learn to handle some light teasing. You know I love your sister dearly, my dear boy. I just don't respect her very much.

Nathaniel: Well, you're not the only one. *((sits in chair))* However, it looks like we won't be making any phone calls tonight. The phone line is dead. It's odd, though. The night is calm.

Lucien: Maybe that was a part of Julius's will and Mr. Franklin just forgot to read it. I suppose Uncle doesn't want to take any chances with us cooped up in here.

Nathaniel: Well, whatever the reason is, I don't like it. Not a bit. After hearing that story about our ancestor's ghost, having the phone lines suddenly die just seems a little too coincidental.

Lucien: Perhaps. Although, it should make for a good story later on.

Nathaniel: Ah yes. I've forgotten that you have a passion for story-telling. Well, as long as we're both here, how about you tell one right now? An exciting one. With lots of mystery and intrigue.

Lucien: *((laughs))* All right. Let's see. *((crosses to leather chair, sits, places hand on chin in contemplation))* Ah, here's one. Have I ever told you the story of how I once traveled with a caravan of gypsies through the Carpathian Mountains? The weather was always so dreadfully grey and it seemed like. . . *((a loud crash is heard from offstage, Lucien and Nathaniel jump from their seats and turn to the door. Walter enters obviously very shaken.))*

Walter: Did you see that?! I was nearly killed!

Lucien: *((concerned))* Killed? How? Are you all right? *((crosses to Walter))*

Walter: *((swallows))* Y-yes, I'm fine. But did you see that!? Did you!?

Nathaniel: *((sardonically))* We didn't see anything, Walter. Lucien and I were in this room the entire time. *((Walter*

looks like he's about to strangle Nathaniel))

Lucien: Calm down, Walter. Calm down. Tell us what happened.

Walter: *((calms))* It was that damn suit of armor out in the hallway! I was walking past it when after I tried using the phone, when it fell forward and the axe it was holding suddenly swung an inch past my bloody head!

Nathaniel: *((crosses arms, looks at Walter closely))* Wait a moment. Are you saying that an empty suit of armor tried to kill you? Walter, I thought you said you didn't believe in ghost stories.

Walter: I don't! *((glares at Nathaniel))* Listen to me, you little twit! How dare you make fun of me!

Lucien: *((angrily))* All right, everyone sit down!

((Walter and Nathaniel glare at each other, then move to sit in opposite chairs. As they do so, the lights suddenly black out and Gertrude's scream is heard. The picture over the mantle is switched with a copy of itself, but with words painted in red over it saying "Leave if you want to live."))

Nathaniel: *((shouts))* What the devil!? Gertrude! Where are you!?

Walter: Watch where you step, you oaf! You almost crushed my toes!

Lucien: Please, Walter! Gertrude, where are you!? What's wrong?

Gertrude: I'm here! Something just brushed past me! Please, someone tell me what's going on!

((Lights come on again. Gertrude is standing close to Nathaniel, Lucien is standing by the leather chair, and Walter is standing behind the desk in front of the painting.))

Nathaniel: Thank God that's over. Is everyone all right?

Lucien: Yes, I seem to be fine. *((brushes off coat))*

Walter: Same here. Whatever it is that caused the blackout seems to be gone now.

Gertrude: *((turns to Walter, sees the painting, covers mouth in shock))* Oh!

((Lucien, Nathaniel, and Walter notice her staring at the painting and all turn to look at it. They gasp.))

Nathaniel: Good God! Is that *blood*?

Lucien: For all intensive purposes, it appears that way. Although, I'm more curious about what it has to say.

Nathaniel: *((reads))* "Leave if you want to live." How ghastly. *((notices Walter behind the desk))* Wait a moment. . . *((accusingly))* Walter, what are you doing back there?

Walter: *((stutters))* Why I was looking for Gertrude, same as everyone else. Why do you ask?

Nathaniel: I can't help but notice that you're the one standing closest to that obscene thing when the lights came back on. Why you could easily touch it from where you're standing.

Walter: *((glares, low tone))* What are you saying, Nathaniel?

Nathaniel: I'm saying that you're the one who wrote those words, Walter! I knew you were scary, but I didn't think you were sick! Or so low that you'd stoop to trickery just to get all of our inheritances for yourself!

Walter: Watch it, boy. . . Those are fighting words.

Lucien: *((stands between Walter and Nathaniel, arms out))* Stop this at once. Fighting amongst ourselves won't solve anything!

Nathaniel: But, he. . .!

Gertrude: *((voice trembling))*

Nathaniel, stop! Lucien is right.

Besides, I don't think Walter couldn't have written those awful words

Nathaniel: What? Why do you say that?

Lucien: She's right, Nathaniel. Take a good look at how the words are written. Notice how impeccably neat the penmanship is.

Nathaniel: *((sputters))* That's beside the point! What does Walter's penmanship have to do with anything!?

Lucien: *((interrupts))* If Walter did do the writing, then it'd be awfully difficult to write in the dark. He'd probably have some red paint or something splattered here and there if he is the culprit.

Nathaniel: Well... So what? We all know how many papers he signs in a day! He's probably got writing his own name down to an artform.

Lucien: *((interrupts))* Wait a moment, my dear boy. How long would you say the lights were out?

Gertrude: Why... No more than five or ten seconds.

Lucien: Exactly. Which is an awfully short amount of time to perfectly inscribe six red large words. In the dark, I might add.

Walter: *((sneers))* There! You see!

Nathaniel: I'm still not convinced!

What's your point, Lucien?

Lucien: *((sighs, putting hand to forehead))* My point, Nathaniel... Is that it would take a feat of superhuman dexterity and hand-to-eye coordination to pull off writing that impeccably in that short amount of time. And I highly doubt that neither of us possess the ability to do that.

Nathaniel: *((crosses arms, angrily))*

Well, who the devil did it then? You don't think it was that...

Lucien: *((interrupts))* That doesn't matter, Nathaniel. We don't have enough clues at the moment, so I suggest we all calm down and try to get some sleep. In the mean time, that...thing...*((gestures to painting))* should be covered up.

Walter: Quite right. *((goes to a couch, grabs a blanket and drapes it over the painting.))*

((Lights fade out. Lucien, Gertrude, Walter, and Nathaniel leave. Lights brighten, Gertrude enters through left door and sneaks over towards the large desk, then begins to open drawers and rummage through. Sound effects of rain and thunder cue when Gertrude enters.))

Gertrude: *((rummages through papers))* Come on... Where is it... It must be here....

Lucien: *((enters through left doorway, stands quietly with arms crossed))* Where is what, Gertrude? *((cue thunder and lightning effects))*

Gertrude: *((gasps))* Lucien! Why are you still up?

Lucien: *((slowly enters closer))* I was about to ask you the same thing. Twelve o'clock in the morning is awfully late to not have your nightgown on. Though, I can't help but notice your sudden interest in dear Julius' desk. Tell me, what were you looking for?

Gertrude: *((slowly backs away from desk))* Oh, nothing important. I was... just looking for a lost earring.

Lucien: *((arches an eyebrow))* In the desk drawer? Really Gertrude... Please, don't lie to me.

Gertrude: I am not lying! Lucien, please!

Lucien: Once again, please don't lie to me. You were looking for Julius' will, weren't you?

Gertrude: *((glares, seething))* How did you know?

Lucien: *((nonchalantly, approaches desk))* Well, I can't think of any other reason why you would rifle through someone else's property. Plus, you were no where near the desk earlier so I find it very unlikely that your "earring" has magically found its way into one of the desk's drawers.

Gertrude: You're still as clever as I remember.

Lucien: Well, it didn't take much to see through your little fib, my dear. You were never any good at deceit. At least, not to someone who wasn't a suitor. But, tell me. What did you hope to do once you found the will? It's already been read and we are all witnesses to it. Don't tell me you've forgotten that?

Gertrude: No, I haven't. But, I can't stand this awful place anymore. There must be a loophole within Julius' will get me out of here.

Lucien: If it's that bad here you could always just walk out the front door.

Gertrude: *((scoffs))* And forfeit my share of the will? Never!

((Sound of crashing furniture plays, Gertrude and Lucien gasp, Nathaniel rushes through right door in his sleep wear.))

Nathaniel: What the devil was that? Are you two all right?

Gertrude: *((looks at left door))* Yes, of course. Just a little shaken. Oh, I hate this place!

Nathaniel: *((approaches Lucien and Gertrude))* Did anyone catch where that sound came from?

Lucien: It sounded like it came from Walter's room! Nathaniel, go check to see if he's all right. I'll stay here and protect your sister.

Nathaniel: *((hesitates))* How do we know he isn't doing this himself?

Lucien: *((glares))* Have we ever known Walter to pull a bad joke? He has no humor!

Nathaniel: At least not when there's a fortune involved.

Gertrude: Just go, Nathaniel!

Nathaniel: Oh, all right! *((rushes through left door and exits))*

Gertrude: *((hesitates before speaking))* Lucien, you don't really think all of this is Walter's doing, do you? It seems too horrible, even for him.

Lucien: *((sighs, rubbing temples))* I wish I could answer you, my dear. I'm sure everything will be made clear in time.

Gertrude: *((crosses arms, sighing))* I hope you're right.

((Cue thunder and lightning effects, both sound and lighting. Gertrude jumps a little and moves a little closer to Lucien))

Gertrude: I wonder what's taking Nathaniel so long. Surely, he should've returned by now.

Lucien: Maybe he's gotten lost in the hallways. This is a big house, you know.

Gertrude: I know. It's just...

((Cue crashing glass sound effect, Gertrude shrieks while lights flicker momentarily.))

Gertrude: What on Earth was that!?

Lucien: That sounded like the main room chandelier!

Gertrude: *((stares shocked))* You don't think..!? Oh no! Nathaniel!

Lucien: Good heavens! That chandelier must weigh well over five hundred pounds! Gertrude stay here and

don't move. I'm going to go check and see what's happened. I'll return shortly. ((rushes through left door and exits))

Gertrude: Lucien, wait! Please don't leave me alone in here! *((looks around frightened, rubbing arms))* Oh no... *((looks up at ceiling))* Please let them be all right. *((Joseph quietly enters through right door dressed up in black and a mask and holding a knife.))*

Joseph: He can't hear you now. No one can now.

Gertrude: *((whirls around, covering mouth))* W-w-who are you?

Joseph: *((holds up a hand to silence her))* Please. You're much prettier when your mouth isn't making that obscene noise.

Gertrude: *((slightly braver))* Answer my question! Who are you and why are you doing this?

Joseph: *((chuckling))* My my, so you do have a bit of backbone after all. Well, no matter. You won't live long enough to appreciate it. *((approaches casually, twirling knife around))* But the answer to your question should be fairly obvious. I'm someone you know, that's all I'll say.

Gertrude: Walter!? How could you!?

Joseph: *((laughing evilly))* What a silly question! You don't deserve Julius' fortune! None of you do! I will not let you sully his good name with his money! You and Lucien are the only ones who stand in my way now.

((approaches Gertrude menacingly))

Gertrude: *((angrily))* You're calling us selfish!? You have no right to make that accusation, Walter! What have you done? Where's Nathaniel!?

Joseph: *((snickers, circling around Gertrude with his back to the left door))* Oh, I imagine your brother is buried under a quarter ton of class and wires right about now. Once I've taken care of

you, Lucien won't be far behind either. *((approaches Gertrude with knife raised))*

Gertrude: *((furious))* You're mad!

Joseph: Possibly. But when you're rich, no one bothers to care about your sanity. *((Lucien re-enters and stands in left doorway, holding a pistol))*

Lucien: *((sternly))* That's far enough, my dear sir. One more step, and your blood will join what has already been shed. Come over here, my dear.

Gertrude: Lucien! *((runs over to Lucien))*

Lucien: Now, you. Drop the knife and turn around. Put up your hands, too.

Gertrude: Oh, thank heavens, Lucien! You've arrived just in time to stop Walter.

Lucien: *((chuckles))* That, my dear, is not our Walter.

Gertrude: *((shocked))* What!? How can it not be! He admitted it!

Lucien: No, he did not. As you'll recall, he only said why he committed these horrible atrocities.

Gertrude: *((perplexed))* But, if it's not Walter... Then who?

Lucien: Simple. *((approaches Joseph and yanks off his mask))* Mr. Joseph Pennbrook. Julius's trusted lawyer.

((Lights fade, Joseph puts on his smoking jacket from Scene 1 and sits in the armchair. Gertrude and Joseph leave and Farnsworth, Henry, and Linda reclaim their respective seats. Lights on.))

Henry: *((leans forward, clearly shocked))* You can't be serious! You mean to tell me it was all the lawyer's doing?

Lucien: *((chuckles))* Yes. A bit unexpected, isn't it?

Linda: *((obviously enjoying the story))* I'll say! That was a wonderful story, Lucien. But, I'm afraid I don't get a few things about it.

Lucien: My apologies, my dear. What is on your mind?

Linda: Well, what I'd like to know is what convinced you that the culprit was Mr. Pennbrook. I thought for sure all of that horrible nonsense was the work of Walter. He just seemed so... so...

Henry: Repugnant?

Linda: *((snaps fingers))* That's the word. Uh, no offense Lucien. He is family, after all.

Lucien: *((chuckles, waves a hand))* Ah, no need to worry. *((pauses, wipes his glasses))* But, my apology for leaving such a gap in my story. *((pauses, sips his drink))* My first clue came to me when I was researching about the life of Sir Francis Belmont a short while after the will's reading. At the time, I thought it to be nothing more than a highly interesting tidbit of knowledge, but we all know how mysteriously clues can change.

Henry: *((impatiently))* Well, what did you find?

Lucien: A map. It was pressed between two pages of the book I was reading and one that revealed to me all of the secret *doors* and *passageways* that riddle this house. That was how Mr. Pennbrook was able to move so quickly without being scene.

Henry: But how does that connect him to the crimes?

Lucien: You have to remember one thing, Henry. *((sips drink))* Neither I nor any of my other siblings had ever set foot into this house until that night. So there was no way any of us could have ever have known about those doors and passages, thus there was no way for any of us to move as stealthily as Pennbrook

had. But Pennbrook, on the other hand, often boasted of paying visits to dear Julius quite often, and most of those visits were spent in this study. It would've been quite simple for him to come across that same map.

Henry: I see. So he was the only one with this knowledge. But now I have another question for you. Why? I just don't see his reason for going through so much trouble just to make sure that none of you remained in the house by sunrise. His name wasn't mentioned in the will, so he had nothing to gain.

Lucien: Ah, but that's where your wrong. He had everything to gain. After all, if there are no heirs to take the properties, then the only other option is to grant the lawyer full control of them. It's a well known fact in the legal system.

Linda: I see. It actually makes perfect sense.

Henry: All right, all right. But try answering this one so easily. Earlier you said this story was about three murders. We'll you've only told us of one so far. Where are the other two?

Lucien: Oh yes, how silly of me! Well as you know, poor Nathaniel was found crushed beneath the chandelier that once hung from the entranceway ceiling. I can only guess that when he was going off to see to Walter, Pennbrook took the opportunity to cut the rope that suspended the chandelier just as Nathaniel was passing under it. As a result, I've decided to not have it replaced.

Henry: Yes. But, what about Walter?

Lucien: Poor Walter's body was later found outside near his bedroom window with his throat slashed. I surmise that crash Nathaniel, Gertrude, and I heard was the sound of him putting up a valiant struggle against his assassin.

Henry: And what about the third?

Lucien: Well, that one may be the hardest one to explain of them all. You see, that one belongs to Mr. Pennbrook.

Linda: *((shocked))* How on Earth did he die!?

Lucien: Well, like I said its going to be very hard to explain. All that I've heard of it came from the constable when I spoke with him the next day.

Apparently, one of the night guards heard a terrible shriek coming from Pennbrook's cell, one that he wasn't sure if it was human or not. But after they had reached the scene, they found something almost too ghastly for words.

Henry: What was it? *((leans closer))*

Lucien: Well... They found Pennbrook's corpse on the floor. His face was twisted into a look of the utmost horrible terror and completely white, and his limbs were twisted at such odd angles. It was like he was trying to hold something off but rigor mortis set in before he was dead.

Henry: *((solemnly))* Oh my. How terrible.

Lucien: *((nods))* Yes. And as ludicrous as it may sound, the only answer that makes sense is that it was the ghost of Sir Francis Belmont. Come to seek revenge on the one who dared to steal away his family's rightful treasure.

((Lights fade, play ends))



Harpo Bay
Jessica Trautman