

# BURYING THE HATCHETS

A COMEDY-THRILLER IN TWO ACTS

By Whitney Ryan Garrity

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Brooklyn Publishers, LLC in association with Heuer Publishing LLC

ISBN: 978-1-61588-018-8

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**BURYING THE HATCHETTS**

**By Whitney Ryan Garrity**

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(FIVE WOMEN, THREE MEN)*

— IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE —

DAPHNE PRESCOTT .....	a pretty but untalented aspiring Chorine, 20's. <i>(186 lines)</i>
GRETA GUMP .....	Daphne's German maid and companion, 20's. <i>(45 lines)</i>
DR. MILES MOUNTEBANK.....	Lord Hatchett's handsome and sophisticated physician, 30's. <i>(75 lines)</i>
HANNAH .....	the stoic housekeeper, 50's. <i>(30 lines)</i>
LADY FIONA HATCHETT .....	the Mistress of the Manor, 30's. <i>(66 lines)</i>
LORD ESMOND HATCHETT .....	the troubled Lord of the Manor, 40's. <i>(45 lines)</i>
WINIFRED HATCHETT .....	Lord Hatchett's frail niece, 17. <i>(44 lines)</i>
ANGUS McNEALY .....	the rugged Scottish stable keeper, 30's. <i>(60 lines)</i>

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

**ACT ONE**

SCENE 1: Evening.

SCENE 2: The following morning.

SCENE 3: That evening.

**ACT TWO**

SCENE 1: The middle of the night.

SCENE 2: Immediately following.

**PROPERTIES**

**ACT ONE**

Suitcases- 2 or 3 (GRETA)

Lanterns - 2 (DAPHNE, MILES)

Pipe, matches (MILES)

Portrait of Lady Lenora/Daphne (PRE-SET OVER MANTLE)

Ring (PRESET ON MANTLE)

Book (PRE-SET ON BOOKSHELF)

Shovel (FIONA)

Small Suitcase (WINNIE)

Pocket Watch (MILES)

Wine Bottle (ESMOND)

**ACT TWO**

Knife (FIGURE/MILES)

Guns - 2 (MILES, ANGUS)

Cord of Rope (MILES)

Fake Blood Packet - Optional (MILES)

Dress with “jewels” (PRE-SET IN SUITCASE)

**SOUND EFFECTS**

Wolf baying

Horse neighing

Thunder

**SETTING**

Hatchett House, an English Country Manor, 1859

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

**SETTING:** Evening.

**AT RISE:**

*The house lights fade up to half, the Act Curtain remains closed. DAPHNE PRESCOTT enters, carrying a kerosene lantern. DAPHNE is an attractive woman wearing an elaborate period costume and feather boa. DAPHNE is followed by GRETA GUMP, HER faithful maid and companion. GRETA is an unprepossessing woman, laden with several suitcases.*

*A wolf is heard baying woefully at the moon, as DAPHNE and GRETA make THEIR way down the aisle toward the stage.*

**GRETA:** *(A theatrically German accent.)* I do not like this, Fraulein Daphne! Where are ve anyway?

**DAPHNE:** *(Looking around.)* Well, let's see... *(Gesturing.)* We came from *that* direction and we're heading in... *(Gesturing.)* This direction, so I would say that we are... *(Throwing up HER arms in defeat.)* Lost!

**GRETA:** I do not believe that this is the vay to Paris! Und I say, ve go back now!

**DAPHNE:** Back to *where*, Greta? Back to that quaint little inn in Hampshire? Do you have the money to pay our bill there?

**GRETA:** *(Contrite.)* No, Fraulein.

**DAPHNE:** Well, neither do I! Do you think it was a picnic for me to have to flee from there like a thief in the night? Climbing out of a third-story window ... it's a wonder I didn't break my neck! Luckily, I landed on something big and soft!

**GRETA:** Ya...*me!*

**DAPHNE:** But, don't you worry, Greta. As soon as we make our way to Paris and I get a job featured in the *Folies Berg`eres*, we'll both be sitting pretty.

**GRETA:** *(Dubious.)* Ya, Fraulein Daphne.

**DAPHNE:** I sense doubt in your accent, Greta. Am I not beautiful and talented enough to star in the Follies?

**GRETA:** Ya, Fraulein. You are verry beautiful.

**DAPHNE:** You see? I... *(A beat, gives GRETA a look.)* Trust me, Greta. I am destined for fame and fortune. I had my tarot cards read just yesterday and the old gypsy told me that a new experience was in my immediate future!

**GRETA:** Ya, but a good experience or a bad experience?

**DAPHNE:** Don't be such a pessimist, Greta! We're here – wherever *here* is – and we're on our way to Paris to become rich and famous. Well, *I'll* be rich and famous. *You'll* still be drawing my baths as usual!

**GRETA:** Ya, with extra bubbles!

**DAPHNE:** Right now, all we need is for some kind—and preferably handsome—stranger with a carriage to happen by!

*The sound of horses neighing can be heard. DR. MILES MOUNTEBANK appears, coming through the Act Curtain at the SR proscenium. HE peers out into the House, holding out a lantern.*

**MILES:** I say! Is someone there?

**GRETA:** *(Curtsying awkwardly with the baggage.)* Guten Abend, Herr Stranger.

**DAPHNE:** Good evening, kind sir. We are but two lost lambs. I am Miss Daphne Prescott, from America, and this is my faithful maid and companion, Greta Gump.

**MILES:** Are you ladies in need of a lift? I am heading straight away to Hatchett House. Lord and Lady Hatchett are... *(Ominously.)* Old chums of mine... *(Brightly; moving toward THEM.)* And I'm certain they would be happy to put two such lovely and charming women as yourselves up for the night.

**GRETA:** *(Excitedly, to DAPHNE.)* Ah, Fraulein Daphne! Ve are saved!

*GRETA begins passing the luggage to MILES.*

**DAPHNE:** Not so fast, Greta. *(Disappointed, GRETA begins taking back the luggage.)* I mean, we don't even know this man. He

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could be some sort of bloodthirsty cutthroat, or a depraved wolf—  
(*The wolf is heard baying again, DAPHNE looks around, exasperated.*) I meant the *two-legged* kind!

**GRETA:** (*Gazing at MILES lustfully.*) Von can only hope, Fraulein!

**MILES:** (*Congenially.*) Miss Prescott, Miss Gump...my carriage awaits.

**GRETA:** (*Excitedly passing the luggage again.*) His carriage awaits, Fraulein!

**DAPHNE:** Now, just hold your horses!

*Miserably, GRETA takes back the luggage. DAPHNE laughs with a loud cackle.*

(*Continued.*) Oh, Greta! I don't think I've ever meant that *literally* before!

**GRETA:** (*Impatiently.*) Fraulein!

**DAPHNE:** Okay, okay. (*Taking GRETA aside.*) But, we mustn't appear too anxious. We must play it coy, nonchalant. Follow my lead... (*Moving to MILES, attempting to be aloof.*) And just who, may I ask, are you, sir?

**MILES:** Oh, please forgive my rudeness, Miss Prescott. I am Dr. Miles Mountebank, at your service.

*The wolf is heard again, louder and closer. DAPHNE rushes anxiously toward the stage, followed by GRETA.*

**DAPHNE:** That's good enough for me! Coming, Greta?

**GRETA:** Ya, ya! Right behind you, Fraulein! Let's do like they say, "vamoose!"

*DAPHNE and GRETA ascend the steps that lead to the stage, led by MILES. MILES gestures for the luggage, GRETA shrugs HIM off. THEY exit behind the curtain. The House Lights fade out as the Act Curtain opens. The lights fade up to reveal the interior of Hatchett House. It is a gloomy gray stone room. A large stone stairway leads*

*up from SR and across to a balcony that runs the length of the US wall. Two doors are visible from the balcony.*

*DSR, an arched doorway leads to the kitchen and other areas of the house. USL is a large set of wooden doors that lead to the outside. DS of the doors is a bookcase and comfortable chair and small table. DS of that is a window masked by floor-length drapes. Under the balcony and across the US wall is a large fireplace, its embers giving off the only warmth the room possesses. Above the mantle is a set of curtains, a long cord hangs from one side. In a corner, a suit of armor stands holding a medieval weapon. CS is dominated by a sitting area, a loveseat, chair and table, all positioned on an ornate area rug.*

*Presently, HANNAH, the housekeeper is standing on a chair, igniting a gas sconce. Several loud “raps” are heard from the doors. HANNAH looks to the doors and then returns to HER task. The “raps” continue.*

**HANNAH:** *(A theatrically thick cockney accent; exasperated.) Cor! (Loudly, as SHE steps down from the chair.) Oh, no! Don’tcha trouble yerselves none! I’ll get the door. ‘eaven forbid anyone else is interrupted from the nothin’ that they’re doin’ ‘round ‘ere!*

*HANNAH moves the doors. SHE opens one and MILES steps in. HANNAH’S mood changes immediately.*

Ah, Dr. Mountebank! Wot a pleasure it is to see you again, sir!

**MILES:** *(Handing HER HIS hat and gloves.) Good evening, Hannah. (Entering the room.) And how are Lord and Lady Hatchett this evening?*

**HANNAH:** *(Following HIM.) Oh, Lady ‘Atchett’s as lovely and charmin’ as ever, sir. And Lord ‘Atchett is...well, ‘e’s ‘is usual self, sir. The poor old soul!*

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**MILES:** Splendid! (*Catches HIMSELF.*) I mean...splendid for Lady Hatchett. Not so splendid for Lord Hatchett.

**HANNAH:** (*Eying HIM curiously.*) Right you are, sir.

**MILES:** Hannah, I've taken the liberty of inviting two young women here for the evening. I found the poor things stranded on the roadside.

**HANNAH:** On a night like this?! It was a good thing you done, Dr. Mountebank. Are they 'ere now, sir?

**MILES:** Yes.

**HANNAH:** (*Concerned.*) Should I see 'em too, sir?

**MILES:** (*Laughs.*) Oh no, Hannah! I mean, they're here, they're just not *here!* (*Calling off.*) Miss Prescott, Miss Gump! Do come in, no one is going to bite you in here.

*GRETA enters from the open door, still carrying the suitcases.*

**GRETA:** (*Disappointed.*) Not even you, Herr doctor?

*HANNAH rushes to the door and relieves GRETA of a suitcase.*

**HANNAH:** 'Ere, let me 'elp you with—

**DAPHNE:** (*Entering and looking around.*) Well, I must say...

*HANNAH sees DAPHNE and shrieks, dropping the suitcase.*

**GRETA:** Tell me about it! Is heavy, no? (*Confidentially.*) Is her make-up case!

**HANNAH:** (*To MILES, as SHE stares at DAPHNE, frightened.*) She looks...she looks just like...!

**MILES:** (*Warningly.*) Hannah...

**DAPHNE:** I look just like what?

**HANNAH:** (*Nervously, under MILES' gaze.*) Um...er...you look just like an angel standin' there, mum!

**DAPHNE:** (*Sweetly.*) Oh why, thank you! (*Turning to MILES, flirtaciously.*) Don't worry, Doc...looks can be deceiving!

**MILES:** Hannah, may I present Miss Daphne Prescott and Miss Greta Gump.

**HANNAH:** (*Nervously retrieving the suitcase.*) A pleasure, I'm sure.

**MILES:** Ladies, this is Hannah, the housekeeper here. I trust you will find the accommodations to your liking for the night. In the morning, I will see to it that you have the means to make it to your destination...Paris, I believe you said.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, Doctor and thank you.

**HANNAH:** Come with me, Miss Gump. I'll show you to the guest rooms. So you'll be stayin' in this eerie, tragic, murderous 'ouse fer just the one night then, eh?

**GRETA:** (*Warily.*) Ya...why do you ask?

**HANNAH:** (*Shrugs.*) No reason. (*Turns to DAPHNE.*) Please forgive my unseemly outburst, mum.

**DAPHNE:** (*Smiling nervously.*) Not at all, Hannah.

*HANNAH ascends the stairs, followed by GRETA. THEY make THEIR way to the balcony and exit through the first door. MILES moves to the fireplace, lighting a pipe, which HE produces from HIS jacket. DAPHNE watches HANNAH and GRETA exit and then joins MILES.*

(*Continued.*) The housekeeper's a little high-strung, wouldn't you say?

**MILES:** I'm afraid you will find that all the residents of Hatchett House are...how shall I put this? A little "off." But, it's not their fault, really. There is a curse that runs through the blood of the Hatchett family. Take Lord Hatchett, for example. He suffers from a heightened sense of...heightened senses!

**DAPHNE:** (*Nodding knowingly.*) Oh... (*A beat.*) What does that mean?

**MILES:** His eyes and ears are acutely sensitive to light and sound. Poor Esmond! Aside from his condition, he's never fully recovered from the loss of his first wife, Lady Lenora. She died tragically 10

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years ago. He remarried, of course, but I believe he still pines for his Lenora.

**DAPHNE:** And what about the *second* Lady Hatchett?

*LADY FIONA HATCHETT enters from the second door on the balcony. SHE is a beautiful, well-dressed woman.*

**MILES:** Ah, yes! Lady Fiona...

**FIONA:** (*Good-naturedly.*) What about Lady Fiona, Miles?

**MILES:** Fiona... (*Catches HIMSELF.*) I mean, Lady Hatchett!

Please come down and meet a guest that I have brought with me this evening.

**FIONA:** (*Descending the stairs.*) Another stray, Miles? I must say that frankly I find your sudden affinity toward altruism to be awfully annoying! Before you know it, you will have—

*LADY FIONA has made it to the bottom of the stairs. SHE sees DAPHNE and shrieks, just as HANNAH did.*

**FIONA:** (*Continued; calming HERSELF.*) Please forgive me! (*Turning to MILES, frightened.*) But, she looks...she looks...

**DAPHNE:** I look what?

**MILES:** (*Warningly.*) Lady Fiona...

**FIONA:** (*Nervously, to DAPHNE.*) You look...um...very pretty!

**DAPHNE:** (*Flattered.*) Oh why, thank you! (*Slightly miffed.*) Some *have* said "like an angel," but whatever!

**MILES:** Lady Hatchett, this is Miss Daphne Prescott.

*DAPHNE proffers HER hand, LADY FIONA looks down at the floor evasively.*

**FIONA:** Charmed. (*Turning to MILES, reprimanding.*) Oh, Dr. Mountebank! Have you forgotten?

**MILES:** (*Smiting HIS forehead.*) Oh, yes! Of course! (*To DAPHNE.*) I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to remove your shoes, Miss Prescott.

**DAPHNE:** *(Warily.)* Remove my...?! Just what kind of doctor are you anyway?

**FIONA:** Please, Miss Prescott, I beseech you. It is because of my husband. The slightest footfall...well, it may not seem like much to you or I, but to my husband's sensitive ears, it is very...  
*(Shouting in DAPHNE'S ear.)* LOUD!!

**DAPHNE:** *(Tapping HER ear painfully.)* I see.

*DAPHNE and MILES remove THEIR shoes and hand them to LADY FIONA. SHE sets them near the fireplace. DAPHNE wanders about, taking in the room, SHE moves to the suit of armor.*

*(Continued.)* Nice suit...who shot the stove?!

*DAPHNE cackles loudly at HER own joke, LADY FIONA looks around warily. SHE joins DAPHNE.*

**FIONA:** So, tell me, Miss Prescott... *(Pointedly.)* Are you just passing through?

**DAPHNE:** Oh, yes. I'm on my way to Paris to be in the *Folies Berg`eres*. I'm an entertainer.

**FIONA:** *(Dubious.)* You don't say!

**DAPHNE:** I thought I just *did* say!

**FIONA:** *(Accessing HER distastefully.)* And just what kind of entertaining is it that you do?

**DAPHNE:** Oh, you name it, I do it! *(Turning to MILES.)* Better yet, you name it and I'll do it! *(Cackles and then quickly to FIONA.)* What I mean, Lady Hatchett, is that I am primarily a singer. A chanteuse, if you will. But I also dance. Watch this!

*DAPHNE executes a terribly awkward dance routine...trenches, buck-and-wings, etc. SHE ends by bumping nosily into the suit of armor.*

*(Continued.)* Oops!

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*LORD ESMOND HATCHETT enters suddenly from the second door on the balcony. HE wears a long black robe and sunglasses.*

**ESMOND:** *(Holding HIS ears painfully.)* What...?! What is all that noise? My ears! I can't stand the—!! *(ESMOND sees DAPHNE at the bottom of the stairs and gasps in fear.)* No, no! It can't be! It can't be!! *(ESMOND exits back through the second door quickly.)*

**DAPHNE:** *(Aside, to MILES.)* Not great with guests, the Hatchetts!

**FIONA:** You must forgive my husband, Miss Prescott.

**DAPHNE:** He looked as if he'd seen a ghost!

**FIONA:** Yes, well...

**MILES:** *(Quickly.)* I had better see to it that Angus takes in the horses for the night. *(Pointedly.)* Can I trust you to keep our guest company, Fiona...I mean, Lady Hatchett?

**FIONA:** Yes, of course, Dr. Mountebank.

**MILES:** *(With a nod.)* Miss Prescott. *(MILES exits through the front doors.)*

**DAPHNE:** I am sorry that I disturbed your husband, Lady Hatchett.

**FIONA:** Please believe me when I tell you that my husband was disturbed long before you arrived here, Miss Prescott.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, you mentioned his affliction. And Dr. Mountebank told me about the Curse!

**FIONA:** *(Feigning innocence.)* The what?

**DAPHNE:** Curse!

**FIONA:** *(Wringing HER hands angrily.)* Don't mind if I do...blast that man for telling you *our* family secrets! *(Calming HERSELF.)* But, then again, you look like someone... *(Catching HERSELF.)* ...someone who might be interested in the Hatchett family history. But I must warn you, it's not pretty!

**DAPHNE:** Do tell!

**FIONA:** Well, first there is Esmond's great-grandfather, the Baron Hecubus Hatchett – a vile man who tortured and killed thousands in a dungeon below this very house!

**DAPHNE:** *(Excited.)* This house has a dungeon?!

**FIONA:** (*Proudly.*) Oh, yes! And a lovely garden overlooking the— (*Exasperated.*) But that is not the point, Miss Prescott! Then there was Esmond's grandfather, Captain Shamus Hatchett – a pirate! He was a liar, a cheat and a terrible dancer! (*DAPHNE looks at HER quizzically.*) Wooden leg!

**DAPHNE:** Oh, I see.

**FIONA:** Lastly, there was Esmond's mother, Lady Vedalia Hatchett. I'm afraid that she was somewhat of a loose woman, a floozy, a—

**DAPHNE:** So, you're saying the Lady was a tramp?! (*DAPHNE cackles loudly at HER own joke. LORD ESMOND can be heard moaning from off-stage. DAPHNE shrugs apologetically.*) Sorry!

**FIONA:** Yes, well, apparently Lady Vedalia was not faithful to Esmond's father. It was even rumored that she gave birth to an illegitimate child. Of course, there was never any proof of that. (*HANNAH enters from the first door on the balcony. SHE calls down to LADY FIONA.*)

**HANNAH:** Mum, I've prepared a room for our guests.

**FIONA:** (*Turning to DAPHNE.*) Guests?

**DAPHNE:** My faithful maid and companion, Greta, is here with me as well.

**FIONA:** I see.

**HANNAH:** Will that be all, mum?

**FIONA:** Yes, Hannah, thank you. You may retire for the evening.

**HANNAH:** Yes, mum.

*HANNAH exits. LADY FIONA turns HER attention back to DAPHNE.*

**FIONA:** And now, if you will excuse me, Miss Prescott, I believe I shall retire for the night as well.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, of course. Thank you for everything, Lady Hatchett. You've made me feel like one of the family here.

**FIONA:** (*Turning on HER suddenly.*) What?! What did you say?! (*Catching HERSELF.*) I mean...you are quite welcome. Goodnight, Miss Prescott.

**DAPHNE:** (*Warily.*) Goodnight, Lady Hatchett. (*LADY FIONA makes HER way up the stairs to the second door. DAPHNE*

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*moves about the room curiously. SHE moves to the suit of armor and raps on "his" chest.) Hello? Anybody home? (Just as DAPHNE is about to lift HIS visor, MILES enters from the front doors.)*

**MILES:** Miss Prescott!

*Startled, DAPHNE bumps into the suit of armor again, creating a loud clanking noise. LORD ESMOND moans from off-stage.*

**DAPHNE:** Sorry!

**MILES:** *(Joining DAPHNE.)* I see that you are still up and about.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, I just finished chatting with Lady Hatchett. A lovely woman...also a little high-strung!

**MILES:** I'm afraid that you have picked a rather unfortunate time to visit the Hatchett family, Miss Prescott. You see, tomorrow will be the 10-year anniversary of her death.

**DAPHNE:** Really? Well, I must say, she certainly looks well preserved...being dead 10 years and all!

**MILES:** No, no. Not *this* Hatchett... *(Ominously.)* Lady Lenora Hatchett!

**DAPHNE:** Oh, Lord Esmond's first wife! Well, that does explain why everybody here is acting so peculiar. But, it doesn't explain why they all seem to be taken aback at the very sight of me!

**MILES:** I can show you why...

*MILES moves to the fireplace. HE pulls on the cord, drawing open the curtains over the mantelpiece to reveal the portrait of LADY LENORA HATCHETT. Aside from the hairstyle and manner of dress, the likeness to DAPHNE is unmistakable. The figure in the portrait is bedecked with numerous jewels. An ominous chord sounds.*

This is Esmond's poor sweet Lenora.

**DAPHNE:** *(Taken aback.)* Oh my stars!

**MILES:** Yes, the resemblance to you is quite remarkable, isn't it?

**DAPHNE:** Never mind about that! Just look at all those baubles that broad is sporting!

**MILES:** Ah, yes...the Hatchett family jewels. They mysteriously vanished shortly after poor Lenora's untimely—

*LADY WINIFRED [WINNIE] HATCHETT enters from the kitchen abruptly. SHE is extremely pretty, but a rather frail girl.*

**WINNIE:** *(Gleefully.)* Dr. Mountebank! I thought I heard you in here!

*WINNIE stops in HER tracks, clutching HER heart. She looks from DAPHNE to the portrait and back again.*

*(Continued.)* Oh, my! She...! You...! Oh, I think I'm going to faint... *(Makes HER way to the loveseat.)* Over here! *(WINNIE collapses dramatically on the loveseat. MILES and DAPHNE rush to the back of the loveseat. THEY look at WINNIE, then to each other.)*

**DAPHNE:** *(A stage whisper.)* Who is she?

**MILES:** This poor, pitiful creature is Lady Winifred Hatchett, the daughter of Esmond's brother, Emil. Emil disappeared around the same time as Lady Lenora's tragic death, leaving poor, frail Winnie an orphan. Unfortunately, she suffers from the Hatchett Family Curse as well. She is susceptible to random fainting spells.

**DAPHNE:** *(Stroking WINNIE'S hair solemnly.)* How awful. *(Moving to the portrait excitedly.)* Now, tell me more about the Hatchett family jewels!

**MILES:** No one seems to know where they are, not even Lord Esmond himself! It is possible that... *(MILES looks around cautiously, then turns back to DAPHNE, speaking to HER confidentially.)* It is possible that Lenora suspected her fate and hid the jewels before her death.

**DAPHNE:** How very strange! And also something of a disappointment! I mean, considering the resemblance and all, just think how splendid I would look in all those priceless gems!

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**MILES:** *(Taking DAPHNE'S hand.)* You would look like a queen, my dear! *(MILES kisses DAPHNE'S hand and SHE recoils abruptly. DAPHNE moves away, yawning elaborately.)*

**DAPHNE:** Oh, well, thank you for everything, doctor. Big day tomorrow, you know! Trip to Paris and all!

**MILES:** *(Closing in on HER rakishly.)* I don't suppose you'd care for a drink before turning in?

**DAPHNE:** *(Backing away.)* No, thank you, really. *(MILES chases DAPHNE around the loveseat.)*

**MILES:** A nightcap? One for the road? Hair of the dog?! *(MILES makes a lunge for DAPHNE, but is startled by GRETA'S voice. HE trips and lands on the floor.)*

**GRETA:** *(Calling from the kitchen.)* Fraulein Daphne...?

**MILES:** *(Getting to HIS feet, attempting to salvage HIS dignity.)* No to the nightcap, then? Jolly good. Very well, I shall have my carriage waiting for you tomorrow morning. Goodnight, Miss Prescott.

*MILES starts for the stairs.*

**DAPHNE:** Dr. Mountebank, aren't you forgetting something?

**MILES:** *(Rushing to HER anxiously.)* Yes, Miss Prescott? *(MILES puckers up to kiss HER, DAPHNE grabs HIS chin and turns HIS face toward the loveseat.)* Oh...her! *(MILES moves to the loveseat and gives WINNIE a gentle shake.)* Winnie, darling...

**WINNIE:** *(Awakening.)* What...what happened, Dr. Mountebank?

**MILES:** *(Helping WINNIE to HER feet.)* Never mind, dear. Come with me, I'll take you to your room.

*MILES gestures quickly to DAPHNE and SHE rushes to the portrait. DAPHNE draws the curtains closed as MILES leads WINNIE up the stairs. GRETA enters from the kitchen.*

**GRETA:** Fraulein Daphne...

**DAPHNE:** *(Watching MILES and WINNIE ascend the stairs; in a stage whisper.)* Ssh! Wait!

**GRETA:** But...

**DAPHNE:** Ssh!

*DAPHNE waits until MILES and WINNIE have exited through the first door on the balcony, then SHE turns to GRETA.*

**DAPHNE:** *(Continued.)* What is it, Greta?

**GRETA:** The room, it is ready.

**DAPHNE:** *(Annoyed.)* Well, geez! You could've said *that* in front of them!

**GRETA:** This house, to me, seems wery strange.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, and the people in it are *wery* strange too! But, it's only for one night. Dr. Mountebank promised to help us get to Paris first thing tomorrow morning!

**GRETA:** Ya, but can ve trust him?

**DAPHNE:** *(Shrugs.)* As much as we can trust any mammal in a pair of trousers!

**WINNIE:** *(Entering on to the balcony.)* Miss Prescott...!

**DAPHNE:** Lady Winifred, what are you doing up and about?

**WINNIE:** *(Descending the stairs.)* Winnie, please. And I'm fine. I just had one of my spells. Please forgive my behavior earlier, Miss Prescott. I was just so shocked by your appearance!

**DAPHNE:** I must say that *is* the first time anyone has fainted at the sight of me!

**GRETA:** Do you not remember that Stage-door Johnny with the limp cravat?!

**WINNIE:** *(Moving to the fireplace.)* For I moment, I actually believed that you were my dear Aunt Lenora...!

*WINNIE pulls the chord, opening the curtains. The ominous chord sounds again.*

**DAPHNE:** *(Impressed.)* Hey! Does it do that every time?

**WINNIE:** *(Distracted.)* I thought she was visiting me from beyond the grave! Poor Aunt Lenora, the Hatchett Family Curse killed you just as it will someday kill me!

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**DAPHNE:** Nonsense, I'm sure you'll be just fine, sweetheart.

**WINNIE:** No! Uncle Esmond says there is no escaping the Curse!

**GRETA:** Maybe it skips generation, like what do you call? Male pattern baldness!

**WINNIE:** No! Uncle Esmond says I am doomed to be confined within the dark, dank, depressing walls of my ancestral home for the remainder of my short, sad, sickly little life!

**DAPHNE:** (*Mockingly.*) Oh, Uncle Esmond says *this*, Uncle Esmond say *that!* (*Derisively.*) Please! That old geezer sounds like the poster boy for gloom and doom! (*Placing HER arm around LADY WINIFRED'S shoulder.*) Now, it seems to me, Winnie... (*Retracting HER arm quickly.*) Wait...the Hatchett Family Curse isn't contagious, is it?

**WINNIE:** (*Shrugs.*) I...I don't know.

**DAPHNE:** I see. (*DAPHNE places GRETA'S arm around LADY WINIFRED'S shoulder and moves away.*) It seems to me that if you want to escape the Curse, you're going to have escape this house. Just pack your bags and go!

**WINNIE:** But, go *where?* And do what?

**DAPHNE:** (*Rallying.*) Come on, Winnie, you're a woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century! Why, nowadays women are free to... (*Defeated.*) Well, let's get you out of the house and then we'll figure something out later!

**GRETA:** You could come with us to the *Folies Berg`eres* in Paris!

**DAPHNE:** (*Dubious.*) Well...

**WINNIE:** (*Joyously.*) Oh! It has always been my dream to be on stage...to perform in a scanty little costume! You know, like those Rosy-Posey girls!

**DAPHNE:** You mean, Flora-dora girls!

**WINNIE:** Yes, yes! I always mispronounce them in my dream too!

**DAPHNE:** Well, Winnie, a dream is all well and good, but can you sing?

**WINNIE:** Well...no.

**DAPHNE:** Can you dance?

**WINNIE:** Well...no.

**DAPHNE:** Have you got any kind of talent at all?

**WINNIE:** (*Eagerly.*) Well... (*Shaking HER head despondently.*) No, I don't believe so.

**GRETA:** You see, Fraulein Daphne? You and she are perfect together!

**DAPHNE:** Yes, we... (*Beat; insulted.*) Hey! (*Turns to WINNIE.*) Okay, all right. You can come to Paris with us. But be sure to be ready first thing tomorrow morning.

**WINNIE:** (*Gleefully.*) Oh, I will, I will! (*Embracing DAPHNE.*) Thank you, Miss Prescott! (*Starts off.*) Oh, I'm so happy I could faint! (*Turns back.*) Just kidding! Good night! (*WINNIE rushes upstairs and exits through the second door.*)

**DAPHNE:** (*Mimicking GRETA.*) "You can come with us to the *Folies Berg`eres!*"

**GRETA:** Sorry, Fraulein Daphne. Shall I draw you a bath?

**DAPHNE:** Yes, please and don't forget...

**GRETA:** (*Overlapping.*) Yes, Fraulein.

**DAPHNE/GRETA:** Extra bubbles!

*GRETA exits. DAPHNE moves to the portrait.*

**DAPHNE:** Lady Lenora, why do I get the feeling you were the one who got off easy in this family? (*Spots something on the mantle.*) What's this? (*DAPHNE holds a ring with an extremely large gemstone.*) Oh, my! (*Trying on the ring.*) And it fits! (*Admiring the ring on HER hand.*) But where I have I seen it before? (*DAPHNE turns to the portrait and notices that LADY LENORA is wearing the same ring.*) Oh, so it's yours! Well, thanks! It looks to me like you have lots to spare there! I wonder where the rest of it ended up. (*A noise is heard off-stage, DAPHNE quickly closes the curtains on the portrait. SHE rushes to the kitchen to hide. Three raps are heard and a secret panel sides open between the fireplace and the suit of armor. LORD ESMOND appears, still in HIS robe and now wearing a stocking cap. HE lifts the visor on the suit of armor and replaces it, the panel slides back into place. LORD ESMOND creeps up the stairs and exits into the second door on the balcony. Just as LORD ESMOND closes the door, the*

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front doors open abruptly. ANGUS McNEALY enters. ANGUS is a muscular man with rugged good looks and a long mane of hair. HE moves to the mantle quickly, as if in search of something. DAPHNE re-enters from the kitchen and lets out a cry of surprise. LORD ESMOND is heard moaning from off-stage. DAPHNE looks up apologetically.) Sorry!

**ANGUS:** (A theatrically Scottish brogue; also startled.) I beg yer pardon, lassie. I dinna mean to frighten ye. I jus' come a-looking fer... (Spots the bookcase and moves across the room to it quickly.) A book! Aye, I kinna sleep without readin' a good book! (Grabbing a book off the shelf.) This one'll do me jus' fine.

**DAPHNE:** (Taking the book from HIM and reading the cover.) "A Thousand and One Recipes for Mutton"?

**ANGUS:** (Taking back the book with a shrug.) Aye...it sure beats haggis! You mus' be Miss Prescott. Dr. Mountebank dinna tell me you was such a bonnie lass!

**DAPHNE:** (Coquettishly.) Oh, he dinna, did he? (Proffering HER hand.) Well, I... (DAPHNE realizes SHE is wearing the ring and retracts HER hand quickly. SHE turns away, pocketing the ring.) I...am not used to speaking so boldly to a strange man...

**GRETA:** (Entering the balcony.) Do you not remember that Stage-door Johnny vith the fancy cane?

**DAPHNE:** (Annoyed.) That will do, Greta! (GRETA exits rather huffily. DAPHNE turns back to ANGUS.) I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage. I mean, you know my name but I don't know yours.

**ANGUS:** Oh, I beg yer pardon ag'in, lassie. I am Angus McNealy, I tend to the horses. I often come here to read, when everyone else is a-sleeping. Ye might say that books are me passion. Ya see, lassie, I am jus' a humble stable keeper the son of a humble stable keeper. And his father afore him...

**DAPHNE:** (Impatiently.) I get it, I get it! Your grandfather was a humble stable keeper too!

**ANGUS:** No, me gran'father was a stable keeper, but he were not very humble! As fer me...well, I am always tryin' to improve upon me-self.

**DAPHNE:** (*Hands on HIS chest.*) Well, I must say, Angus McFeely...

**ANGUS:** (*Correcting HER.*) McNealy!

**DAPHNE:** Whatever! The improvements seem to be working!

**ANGUS:** How long are ye plannin' to stay here, Miss Prescott.

**DAPHNE:** Just for tonight... (*HER head against HIS chest.*) One lonely little night!

**ANGUS:** (*Breaking away; solemnly.*) Aye, that is good. Hatchett House is no place for a charmin' lass such as yerself, Miss Prescott. 'Tis a sad and gloomy place.

**DAPHNE:** So I've heard.

**ANGUS:** I doubt that the likes of Lord Hatchett has been a very hospitable host.

**DAPHNE:** Well, let's see...he took one look at me and ran shrieking from the room, so I would have to say "no".

**ANGUS:** Aye, he has not bin the same since the suicide of his beloved Lady Lenora.

**DAPHNE:** Suicide? No one else said anything about suicide!

**ANGUS:** Lord Esmond, he blames himself for her death. But I blame the Hatchett Family Curse!

**DAPHNE:** (*Embracing HIM.*) Oh, you poor baby... (*Caressing HIS shoulders.*) You poor, big strong baby!

**ANGUS:** (*Breaking away.*) But...I am not a Hatchett!

**DAPHNE:** (*Disappointed.*) Oh. (*Brightly.*) In that case...

(*Embracing HIM again.*) Congratulations! (*A noise is heard from the kitchen.*)

**ANGUS:** (*Breaking away again.*) I kinna be found here! Once they know how I can read, there would be no end to what they'd expect from me!

**DAPHNE:** (*Scanning the room.*) Quick, behind the drapes!

*ANGUS hides behind the drapes. DAPHNE takes up HIS book and strikes a casual pose in front of the drapes. LADY FIONA enters from the kitchen, SHE wears a nightgown and a mop cap. LADY FIONA joins DAPHNE.*

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**FIONA:** *(Suspiciously.)* Forgive my intrusion. I thought I heard voices in here.

**DAPHNE:** Oh, no...just me! Perhaps I was reading out loud. *(FIONA eyes the book. SHE grabs it and turns it right-side up in DAPHNE'S hands.)* I...I was reading a recipe for "Pineapple Upside-down Mutton"! *(LADY FIONA pushes DAPHNE aside and pummels the drapes with HER fists.)*

**FIONA:** Aha!! *(Calming HERSELF.)* I thought I saw a spider! *(LADY FIONA throws open the drapes, only a window is revealed. DAPHNE looks amazed, then shrugs to LADY FIONA. LADY FIONA closes the drapes again.)* I shall say goodnight again, Miss Prescott.

*LADY FIONA moves up the stairs and to the second door on the balcony and exits.*

**DAPHNE:** Goodnight, again! *(DAPHNE watches HER exit and then opens the drapes, ANGUS steps into the room.)* How did you...?

**ANGUS:** *(Putting HIS arm around HER.)* We dinna have time fer that now, lassie! I best be gettin' ye to yer room!

**DAPHNE:** Well! Perhaps things are looking up here after all!

*ANGUS leads DAPHNE up the stairs as the Lights. BLACKOUT.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2**

**SETTING:**

*The following morning.*

**AT RISE:**

*LADY FIONA enters from the front door, carrying a shovel. SHE calls off toward the kitchen.*

**FIONA:** Hannah!

**HANNAH:** *(Entering from the kitchen.)* You bellowed, mum?

**FIONA:** Yes, I... *(Beat; gives HANNAH a look.)* I wanted to know if our guests are getting ready to leave?

**HANNAH:** Yes, mum. But, I don't see the point to it. Dr. Mountebank's in the village and 'e said 'e won't be back 'til dinner. What's more, Lady Winifred is packin' up 'er things as well!

**FIONA:** Winnie? What in Heaven's name for?

**HANNAH:** Says she wants to leave 'Atchett 'ouse. Says she wants to go to Paris with Miss Prescott and Greta. Says she wants to dance the Can-Can in the *Folies Berg`eres!* *(LADY FIONA gives HANNAH a quizzical look.)* You know, mum... *(HANNAH executes a few awkward can-can steps. LADY FIONA just stares at HER.)* Sorry, mum! But, trust me, when Lady Winifred dances, it should be called the "can't-can't"!

**FIONA:** But, that's absurd! Winnie can't just go traipsing off to Paris on a whim. She's only a child. She's not ready to face the dangers of the outside world!

**HANNAH:** *(Sarcastically.)* Yes, mum...she'll be much 'appier and safer 'ere in the fam'ly "loony bin"! *(LADY FIONA shoots HANNAH a look.)* I beg yer pardon, mum. I meant to say "stately manor". It's me cockney accent, sometimes it suffers in the translation!

**FIONA:** Lady Winifred is a Hatchett. She cannot escape this "loony..." *(Catching HERSELF.)* This "stately manor" anymore than she can escape the Hatchett Family Curse! *(Dramatically.)* We are all prisoners in this dark, dank, damp domain!

**HANNAH:** Sounds to me like yer afflicted with the Curse of Alliteration!

**FIONA:** Never you mind about that, Hannah. We must find Winnie and talk some sense into her! *(Handing HANNAH the shovel.)* Why am I still holding this?!

*HANNAH takes the shovel and follows LADY FIONA off into the kitchen. GRETA descends the stairs followed by DAPHNE, in traveling clothes. This time, DAPHNE is carrying the suitcases.*

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**DAPHNE:** Greta, why am I carrying all the luggage? I mean, what exactly do I pay you for anyway?

**GRETA:** Fraulein Daphne, you no pay me in many months!

**DAPHNE:** (*Embarrassed.*) Oh. (*Gamely.*) Have I got everything then?

*DAPHNE and GRETA have made it down the stairs; LADY WINIFRED appears from the second door on the balcony. SHE wears a cloak and carries a suitcase.*

**WINNIE:** Miss Prescott, I am ready! (*Joyously.*) Oh, think of it...Paris! (*LADY WINIFRED begins to swoon in HER excitement. SHE steadies HERSELF on the balcony.*) Oh, that was a close one!

*LADY WINIFRED descends the stairs with HER suitcase, joining DAPHNE and GRETA.*

**DAPHNE:** I wonder where Dr. Mountebank can be with his carriage? (*LADY FIONA and HANNAH re-enter from the kitchen, HANNAH is still carrying the shovel.*) Good Morning, Lady Hatchett.

**FIONA:** Good Morning, Miss Prescott. I see that you are all set to depart.

**DAPHNE:** Yes, everything's ready except the conveyance. Hannah, have you seen Dr. Mountebank this morning?

**HANNAH:** Yes, mum. 'E left bright and early on some sort of medical emergency, 'e did!

**DAPHNE:** (*Annoyed.*) What kind of medical emergency?

**HANNAH:** It seems many of the villagers are dying from the plague!

**DAPHNE:** Well, if they're dying, then they certainly don't need his carriage to get to Paris, now do they?!

**FIONA:** I'm sorry, Miss Prescott. It appears that Dr. Mountebank will not be back until this evening. I'm afraid your journey will have to be postponed until tomorrow. (*To LADY WINIFRED.*) And what, may I ask, do you think you are doing?

BY WHITNEY RYAN GARRITY

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