

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

By Claudia Haas

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CHARACTERS

(5 Males, 9 Females, 7 Either)

AMERICANS

HIRAM B. OTIS (M)	practical, no-nonsense wealthy, American businessman
MIRIAM OTIS (F)	even more practical; an anglophile; Hiram's wife
WILLIAM or WILLA OTIS (M or F)	15 years old - eldest Otis child; just a perfect eldest child
VIRGINIA (F)	14 years old - endlessly thoughtful and compassionate
IGGIE or IZZIE (M or F)	12 years old - delights in mischief - twin of Gabby (Gabe)
GABBY (GABE) (M or F)	12 years old - very busy; talkative and twin of Iggie (Izzy)

BRITISH

LORD or LADY CANTERVILLE (M or F)	ethical and downtrodden owner of Canterville Chase
DUKE CHARLES (M)	14 years old - young man smitten with Virginia (British)
LADY JANE (F)	Charles's Guardian; very "veddy" British
ELIZABETH (F)	14 years old - Virginia's confidante
VIVIAN or VIVIEN (M or F)	12 years old - Twins' engaging, equally mischievous friend
KATHRYN (F)	12 years old - Twins' friend; very proper and easily shocked

SERVANTS AT CANTERVILLE CHASE (BRITISH)

HENRY (M)	British butler - nothing fazes him; served at Canterville Chase forever
MRS. UMNEY (F)	older, mysterious maid who has been at Canterville Chase forever
COOK CHORTLE (M OR F)	new to Canterville Chase, a great - not-believer in ghosts
COOK CRUMLEY (F)	the second in a series of three cookies; loves ghosts (she thinks)
COOK CRUSHY (F)	the third in a series of cooks; terrified of her shadow
THE GHOST (M)	(a past Lord Canterville); you think he enjoys his ghostly missions but is growing tired of the haunting but has no means to escape

GYPSIES WHO LIVE ON THE GROUND OF CANTERVILLE CHASE

DUMKEN (M)	fortune teller
LYANKA (F)	exacting
TAWNO or TAWNY (M or F)	smarter than he/she appears

COSTUMES

1910 period costumes. The Ghost however is dressed from 1584 and by now is pretty shabby with a pretence of elegance.

SETTING

The majority of the play is set in a great room of Canterville Chase. A stairway *may* be seen or simply have a door up center to the bedrooms, a door on the left to the kitchen and serving areas and a door on the right for the main entrance. Lost grandeur is implied in the furnishings. Ornate pictures of the Canterville's ancestors could be seen. A chair and a table may hover along the back wall and two chairs and a table could form a small sitting area on the left. There should be a rug nearby that has the infamous "blood stain." There could be a suit of armor, books shelves. There should be some "grounds" visible and that is where the gypsies may stay. It is 1910.

PROPS

DEED or CONTRACT (for Lord Canterville to give to Mr. Otis)
SPYGLASS (for Lady Jane)
THREE LARGE SUITCASES (for the Otis Family)
RAG BALL or HOOP (for Gaby and Iggy)
VIAL OF PINKERTON SOLUTION and HANDKERCHIEF (for Mr. Otis)
CRYSTAL BALL (for Dumken)
DUSTING BRUSH (for Mrs. Umney)
DUST CLOTH (for Henry)
VIAL PINKERTON STAIN REMOVER (for Will)
ANOTHER BALL OR ARROWS OR STICKS (for Gaby and Iggy)
CALLING CARD (for Lady Jane)
VIAL OF RUG CLEANER (for Will)
NEWSPAPER (for Mr. and Mrs. Otis)
CARDS (for Gaby and Iggy)
LANTERN (for Cook Chortle)
CHAINS (for Ghost)
TWO SMALL PILLOWS (for Gaby and Iggy)
BOOK (for Ghost)
SMALL OVER NIGHT CASES (for Elizabeth, Vivian, Kathryn and Lydia)
****(Although you don't need for all four)
MAKESHIFT GHOST (A hat rack, a pumpkin for a head and a sheet)
(for Children)
A BRANCH IN BLOOM (for Virginia)
A SMALL CHEST OF JEWELS (for Virginia)

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PROLOGUE

"THE PURCHASE"

AT RISE we are in a small office. There could be a desk and two chairs off to the side or simply done in front of a curtain. LORD or LADY CANTERVILLE has finished the business of renting out the family home to the OTIS family.

L. CANTERVILLE: Mr. Otis, you do understand that Canterville Chase is haunted. I'd hate to sell you the place under false circumstances. Wouldn't be right.

HIRAM: Stop trying to talk me out of purchasing your home! I am used to buying whatever I want. It's an American trait and a very good one.

L. CANTERVILLE: Did I also state the fact that my grand-aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton was frightened into a fit when two skeleton hands were placed on her shoulder as she dressed for dinner?

MIRIAM: Yes. Twice I believe. Such an exhilarating experience! We don't have anywhere as much excitement in the states.

L. CANTERVILLE: The ghost has been seen by all members of my family as well as the rector of our parish who is a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He does not have a flighty nature. You must take the presence of the ghost quite seriously.

HIRAM: I come from America, Lord Canterville - where everything is modern. And not much is serious. We carry off your best art and antiques and add them to our finest homes or put them in our museums. I daresay, if England had a ghost - we would have booked him a speaking tour through all of our states. There is no ghost, Lord Canterville. Just an over-active imagination.

L. CANTERVILLE: The ghost does exist, sir. It has been well-known for three centuries and always makes an appearance before the death of any member of our family.

HIRAM: So does the family doctor for that matter. But there is no such thing and I will not give in to superstition.

L. CANTERVILLE: I fear, you will find it difficult to maintain servants. And there is little sleeping in my home due to the mysterious noises that come at night.

HIRAM: My Lord, I will take the furniture and the ghost as a package. I signed on the dotted line and I am ready to take possession. I will not take "no" for an answer!

L. CANTERVILLE: Please think about it Mrs. Otis, will my home suit your family?

MIRIAM: Oh, everything English suits me! My daughter, Virginia and I are quite the horsewomen. We all adore the rain as well as fish and chips! You will find that I am quite suited to the English way of life and the only thing that confuses me is - of course - your language. We are ready to move in tomorrow.

L. CANTERVILLE: I have done my part by disclosing our ghost and if you don't mind his presence, then all is well. Only - you must remember - I warned you.

FADE TO BLACK

ACT I

SCENE 1

"THE ARRIVAL AT CANTERVILLE CHASE"

AT RISE there is much excitement. The OTIS'S are moving in. HENRY, MRS. UMNEY and CHORTLE are lined up in the Great Hall to greet the OTIS FAMILY. The OTIS FAMILY is thrilled to be arriving in their new home. Somewhere on the grounds (or in the audience) we find LADY JANE with a spyglass and her nephew, young LORD CHARLES in tow peering at the American family. Elsewhere on the grounds (or in the audience) DUMKEN, LYANKA and TAWNY are also watching. This is a big moment in all their lives.

CHARLES: Can you see anything?

(MR. and MRS. OTIS enter the home with a sweep. THEY each have a large suitcase which THEY throw down with a clump.)

JANE: They're American all right. You can tell by the way they walk and their dress. How sad that the Cantervilles have stooped so low as to sell their ancestral home to those upstarts!

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MRS. OTIS: Ohhh! What a grand hall. I shall love being here. Virginia!
Will! Isn't it wonderful?

CHARLES: Let me see!

(CHARLES grabs the spyglass as VIRGINIA and WILL or WILLA enter. WILLA respectfully touches the artifacts in the home while VIRGINIA stands mesmerized by her surroundings.)

Oh! Auntie Jane! Look at our neighbor. She is uncommonly pretty.

(LADY JANE grabs the spyglass and peers.)

JANE: Pretty is as pretty does. Remember Charles - she is merely - an American! And as such - unsuitable for you. Come along, please. It doesn't do to spy on people! Most unseemly.

(JANE turns to go while CHARLES happily watches VIRGINIA. JANE grabs CHARLES by the collar and leads him off.)

CHARLES!

(IGGY and GABY enter chasing each other. THEY have a tennis ball or rag ball which THEY proceed to throw back and forth at each other.)

MRS. OTIS: Now you two - stop that!

(THEY don't.)

MR. OTIS: Iggie! Gaby! You heard your mother.

(The TWINS proceed to run around until finally a ball is thrown to HENRY who catches it and puts an end to the mayhem.)

HENRY: *(In an imposing manner which means "he means business!")*
One does *not* throw a ball in the Great Hall!

(The TWINS are astounded and calm down -momentarily.)

IGGIE: I'd like my ball back.

HENRY: Please.

IGGIE: What?

HENRY: It's mine now. All mine.

GABY: MOM! Make him give us back our ball!

HENRY: As you Americans say, "Finders-keepers."

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MRS. OTIS: Really you two - playing ball in the house. These people will think you were brought up in a barn. Get your suitcases and start putting stuff away! We are finally home!

MRS. UMNEY: The rooms are ready, Mum. We trust all is to your liking.

VIRGINIA: It is the most beautiful place!

HENRY: I am so glad you can appreciate that.

VIRGINIA: So many rooms to explore.

WILL: I bet there's even a library.

HENRY: Indeed there is. We shall take you on a tour as soon as you are settled. You will find a prophecy in the library. Pay it no mind.

VIRGINIA: A prophecy? How wonderful. What does it say?

HENRY: "When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin,
When the barren almond bears,
And a little child gives away its tears,
Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville."

VIRGINIA: What does it mean?

HENRY: You will know soon enough.

GABY: Look, Mother! A dirty stain. I hope the rest of the home is not like this.

MRS. OTIS: It does look like something has been spilt.

MRS. UMNEY: *(In a low, mysterious whisper)* Something indeed has been spilt. Blood. It does not go away.

IGGIE: Real blood? Wonderful!

MRS. OTIS: No! Horrid! I do not wish to look at blood stains in my sitting room. It must be removed at once!

MRS. UMNEY: *(SHE goes into a spooky incantation.)* It cannot be removed. It is the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville who was murdered on that very spot by her own husband - Lord Canterville - in 1575. The same Lord Canterville who walks these halls filled with guilt and shame. *(SHE perks up considerably.)* The blood stain has much been admired by tourists and is permanent.

COOK CHORTLE: Ghosts and blood stains. It's all nonsense if you ask me. Nothing but a bit of cherry juice put there by a mischievous person.

MR. OTIS: I agree! Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover will clean it up in no time.

(MR. OTIS takes out a small bottle, pours it on the stain and begins to scrub with a handkerchief. The stain disappears.)

There! What this home needs is a bit of "American-know-how." I knew Pinkerton would do it. I hold the patent myself!

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GABY: Oh! It's gone.

MR. OTIS: Now that that's been cleaned up, we must attend to other matters. I noticed there's a tree outside that is quite dead as a doornail. It needs to be chopped down.

HENRY and MRS. UMNEY: No!

MR. OTIS: I assure you - it will never bloom again.

HENRY: It is the almond tree that is part of the prophecy. It must never be removed.

MR. OTIS: We shall see about that! I may have to chop it down myself!

(There is a great crack of thunder and MRS. UMNEY faints.)

MR. OTIS: What a monstrous climate you have.

MRS. OTIS: My dear Hiram, what shall we do with a servant who faints?

MR. OTIS: Take it out of her wages, I suppose. She'll stop fainting soon enough.

VIRGINIA: Is she all right?

MRS. UMNEY: There is trouble coming to the house. Beware! I am not sure I can work here anymore.

MR. OTIS: Would an increase in salary quell your fears?

MRS. UMNEY: It would help, sir.

MR. OTIS: We shall make arrangements then. After we are settled.

COOK CHORTLE: Does that mean if I decided to suddenly believe in ghosts, I would get an increase in salary?

MR. OTIS: No.

HENRY: Get settled. Tea will be waiting in the south room.

MRS. OTIS: I do like the sound of that! "Tea in the South Room!" So wonderfully British!

(With hustle and bustle, ALL take suitcases to their rooms. The three GYPSIES have watched all from the side.)

LYANKA: What does the crystal ball say?

DUMKEN: Doomed. They are all doomed.

TAWNY: Who is doomed? The Americans? Or us?

DUMKEN: Condemnation. Destruction.

TAWNY: Oh, for goodness sake - will they allow us to camp on their land or not?

DUMKEN: All is lost!

LYANKA: For us? Or for them?

DUMKEN: Someone is doomed!

LYANKA: We're never going to get a straight answer from him.

TAWNY: We shall have to ask them ourselves!

(TAWNY and LYANKA leave as DUMKEN stands up.)

DUMKEN: Doom. I see doom!

(There is a great crack of thunder. Rain may be heard as the lights fade. In the faded light, THE CANTERVILLE GHOST appears. HE is dressed in what was the custom of his time but all is now in tatters. His long hair is matted and wild and his eyes burn like coals. HE goes to the spot on the rug where the stain was and bends down to examine. HE slowly looks up and glares out at the audience.)

BLACKOUT

(One more crack of thunder is heard.)

ACT I, SCENE 2

“AN ORDINARY MORNING”

It is morning with all the hustle and bustle. HENRY is polishing lights and doorknobs. COOK CHORTLE enters.

COOK CHORTLE: Good morning, Henry! There was no sign of a ghost last night, eh? Slept like a babe. A newborn babe. Heard nothing and ready for work!

(MRS. UMNEY enters with a dusting brush.)

MRS. UMNEY: Ta! Did you hear that thunder? The skies exploded last night. I wonder what it means.

COOK CHORTLE: It means it will rain and nothing more than that. You and your supernatural beliefs! Utter pish-posh, I say!

MRS. UMNEY: Have you checked, Henry?

HENRY: Yes, ma'am.

MRS. UMNEY: And -

HENRY: It's back.

MRS. UMNEY: Exactly as I feared.

COOK CHORTLE: What? What's back?

MRS. UMNEY: The stain. Look - it never goes away.

COOK CHORTLE: Why, it's just stubborn - that's all. Cherry juice never goes away on the first try. We must simply scrub again.

MRS. UMNEY: Maybe. And maybe not.

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WILL: *(Entering)* What's that? Is the stain still there?

HENRY: Indeed it is.

WILL: Must need a second helping. Dad's Pinkerton Stain Remover never fails. I'll get it and apply a second coating. *(WILL exits.)*

COOK CHORTLE: Now, that's a sensible child. When the family comes down, tell them that breakfast is being served in the South Room.

(COOK CHORTLE exits as the TWINS - GABY and IGGY run in. THEY may have hoops, or balls, or arrows and are running and chasing each other - again.)

MRS. UMNEY: Children! Breakfast . . . breakfast is served . . .

(The TWINS are running around MRS. UMNEY. HENRY grabs the toys THEY have and all stops.)

IGGY: Gimme that!

HENRY: It's mine now. One does not play chase in the Great Hall!

GABY: I'm going to tell!

HENRY: Do. Tell. Breakfast is being served in the South Room. I would eat now. You never know when you will eat again.

(IGGY and GABY start to exit and notice the stain.)

GABY: The blood stain is back!

IGGY: Maybe there really is a ghost. I'm going to love living here!

GABY: Except for the toy-snatching butler!

(And MRS. UMNEY ushers them out as WILL enters with MR. and MRS. OTIS.)

MR. OTIS: England probably has more gritty stains than America. After all, the country has been around longer.

WILL: That must be it. I am sure a second dose will get rid of it.

MR. OTIS: Of course it will! Why, that stuff made me a millionaire!

MRS. OTIS: Good morning, Henry.

(The doorbell rings. DUMKEN, LYANKA and TAWNY are there.)

Why, whoever could that be? Before breakfast?

HENRY: I'll see to it, Madam.

MRS. OTIS: That's fine, Henry. You go about doing whatever it is you do.

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HENRY: I am the butler, Madam. What I do is answer the door. (*And HE does so.*)

LYANKA: We are here to see Mr. or Mrs. Otis, Henry.

HENRY: Are you home, Madam?

MRS. OTIS: I believe we are, aren't we dear?

HENRY: Very good. Please, come in.

LYANKA: I see you are working on the blood stain. Nothing can remove it.

DUMKEN: Doomed. All are doomed.

WILL: It's disappearing right now. Watch!

TAWNY: It will return.

WILL: And then I shall get rid of it again.

LYANKA: Mr. Otis - I may call you Mr. Otis - may I not?

MR. OTIS: That would be suitable - for it is my name.

LYANKA: Every year, we camp on the Canterville estate en route to the Chorton Fair. We are only here for a week. Do you mind if we continue our tradition?

MR. OTIS: Mind? No, I don't mind. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. OTIS: Not at all. I love carrying out traditions. It is most English! And I love everything English!

(*VIRGINIA enters.*)

VIRGINIA: Good morning, wasn't that the most wonderful storm last night?

DUMKEN: Doomed. The home is doomed.

VIRGINIA: My, aren't we cheery? Hello. I'm Virginia.

DUMKEN: I am Dumken and these are my friends Lyanka and Tawny. We do not wish to see you doomed.

VIRGINIA: Thank-you. I do not wish to see any of us doomed either. Will! Is the stain back?

WILL: Yes and rather strange. It's a deeper color than last night. More brown in it.

VIRGINIA: More brown? Let me see. Very interesting. Excuse me. I need to check - on something.

(*VIRGINIA exits to her room.*)

MR. OTIS: The Pinkerton Stain Remover must have mixed with the stain and changed its color.

DUMKEN: The Great Hall is doomed.

MR. OTIS: My dear fellow, if you wish to camp on our property for a week, you must develop a better attitude!

TAWNY: We're going to go now. Thank-you . . .

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LYANKA: You are most generous. Good morning.

DUMKEN: Doomed.

(TAWNY and LYANKA grab DUMKEN and pull him out.)

MR. OTIS: They are most eccentric, are they not, Mrs. Otis?

MRS. OTIS: Indeed they are! I love the British!

HENRY: Breakfast is in the South Room. I believe it is sardines and toast.

MRS. OTIS: Thank-you, Henry.

(The doorbell rings. LADY JANE and DUKE CHARLES are there.)

I'll get it.

HENRY: No, Madam. I'll get it.

LADY JANE: Good morning. Is the Lady of the House in?

MRS. OTIS: That would be me! Oh I do love being the "Lady of the House!" Who is calling?

HENRY: Lady Jane, who may I say is calling?

LADY JANE: Lady Jane and her nephew the Duke of Clankton. Would you kindly give this basket of flowers to the Lady of the House and take my calling card?

MRS. OTIS: Ohh! How sweet. Come in -

HENRY and LADY JANE: No!

LADY JANE: Please tell the Lady of the House it is not seemly to receive visitors until the day after the calling card has been received-

HENRY: It is not seemly -

MRS. OTIS: Thank-you, Henry. I may be American but I can hear when people talk about me.

HENRY: Yes, Madam.

WILL: The stain's gone!

MR. OTIS: Shall we go to breakfast then, since we cannot speak with people at the door?

(WILL and MR. and MRS. OTIS exit.)

LADY JANE: Does the stain still return?

HENRY: Every day. The Otis's are trying to remove it.

LADY JANE: Ghastly Americans! Don't they know it is part of the history of the manor?

HENRY: They don't care.

LADY JANE: Americans are quite ignorant, aren't they Henry?

HENRY: Yes, Madam.

LADY JANE: Well, I've done my duty. I should be off!

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HENRY: Let me walk you to the gate.

(HENRY and LADY JANE exit as CHARLES peeks in. VIRGINIA enters and checks out the stain.)

VIRGINIA: Gone. Just as I thought. Pinkerton Stain Removal does it again. *(SHE spies CHARLES.)* Oh, hello! You're not a ghost, are you?

CHARLES: . . . no . . . decidedly not.

VIRGINIA: A spy?

CHARLES: . . . no.

VIRGINIA: I'm quite sure you're not a servant or a member of my family, so who are you?

CHARLES: I'm - a neighbor, Miss Virginia.

VIRGINIA: You know my name!

CHARLES: I do. *(Pause)* It's a pretty name.

VIRGINIA: Thank-you.

(Pause)

CHARLES: . . . you're a very pretty girl.

VIRGINIA: Thank-you again.

LADY JANE: *(offstage)* Charles! CHARLES!

VIRGINIA: Is that your name?

CHARLES: Yes.

LADY JANE: *(offstage)* CHARLES!

VIRGINIA: You're being called.

CHARLES: Yes.

VIRGINIA: Hadn't you better -

CHARLES: I must -

LADY JANE: *(Offstage)* Charles!

CHARLES: - go.

(HE dashes out and then returns.)

I'll be calling, Miss Virginia. You can count on that!

(CHARLES exits as VIRGINIA emits a happy squeal and dances off as the lights fade to black.)

ACT I, SCENE 3

"THE GHOST MAKES AN APPEARANCE"

In dim light, THE GHOST is spied staring at the stain in the floor. HE looks around and quickly exits as the clocks chime 10 p.m. MRS. UMNEY, HENRY and COOK CHORTLE enter.

COOK CHORTLE: I am glad the Otis's said we may go to bed. They may stay up to the wee hours of the morning, but it is the three of us who must be up early doing their bidding. And I must do a proper shop tomorrow. Now that I know the Americans are not fond of sardines and toast.

MRS. UMNEY: *(Seeing the stain that has returned to the rug)* Oh dear. It's back again. Shall we tell them?

HENRY: No need. They'll just bring out the horrid smelling Pinkerton stuff and wipe it away.

COOK CHORTLE: The stain is most stubborn. And it seems to change color. I've never known a stain to do that.

MRS. UMNEY: Three-hundred year old blood stains can do strange things.

COOK CHORTLE: Oh, don't start down that path again. It's just wickedly stubborn, that's all.

MRS. UMNEY: Have it your way. But don't be surprised if the Ghost makes an appearance tonight. He's likely to be miffed that people are rubbing away his stain.

COOK CHORTLE: There is no ghost, Mrs. Umney. Only in your mind.

HENRY: We shall see. Good-night.

(The SERVANTS exit as the OTIS FAMILY enters. The TWINS lie on the floor with some cards. MR. OTIS and MRS. OTIS have a section of the newspaper. The OTHERS may have a book to occupy themselves.)

IGGY: Look! It's back. And it's sort of purplish!

GABY: I liked the color last night much better.

VIRGINIA: You say it is purplish, now? Let me see. Just as I thought!
(Examines it)

WILL: I shall get rid of it once and for all. If Pinkerton's Stain Remover won't do it, then I will use Pinkerton's Amazing Rug Cleaner on it.

MRS. OTIS: Yes - I don't know why we didn't use it right away. Poor stain. It won't have a chance against our rug cleaner.

WILL: I shall get some at once! *(Exits)*

MRS. OTIS: I see on the Arts Page that Miss Sara Bernhardt is coming to town.

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