"AUNT AGATHA'S AILMENTS"-A Jazz Age Mystery

"OVERTURE"

Scene 1

England, 1924. A country Mansion. Towards the end of the Overture, Grayson the butler enters with Mary the maid. They bustle around the Mansion house living room. The room is a little shabby. Grayson has a bundle of post which he looks through sighing and shaking his head. He puts the bundle down on the table. They are generally tidying when the door opens and Gerry enters. He is dressed in a silk dressing gown and has just got up. Music ends.

Mary Good morning sir.

Gerry Morning Grayson, morning Mary and how is the world treating you

both?

Grayson We're both very well sir, thank you for asking. I've put your post on

the table.

Gerry Excellent, excellent (He moves over to the table and picks up the

post) Oh dear!

Mary Bad news sir?

Gerry These do look decidedly ominous I'm afraid.

Grayson I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings sir.

Gerry Never mind...don't shoot the messenger and all that, eh? (He opens

the envelope and looks at the letter) Ah!

Mary I'll put the kettle on shall I sir?

Gerry What? Er...yes. That would be nice Mary. I think I need to sit down.

Grayson Chair sir? (He moves a chair slightly)

Gerry Thank you. (He sits down and continues to read the letter looking

worried, Mary leaves the room and returns immediately with a tray of tea. He hands a cup to Gerry who sips it) Ah...excellent tea Mary. Good old Earl Grey works his wily ways on the old grey cells once again. I feel like a new man. What am I to do about this Grayson?

(He gestures to the letter) Any inspired ideas?

Grayson It's unusual to see you so flustered sir. Is there a problem?

Gerry I have to admit...I haven't been my normal flippant and jovial self

recently. Things are not good I'm afraid. It's the house again.

Mary The house sir?

Gerry Yes indeed. This place is mortgaged to the hilt and the family coffers

are almost as empty as my dear Grandfather's head when he decided

to take up gambling as a career.

Mary Is that why you let the rest of the servants go?

Gerry Yes. It broke my heart doing it. Some of them had been with the

family for generations, and now it's just the three of us.

Grayson You were perhaps overly generous with their redundancy cheques

sir. They would have settled for less.

Gerry Well I couldn't see them starve could I? Although, if nothing turns

up soon that might be my fate. You'd find new jobs easily enough though wouldn't you? I wish we didn't have these money troubles, all I want is to be left alone to live a quiet life here in the

countryside.

SONG 1: "THE QUIET LIFE"

Grayson Let's not be too pessimistic shall we sir? Today's a new day after all.

Something might turn up.

The door bell rings

Mary There you go sir, perhaps it's good news.

Gerry I doubt it...(he holds his head) Oh no. It's Felicity. I'm meant to be

going out with her today.

Mary Your fiancé sir?

Gerry Yes. I clean forgot about her.

Grayson (*Under his breath*) Maybe that's just wishful thinking.

Gerry What was that?

Grayson Nothing sir.

Gerry (despondently) This is all I need...why in the world did I ask her to

marry me?

Mary It was a beautiful starry night, sir...who can tell where Cupid's

arrow will fall?

Grayson ... And she is rich.

Gerry Oh yes. That's it.

Grayson I'll just let the *delightful* lady in. You'd better go back to the kitchen

Mary. You know how she feels about servants getting in the way.

Mary Ooh yes...I'll make me'self scarce

Grayson and Mary leave the stage.

Gerry I suppose she has got money. Maybe this is the answer to my

problems...I'd better make myself look a bit more presentable. (he

smoothes his hair)

Grayson, **Felicity** and Felicity's friend **Annabel** enter. They both have a look of permanent disapproval on their faces. They are both snobs.

Grayson Miss Felicity Albright and her delightful friend, Miss Annabel

Smith.

Annabel It's pronounced "Smy-the" Not Smith you foolish man.

Felicity And I think by now he knows who we are. Hello Gerry how are you?

(turns back to Grayson) Yes Grayson? Is there a problem?

Grayson No madam.

Felicity Well why are you still here ogling us like an incompetent penguin.

You may go.

Grayson (with restraint) Certainly madam (he leaves the room).

Gerry I say darling. I do wish you wouldn't talk to Grayson like that.

Annabel But he's a servant. He's not one of us. That's the only way to get the

lazy good for nothing layabouts to do anything.

Gerry But...but...

Felicity No buts. We know what's best for you. If it wasn't for our guidance

you'd be inviting him to sit down for dinner with you next.

Gerry But he's my friend...

Felicity (angrily) No he's not. He's your servant and don't you forget it! I tell

you something Gerry...when we're married you'd better start looking for a better class of staff because I'm not having *him* in the

house!

Annabel Calm yourself Felicity, we'd better get going, we've got a lot of

wedding arrangements to sort out. (turns to Gerry) You need to get dressed quickly and stop upsetting poor Felicity... We'll be in the car.

Hurry up. (they leave)

Gerry Oh dear...What am I going to tell Grayson?

(Grayson enters looking around carefully with a telegram on a tray)

Grayson (He looks around) Have they left Sir?

Gerry They're in the car.

Grayson Oh good. I have a telegram for you to read Sir. Then you'd better

get dressed.

Gerry (takes telegram) Thank you Grayson. What would I ever do without

you.

Grayson The mind boggles, Sir.

Gerry (Opening telegram) My word!

Grayson More bad news sir?

Gerry I'm not sure. It's from Great Aunt Agatha in America...She's dying

and she wants to see me!

Both men look shocked as they leave the stage. The scene ends.

Scene 2 Driving to Southampton docks. England Grayson and Gerry are

seated behind a vintage car cutout facing the audience. Grayson is driving and Gerry is in the passenger seat. If possible there should

be some form of moving backdrop behind them.

Grayson So what did you tell her then sir? If it's not a personal question.

Gerry Eh...tell who?

Grayson Miss Albright. I would have thought she'd have been reluctant to let

you go away this close to your wedding... and to New York of all

places.

Gerry Yes...I can't say that she was overly enthusiastic. But Aunt Agatha is

my only remaining relative, apart from my brother of course.

Grayson Oh yes...your brother Clarence. Will you be staying with him in

Manhattan?

Gerry Definitely...It'll be a rare chance to see both him and Aunt Agatha.

Grayson You know sir...I've never really understood why he went to America

in the first place.

Gerry Well...when Father died and the will was read out he was obviously

disappointed to be left nothing.

Grayson Yes, but it worked out better for him in the end didn't it?

Gerry Definitely, I just ended up with was a heavily mortgaged house and a

mass of other debts. He realised eventually that he was better off

than I was because he was free of all that.

Grayson And that's when he travelled to America to seek his fortune.

Gerry He was always partial to the high life. I hear he's doing alright for

himself over there. It'll be good to see him again.

Grayson Yes indeed. It's a shame when families split up.

Gerry Are you sure that I can't tempt you to come with me Grayson? I'll be

lost without you.

Grayson You can barely afford your own ticket Sir. I'm afraid you'll just have

to manage without me.

Gerry Yes, I suppose so. Ah...here's the entrance to Southampton docks

now. I think we need to turn left here.

Grayson Very well sir. Are you sure you've got everything now? Tickets?

Passport?

Gerry Yes...yes. All present and correct. You can drop me off by the

terminal just over there. They're boarding already...oh no!

Grayson What is it sir?

Gerry This is all I need...(he gets out of the car)...Hello Felicity.

Felicity enters the stage followed by **Wilkins** her aged driver, he looks nervous. She still looks disapproving. Grayson gets out of the

car and takes out a small suitcase from the back.

Grayson (sarcastically) Ah Miss Albright. What a pleasant surprise.

Felicity (glaring at Grayson and then ignoring him) Hello Gerry.

Gerry (looking glum) Hello Felicity. What are you doing here?

Felicity Well I couldn't let my Gerry go without saying goodbye could I?

Gerry I suppose not, but how did you get here?

Felicity I got old Wilkins to drive of course. He's a bit stupid but he has his

uses sometimes.

Gerry But isn't it your day off today, Wilkins?

Wilkins Er...yes sir.

Grayson Isn't your daughter getting married soon, Wilkins?

Wilkins Yes...today. But she won't mind me being a bit late.

Felicity He did mumble something about a wedding or something, but

honestly they hardly do anything when they are at work, so it's hardly going to hurt him doing a bit extra is it. It's not like it's

anyone important getting married, is it?

Grayson (through gritted teeth) No madam...no one important.

Felicity I wasn't talking to you? (she takes Gerry's arm and steers him away

leaving Grayson with the suitcase) Now my dear, do promise that

you'll hurry back won't you? We've got so much to arrange.

Gerry Er...yes.

Felicity Do you really have to go? I'm sure your Aunt won't recognise you

anyway.

Gerry (looking shocked) But...she's dying. I must see her.

Felicity Honestly...you worry me sometimes. She's probably dead already

and then it's just a wasted journey? It's not as if you're made of

money?

Gerry That's not the point. She's family.

Felicity Hmmph...Your problem is you just can't say no to anyone. I hope

you're not thinking about going to any of those awful dance clubs while you're out there. I hear that they're full of semi-clad dancing

girls.

Gerry (looking wistful) Hmmm...they sound terrible and I shall avoid them

like the plague. (A foghorn sounds) I must go now; my boat is

waiting.

Felicity Very well. If you must. (she offers a cheek) You may kiss me. (he

does tentatively. She turns to Grayson) And you can drive me home,

Wilkin's car has broken down.

Grayson It shall be my pleasure...It's like all my dreams have come true.

Gerry Thank you Grayson. Goodbye. (they shake hands)

Grayson Goodbye sir, have a good trip.

Felicity (annoyed) Come on servant. I haven't got all day.

Grayson rolls his eyes and shakes his head, then follows Felicity off stage. Gerry watches them go and then picks up the suitcase and

leaves the stage at the other side.

Scene 3 In the ship's bar. Gerry is sat at a table with a drink and a newspaper. There is a bartender behind who is polishing glasses.

Bartender Another drink sir?

Gerry Yes, why not. I might as well make the most of this while I can.

There's still prohibition in American isn't there?

Bartender Yes sir, I'm afraid so. (he looks around carefully) Of course, if sir

knew where to look, there might be the chance of a wee dram.

Gerry Yes...yes, I'm sure there are places like that, but you won't find me

in any of them I can assure you. Do you know I do love travelling by

sea.

Bartender Indeed sir. There's nothing quite like a life on the sea.

Song 2: "A Life on the Sea"

Bartender I'll just get you that drink now. (He turns and pours a drink, giving it

to Gerry who goes back to the paper)

A shifty, slightly scruffy man enters the bar. He gets a drink from the

bar and comes over to Gerry.

Arthur Do you mind if I join you?

Gerry No...not at all. Please sit down. My names Gerry.

Arthur An interesting name. English I suppose?

Gerry Yes indeed.

Arthur My name's Arthur Longfellow. Is it your first trip to the

States?

Gerry Yes...yes it is.

Arthur I see. Where are you staying in New York?`

Gerry With my brother Clarence in Manhattan. He's been in the States for

five years now. Do you know him?

Arthur No I don't. New York's a big place.

Gerry Sorry, I was forgetting. I'm from a tiny village in the countryside.

We tend to know everyone there.

Arthur Lord of the Manor are you? Rolling in it I suppose.

Gerry Well I do live in a large house, but I'm not very well to do I'm

afraid.

Arthur I see. What brings you to the States then.

Gerry I'm off to visit my Great Aunt. She's not well...not very well at all

I'm afraid.

Arthur Still, I suppose that if she pops her clogs there might be some money

in it for you eh?

Gerry I really don't know. I hadn't thought about it to be honest.

Arthur No...no, I bet you haven't. What with that big house to support and

everything.

Gerry (getting a bit annoyed) No, I really haven't. I happen to care a lot for

my Aunt. (looks a bit thoughtful) Still, the rumour was that she did

have hidden wealth.

Arthur (stroking chin) Hmm, Interesting. (he gets up to go) Nice to meet

you Gerry. (shakes his hand) I'm sure we'll meet again...yes, I'm

sure we'll meet again.

Arthur Longfellow leaves the stage.

Gerry (returning to his newspaper) What a pleasant man. I hope all

Americans are as accommodating as he was.

He leaves the stage.

Scene 4 New York docks. Gerry has disembarked from the boat and is looking around the terminal to try to see his brother. He spots him and Clarence bounds onto the stage followed by Geoffrey his manservant.

Clarence Hey big brother...long time no see!

Gerry (Shaking his hand) Clarence! How are you? It's been a long time.

Clarence Too long Gerry...too long. This is Geoffrey my manservant.

Geoffrey Pleased to meet you Sir. Can I take your luggage?

Clarence It's so great to finally see you again.

Geoffrey If you gentlemen would like to come this way. The car is waiting.

You can catch up on the journey.

Geoffrey picks up the case and turns to leave. As he does so Arthur

Longfellow walks past them across the stage.

Arthur See you around Gerry.

Gerry What? Oh yes...see you Arthur.

Arthur leaves the stage.

Clarence Who was that? A friend of yours?

Gerry Oh just someone I met on the boat.

Clarence He looks familiar...where have I seen him before? (pause) Oh

well...must be my imagination. Come on let's go. We're on a tight

schedule.

Geoffrey Remember. You must go to see your Aunt Agatha first.

Clarence Of course...of course. All in good time. But I've got a lot planned

for us to do and see. New York's gonna blow Gerry's socks off!

Gerry Right ...I'm sure it will. But we should get to Aunt Agatha's as soon

as possible...she is dying after all.

Clarence Yeah right! The batty old hypochondriac is always at death's door. I

can't believe she dragged you all the way here this time.

Gerry Clarence! That's a terrible thing to say.

Clarence Well...she's got that many ailments a hospital could use her as a

living text book!

Song 3: "Aunt Agatha's Ailments"

Gerry Well we should go and check on her anyway.

Clarence I don't think so thanks. I can think of far better ways of wasting my

time. If you have to go there Geoffrey will take you and bring you

round to mine later. I'll take a taxi to the club.

Gerry Well...ok. If you're sure

Clarence See you later...then we'll really paint the town red!

Clarence leaves the stage

Geoffrey This way sir.

They leave the stage too.

Scene 5 Aunt Agatha's apartment. Aunt Agatha is sat in her chair. She does

not really look like she is dying. The door opens and Gerry is led in

by Florence, Aunt Agatha's maid.

Florence Your nephew has arrived m'lady.

Agatha Come on then if you're coming in. Don't hang around the door

you're creating a draught and I don't really need hypothermia on top

of everything else!

Gerry Sorry Aunty.

Florence Can I get you anything m'lady?

Agatha Ask Anthony to bring in a tray of tea please, Florence

Florence And some of those nice biscuits, m'lady?

Agatha Yes please

Florence Right away, m'lady. (she curtsies and leaves)

Agatha Now come over here and give your great Aunt a kiss. (Gerry does

so) Lets have a look at you...my you have grown! But you seem to

have something stuck on your top lip.

Gerry Er...it's a moustache Aunty.

Agatha A moustache! Florence has got a better growth than that. My

goodness what does your wife think of it?

Gerry I'm not married yet Aunty...(proudly) but I am engaged.

Agatha Well I suppose that's something. What's the poor unfortunate girl's

name?

Gerry Felicity. Felicity Albright.

Agatha A good solid name that. I approve. Is she from good stock?

Gerry Aunty! You make her sound like a racehorse.

Agatha Nonsense! Good breeding is important. How are things back in the old country?

Gerry Er...fine. Things are all tickety boo.

Agatha Don't tell me fibs Gerry. I could always tell when you were lying... your left eyebrow twitches.

Gerry It's not twitching.

Agatha Yes it is...oops...there it goes again. Jiggling about like a maddened hamster. Tell me the truth. How are things really?

Gerry Well...not good I'm afraid. Not good at all. The house is mortgaged to the hilt, the building's in desperate need of repair, I've had to lay off most of the staff and the family coffers have run dry.

Agatha Ah yes...your Grandfather was always more popular with the bookmakers than the ladies. A lovely man, but a hopeless gambler.

Gerry Yes...but anyway...keep a stiff upper lip and all that. The show must go on.

Agatha You can dispense with the cliches Gerry. You were always so predictable...anyway, I may be able to help you. I did call you over here for a reason.

Gerry Yes, you're dying aren't you?

Agatha Balderdash Gerry. You are a bit thick sometimes aren't you? Do I look like I'm dying?

Gerry Well...no. Now you come to mention it you actually look uncommonly healthy.

Agatha Absolutely. Now listen carefully. This may come as a bit of a shock...but I think someone is trying to kill me.

Gerry Aunty...no! Who would want to do that?

Agatha Well...I can think of at least five people straightaway...and *that's* just amongst my close friends. But seriously...it's true. Someone *is* trying to bump me off.

Gerry I...I can't believe it. How can someone as kind and generous as you have any enemies?

Agatha Oh stop being such a snivelling great creep. I *know* what people think of me. But I never thought anyone hated me enough to try to kill me.

Gerry Surely there must be a reasonable explanation?

Agatha Can you think of an innocent reason for your tea smelling of bitter almonds?

Gerry Cyanide? My word.

Agatha Yes indeed. Cyanide. And that's not all. There's been other

attempts...

Song 4: "Nine Lives"

Gerry It certainly all seems a little fishy Aunty.

Agatha Fishy? You can say that again. They're after me I tell you.

The door opens and Aunt Agatha's butler enters with a tray of tea

and biscuits.

Anthony Your tea and biscuits m'lady.

Agatha Ah Anthony. Thankyou

She takes her tea and sniffs it.

Agatha Smells fine to me. What do you think Gerry? Have a good sniff. (She

passes him the cup)

Gerry (Sniffing) Seems Ok. Would you like me to taste it?

Agatha If you like.

Gerry sips the tea carefully. There is a pause as Anthony and Agatha

watch him carefully.

Gerry I feel Ok...I think.

Anthony Are you sure, sir?

Gerry Yep...absolutely fine.

Agatha Ok then. Thank you Anthony, you may leave us.

Anthony Very well madam. Enjoy your tea. (He leaves the room)

Agatha A very reliable servant Anthony. He was mortified after the cyanide

incident.

Gerry Understandably so. Now why did you bring me here Aunty? How

can I help?

Agatha Well I want you to look into this for me. I've hidden my will away

for safe keeping in case some one's after that but I need someone to

be my eyes.

Gerry But shouldn't you go to the police?

Agatha I've tried but they're just not interested.

Gerry But I don't even know the city. What use would I be?

Agatha An innocent abroad my dear...people won't suspect you at all.

You're perfect for the job. (She picks up a biscuit from the saucer) Ah...almond fingers...my favourite. (She takes a bite) Anyway...I'd

better tell you what I've done with the will. It's...

She grabs her throat and starts to gag. She has been poisoned.

Agatha Aaah...the biscuit...I forgot about the biscuit.

Gerry Aunty...hold on...I'll get help...

Agatha No...it's too late. The will...it's...come closer...

Gerry Don't tell me Aunty...save your breath.

Aunty Shut up you fool...(she is getting fainter)...cat...cat...knows...

where...it...is...

Gerry The cat? What cat?

Aunty The cat...uh. (She falls back in her chair. She is dead)

Gerry Aunty...NO! ANTHONY!! HELP!!!

He runs out of the room and the scene ends.

Scene 6 Aunt Agatha's Apartment. Gerry and 3 police detectives are in the

room. They are walking around taking notes and looking thoughtful.

Gerry looks worried. He is sat down.

Detective 1 So you say she had no enemies sir?

Gerry No...at least not that I know of. She was such a gentle person. I just

can't believe it.

Detective 2 Indeed sir. And you were the only person in the room at the time

were you?

Gerry Er...yes. What are you inferring?

Detective 3 Well sir. We have to look at every eventuality. I hope you

understand.

Gerry You don't seriously think I did it do you?

Detective 1 Well...she didn't have many other relatives did she? And she was a

very wealthy woman. You must stand to inherit a fair amount.

Gerry How dare you! She was my favourite aunt. Whatever happened to

innocent until proven guilty?

Detective 2 You are in America now sir. No one here is entirely innocent.

Anyway I'm not accusing you of anything...just looking at all of the

possibilities.

Gerry What about the butler? Have you spoken to him yet?

Detective 3 Yes...he can barely contain himself. He's distraught.

Gerry He had been with Aunty for nearly forty years. He must have been

very attached to her.

Detective 1 Actually, it turns out that he was more attached than we realised.

They were very fond of each other indeed!

Gerry What?...Aunt Agatha and Anthony...my word!

Detective 2 Yes...anyway lets get back to the point...

The door bursts open and Clarence enters. He seems out of breath.

Clarence Gerry! I came as soon as I heard. It's terrible...terrible. Why her?

Detective 3 You knew her then? Who are you?

Clarence Who am I? I'm Clarence, I'm Gerry's brother.

Detective 1 I see. (he makes a note in his book) You were fond of her then I take

it?

Clarence Fond of her? (melodramatically) She was my guiding light.

Gerry looks at him inquisitively.

Detective 2 And where were you when she died?

Clarence Where was I? I was at my club I suppose. That's where I'm normally

found. After all if you can't enjoy the high life when you're young when else can you? And Gerry...I'm going to show you it all

tonight!

Song 5: "Clarence Takes Manhattan"

Gerry But Clarence...how can we possibly go out? Poor old Aunt Agatha.

Clarence Well.. it's what she would have wanted. There's nothing we can do

for her now. Goodbye Detective...if there's anything we can do to

help don't hesitate to call. Come on Gerry.

He grabs Gerry and leads him protesting to the door and out.

Gerry I...I...don't know. I'm not sure.

The detectives look at each other.

Detectives 1, Most suspicious! (They leave the stage)

2 and 3

Scene 7 The Golden Palace Nightclub. Very elegant. A few clientele are sat around the stage on tables (this could be off the stage). Clarence and Gerry enter from the side of the stage. Gerry looks unhappy to be there. Clarence is in his element. He waves to Monty, Isobel and Alfie as they enter and sit down at the edge of the stage.

Clarence Monty! Isobel! Hey...you're looking good. Alfie!..like the moustache. Very nice...very nice. (turns to Clarence) You know Gerry...this place is almost like a second home to me.

Monty You too Clarence you old rogue, have you lost weight?

Isobel (to Monty) He's so dreamy, I wish he was my boyfriend.

Monty Steady on...you can hurt a chap's feelings!

Isobel Oh yes...sorry I forgot about you for a moment there. (they sit down)

Alfie Clarence old fella...have you thought any more about my movie offer?

Clarence Sorry old chap. I can't be moving to Hollywood now...New York needs me!

Alfie That's a shame...I could have made you a big star. (he sits down)

Gerry It's very noisy and smoky Clarence.

Clarence My dear boy...those are the sounds and smells of a party atmosphere!

Gerry Well...I'm not sure if I like them all that much.

Clarence Don't be silly...you're just not used to them that's all. Ah look...Big Cecil has saved my usual table for me. Come on lets sit down.

Gerry Oh good...does that mean we're staying?

They sit down. Clarence looks around for a waiter. He spots one and tries to attract his attention.

Clarence Oi...waiter. We're dying of thirst over here. Any chance of a drink sometime tonight?

Waiter (Coming over) You called sir? What can I get you?

Clarence About time too. I'd like a house special (winks) Know what I mean? What about you Gerry? A house special? I can heartily recommend them.

Gerry Er...yes. Yes please.

The waiter nods and turns to go. Clarence is turned facing the other way. Gerry grabs the waiter's arm.

Gerry Look...I'm really sorry about my brother's rudeness.

Waiter Oh...I'm used to it. I'll just be off now to spit in his drink.

The waiter leaves.

Clarence Ah...here comes Big Cecil. He owns this place. He's a very

important man about town...Cecil...over here!

Cecil comes over to the table. He is accompanied by two

bodyguards: Herbert and Ernie who are not very clever.

Cecil Clarence!...welcome back...and who is the distinguished gentleman

accompanying you.

Clarence This is Gerry...my brother visiting from England.

Herbert From England eh? I know someone from England. Mrs Jones...do

you know her? She lives in London?

Gerry Er...no. I'm afraid I don't.

Ernie Are you sure you're from England? You're not very tall.

There is a pause as they all look blankly at Ernie. Cecil turns back

first

Cecil Welcome to my little place Clarence. Have a good time. Ah...here

come your drinks...on the house of course.

The waiter comes with the drinks. He puts them on the table.

Clarence takes a sip of his.

Clarence (spitting it out) Euurgh! What's this? I ordered a house special. You

know? A proper house special...not the rubbish you give to tourists.

I'm a regular here you know.

Waiter I...I'm sorry sir. I didn't realise.

Cecil I'm very sorry. This sort of thing cannot be allowed to happen. Your

drinks will be replaced immediately. Herbert. Ernie. Deal with this

incompetent idiot will you.

Herbert Certainly sir...it will be our pleasure.

Ernie Come on you. (They drag the waiter away)

Gerry But...but...

Cecil I'm sorry you had to see that...an unfortunate circumstance, but

sometimes you just can't get the staff.

There is a scream from backstage. The waiter has been dealt with.

Herbert and Ernie return.

Cecil Ah boys...a job well done I presume?

Herbert Yes sir

Ernie No problems.

Cecil Good...good. Anyway gentlemen I must leave you. Important

business to attend to. Enjoy the show and we'll catch up with you

later.

They leave.

Gerry The show...what show?

Clarence It's about to start...

The brothers sit at their table at the edge of the stage. All others move offstage. The MC comes out from backstage to introduce the

show.

MC Ladies and gentlemen. May I present in her fabulous gown...The gorgeous and seductive headline show...Put a smile on your faces

and please don't feel down...put your hands together for Miss Catherine Montreux... and the wonderful Golden Palace dancers....

Catherine and Dancers enter the stage and song begins.

Song 6: "The Stage is Mine"

Song ends and the dancers leave. Catherine waves at Clarence and Gerry. Gerry is standing applauding with his mouth open. He is

smitten. Catherine leaves.

Clarence She's quite something isn't she? And the dancers aren't bad either.

(he turns to Gerry) Anyway...look. I'm really sorry for dragging

you here...it's not really your cup of tea is it?

Gerry (looking towards where Catherine has left) Clarence...

Clarence Yes Gerry?

Gerry Can we come again tomorrow?

Gerry looks shocked and they leave the club. The scene ends.

Scene 8 In the Golden Palace nightclub. It is closed and there is only Big

Cecil, Herbert and Ernie in there. The chairs are on the table.

Cecil Well boys. Any sign of it yet?

Herbert No boss. Not yet. We've looked everywhere...honest.

Ernie Yeah boss...everywhere.

Cecil Well boys...I'm afraid it's not good enough. Someone's head is

going to roll and I tell you something...

Herbert and

Ernie

Sorry boss!

Cecil Sorry!...I'm sick of that word. It's all I ever hear from you two.

You're useless...both of you. I'm demoting you to doorman duties.

Tell Fingers and Colin they can do your job from now on

Herbert and

Aw no...Sorry.

Ernie

Cecil It's too late for that now you incompetent pair. Clear off both of you.

I've got to phone the boss.

Herbert and Cecil leave. Cecil goes to the phone and dials.

Cecil

Hello boss...it's me...big Cecil. (he holds the receiver away from his ear as the boss is obviously shouting) Yes boss...I know. I'm sorry but there's just no sign of it as yet...we've looked everywhere...yes we've looked there...someone must know where it is. Who?...that English fool!...why would he have it? Ah...I see. He was related to the old bag. I suppose she might have told him where it was...What would you like us to do?...Do you think that's wise? (he holds the receiver away from his ear again) Ok...ok! I'm sorry to have doubted you...we'll get him right away...I won't fail you again... goodbye.

Cecil puts down the receiver and then picks it up again and redials.

Cecil Hello...is that Arthur? Arthur Longfellow? It's me Big Cecil...the

boss needs some information...get over to the club right away.

He puts down the phone and calls through the wall

Cecil Fingers...Colin...get in here? I've got a job for you...

Fingers and Colin shuffle in.

Fingers Yes boss?

Cecil Right...I've just spoken to the boss and he wants us to go out and get

that idiot brother.

Colin What? Clarence? But what does he know?

Cecil Not Clarence...he's a harmless fool...I mean his brother Gerry.

Fingers The English guy?

Cecil Yeah...the English guy. The boss reckons he knows where the will

is.

Colin Will?...who's this guy Will? Do we have to snatch him as well?

Cecil You really are an idiot aren't you Colin?

Colin Yeah boss...I suppose I am.

Cecil Remember the will? The one that the old dear was supposed to have

written? The one we're trying to get hold of so it can be...shall we

say...amended?

Fingers Oh yeah...I remember. But we don't know where it is do we?

Cecil Oh well done Mr Quick...we've caught up at last. Now can you go

and pick up our distinguished English visitor.

There is a knock at the door and Arthur Longfellow enters.

Cecil Ah...Mr Longfellow...I trust you have some information for us?

Arthur Yes indeed Cecil...he was most illuminating.

Cecil Excellent, excellent...now when would be the best time for us to

strike?

Arthur Well...I was hanging around at the club earlier and I noticed that our

English guest seems to have developed a bit of a thing for Miss

Montreux. He was talking about coming back here tomorrow.

Cecil Ah...wonderful. Did you here that boys? You won't need to pick

him up after all...he's going to walk right back here into the trap!

They all laugh and leave the club. The scene ends.

Scene 9 *Clarence's Apartment.* Clarence and Gerry enter the apartment and

Clarence slumps down into a chair. Gerry does not sit down but paces around the room. Geoffrey is in the room waiting on them

Clarence For goodness sake Gerry...sit down...you're wearing the carpet out.

Gerry Oh...I'm sorry. I just don't seem to be able to settle.

Clarence (knowingly) Oh yes...and why's that then?

Gerry I don't know. I really don't know!

Clarence Nothing to do with a certain beautiful young dancer then?

Gerry What...no! Of course not! What makes you say that?

Clarence Well...nothing really...apart from the fact that you've been flustered

and nervous ever since you set eyes on her. That can only mean one

thing!

Gerry But...I don't have any feelings for her. Yes she's very beautiful,

talented, shapely and has the most wonderful greeney blue eyes when you stare deeply into them...(pauses and sighs)...but honestly

Clarence, there's nothing going on.

Clarence Yeah right...ok if you insist. So why do you want to the club again

tomorrow then?

Gerry Er...well, I liked it. It had a certain...er...ambience...

Geoffrey I hope Sir likes Slapstick comedy.

Gerry I beg your pardon?

Geoffrey Well Sir...it's comedy night at the palace tomorrow. Slapstick

comedy night...

Gerry Great. I love slapstick...er...what is slapstick exactly?

Geoffrey I'm led to believe people hit each other with things Sir. I gather

many people consider it a "hoot," Sir.

Clarence Cat will be there anyway...she works as a waitress on the nights

when she's not singing. Cecil's not known for his extravagant wages.

But of course...that won't interest you will it?

Gerry Oh no...not at all!

Clarence (Looking closely at Gerry) You've fallen for her haven't you? Tell

me the truth now.

Gerry No!...how dare you! I'm engaged to be married I'll have you know!

Clarence The truth...?

Gerry No...I don't like her...(pauses)...well...maybe just a bit.

Geoffrey A bit, Sir?

Gerry Alright...I love her! Are you both happy now? I haven't even spoken

to the girl and I've fallen in love with her! But I'm never gonna be the person she wants me to be! She's so wonderful! What can I offer

her?

Song 7: "Never Gonna be the Person"

Clarence Thought so! Would you like me to introduce you then?

Gerry (Suddenly nervous) er...I don't know.

Clarence Dunno! What have you go to lose?

Gerry What will I say? What shall I wear?

Clarence Don't worry dear brother. You have the most fashionable, debonaire,

gentleman in the whole of New York to advise you.

Gerry (Looking around) Who's that then?

Clarence (Looks slightly annoyed) Me! You idiot. Come on...we've got

shopping to do. (They leave the stage)

Scene 10 Golden Palace nightclub Slapstick Comedy Night. The same club

but the next night. Gerry and Clarence enter. They sit down at the same table as the previous night waiting for the entertainment. Gerry

is looking around nervously.

Gerry Well...where is she? You said she'd be here...

Clarence Calm down...calm down. She'll be around here somewhere.

Gerry How can I be calm? I've got enough butterflies in my stomach to

start a farm!

Clarence Relax!...just remember all the things I told you to say.

Gerry But...I can't remember!

Clarence (sighs) Think carefully. What do you say when you first speak to

her?

Gerry (woodenly) er...hello Miss Montreux. You're looking lovely tonight?

Clarence Not like that! Like this (very smoothly) Why hello Miss Montreux...

you're looking lovely tonight...and then you kiss her hand.

Gerry Oh right...ok (he does not look sure)

MC #2 comes out from backstage.

MC #2 Welcome ladies and gentlemen. It's Saturday night set alight...By

the hilarious antics of slapstick men...Roll around in the aisles 'til your britches feel tight...let's laugh our socks off from now until ten...Ladies and Gentlemen...fresh from Hollywood...the slapstick

fools....

Applause. The MC, Clarence and Gerry leave the stage (moving the table) and the fools enter for the slapstick dance.

Song 8: "Slapstick"

The dance ends and the fools leave the stage. As the last one leaves the table is moved onto the stage. The two men sit down and Catherine enters. She is waiting on tables. Gerry spots her and ducks down.

Gerry (trying to attract Clarence's attention, hisses) Clarence...it's her...

Clarence Of course...I said she'd be here. Now's your chance...(he stands

and shouts)...Cat...Cat...over here!

Gerry (Trying to pull him down) Clarence no!

Clarence Don't be silly...Cat...baby...it's me...Clarence.

Cat looks over at them and waves. She comes over to them.

Cat Hi boys...how ya doin'

Clarence I'm fine thanks Cat. I don't think you've met my brother Gerry.

Cat No I haven't had the pleasure. Charmed I'm sure. (She holds out her

hand)

Gerry (Standing frozen) I...I...

Clarence nudges him.

Clarence Come on Gerry...say hello to Cat.

Gerry Er...er...hello...er...Miss Montreux...you're...er...looking...er...

lovely...er...tonight. (he stands there looking embarrassed)

Clarence (hissing out of the corner of his mouth) The hand Gerry...the hand...

Gerry Oh yes...the hand...(He grabs her hand and not very romantically,

kisses it)

Cat pauses and then smiles at him.

Cat You're a very charming man Gerry. I hope to meet you again but

now if you'll excuse me I have to serve more drinks.

She smiles at Gerry again and then leaves the stage. Gerry looks

gobsmacked and slumps down onto his chair. Clarence is grinning.

Clarence Well...wou old charmer you! You seem to have made an

impression there! My word! Who'd have thought it?

Gerry I made a bit of a fool of myself didn't I?

Clarence I don't think so. I think she likes you!

Gerry Do you really think so?

Clarence Without a doubt!

Gerry (taking out his hankerchief and mopping his brow) My goodness!

He is still looking flustered when Big Cecil accompanied by Jimmy

and Knuckles come onto the stage and walk up to the table.

Clarence Hello Cecil. (looks at the henchmen) What happened to Herbert and

Ernie?

Cecil It's a long story. I replaced them with Fingers and Colin...but they

were terrible. This is Jimmy...

Jimmy Pleased to meet you

Cecil ...And this is Knuckles.

Knuckles (grunting) Hur...hur...me Knuckles!

Clarence Ah!...an intellectual type.

Cecil Ah Gerry...there you are. There's a phone call for you out the back.

Gerry A phone call? For me? But who knows I'm here?

Cecil I don't know I'm afraid. They wouldn't give their name.

Gerry Oh right. Well I suppose I'd better go and see what they want.

Cecil Yes...you better had! Jimmy, Knuckles...show this gentleman where

the phone is will you.

Jimmy Certainly boss we'll do that...(he taps his nose knowingly)...you can

rely on us!

Knuckles Hur...hur...me Knuckles!

Cecil (to Gerry) You'll be safe in their hands Gerry. Take your time over

the call.

Jimmy and Knuckles take Gerry's arms and lead him briskly away

and offstage. He is being kidnapped.

Cecil (turning to Clarence) ...and how is the world treating you Clarence?

Clarence Oh fine, fine. (pause) Any chance of a house special...if you know

what I mean?

Cecil I do indeed Clarence my friend...I'll have one sent over.

Jimmy returns and whispers in Cecil's ear.

Cecil I see...(speaks to Clarence) I'm afraid that Gerry has had to leave.

Urgent business to attend to apparently.

Clarence I understand. Anyway, I'd better be going as well. Don't want to

outstay my welcome eh? I'll have that drink another time.

Cecil Shall we see you later sir?

Clarence Maybe...maybe...But for now goodbye.

He puts on his coat and leaves the stage. The scene ends.

Scene 11 Upstairs at the club. It is a small room and Gerry has been tied to a chair. Big Cecil, Herbert, Ernie, Fingers, Colin, Jimmy and Knuckles are standing around as Big Cecil addresses them.

Cecil Right boys. Don't make me regret giving you another chance. We need him to talk. Here's your chance to impress me.

Herbert (going over to Gerry shouting) COME ON THEN YOU STUBBORN FOOL...TALK!

Cecil (restraining him) Er...Herbert...

Herbert (realising that Cecil is talking to him) Yes boss?

Cecil Do you not perhaps think that we should ask him a question first?

Herbert Oh right...sorry boss.

Cecil Don't worry...your incompetence has become almost comforting (turns to Ernie) Ernie...why don't you have a go.

Ernie Ok Boss...(turning to Gerry and shouting) TELL US WHERE IT IS!!

Gerry Er...where what is exactly?

Fingers Don't try and be clever with us Gerry. We're not some of your limey amateur crooks. We're professionals and we're prepared to go a long way to get what we want.

Colin Yeah...a long way!

Cecil So you'd better loosen up your tongue quickly...or we may have to do it for you.

Knuckles Hur! Hur! ... me Knuckles!

Gerry But I don't know what you're talking about. What is it that you think I have?

Cecil The Will you fool...your Great Aunt Agatha's Will. Where is it?

Gerry Oh that? But I don't know.

Herbert You don't know...(turns to Cecil) If he doesn't know he's no use to us is he? Let me finish him off!

Cecil No Herbert...I think he knows more than he's letting on. No one is going to "finish him off" as you so eloquently put it.

Ernie Oh go on boss...please?

Cecil NO!...Now I suggest that you start to think carefully about where the will is. I don't believe your story. My spies tell me that you visited your Aunt just before her unfortunate "accident."

Gerry Yes...but she didn't tell me anything...hang on. It was you wasn't it? You killed my Aunt! You cad!...but why? What use is the Will to you?

Cecil Calm yourself. From what I gather she died of natural causes...an allergy to bitter almonds apparently.

Gerry Yes...people do tend to be allergic to cyanide...it's quite common.

Cecil Very dry...Yes it was a shame she had to go...but she wasn't a very nice old lady at all...even her friends said so.

Gerry She was my Aunty!

Yes...and I can only offer my deepest condolences. Now you asked why we wanted the Will? I don't know if you're aware of it but your Aunt Agatha was a very wealthy woman. Her late husband invested wisely and managed to accumulate a *lot* of money.

Gerry And that's it? You did all this for just money?

Cecil *(feigning shock)* Just money! My dear boy that sort of attitude worries me. Just money indeed! Anyway, at great expense, we have produced an alternative Will which bequeaths everything to our little enterprise.

Gerry I see. So you think I know where it is then?

Cecil Yes. So I advise you to tell me before I ask my two friends here to "persuade" you to talk.

Gerry Look...if I knew anything I would tell you, but I don't! She was in a bad way before she died and only managed to mumble a few words...something about the cat knowing where the will was. She was delirious.

Cecil Hmm...I see. The CAT eh? What on earth did she mean? What do you think boys?

Henchmen (making a big show of thinking) Dunno boss.

There is a knock at the door and Catherine enters cautiously.

Cat Er...Mr Cecil? Are you here? There's a phone call for you downstairs.

Gerry (shouts) Cat! Don't come in...run for it...get help!

Cecil Cat? Cat? (realises) It's her! Fingers, Colin...grab her.

She starts to run but Herbert and Ernie catch her and bring her in. She is tied to another chair next to Gerry.

Cecil Well, well...the gang's all here now aren't they? Welcome to our little soiree Miss Montreux. (he shouts offstage) MR

LONGFELLOW...WILL YOU JOIN US?

Arthur enters.

Cecil Hello Arthur. Would you be kind enough to question this young lady

for us? Maybe you could use some of your specialist skills.

Cat What do you want with me? Let me go.

Arthur I think you have something that we want...some important

information.

Cat Me? I know nothing. I just serve tables and dance. What would I

know about anything important?

Arthur Ah...Miss Montreux. You are *too* modest. I think you are a clever

girl and that someone realised that and decided to trust you with

some very important information indeed.

Cat Who?

Arthur Gerry's Great Aunt Agatha. That's who! Now, enough of the fooling

about. Where is it?

Cat But I don't know where the Will is.

Arthur Ah ha! You fell into my little trap. I didn't mention that I was

looking for a Will did I? Now where is it so we can destroy it and

replace it with our fake one.

Cat Drat...I'm so stupid. I suppose I'd better tell you then.

The phone starts to ring. Fingers answers it.

Fingers Hello...Yes he's here. Boss it's for you. It's the big Boss. He wants

to talk to you.

Cecil What...now? Right give it here. (Herbert hands him the phone)

Hello...yes...yes...I'm just about to find out. The dancing girl knows exactly where it is...You want us to do what?...Now?...Ok... we'll be there in ten minutes. (He puts down the phone) Come on

boys...the boss wants us to take them to him.

Arthur But why don't we just ask them now and then go over?

Cecil I don't know...but are you going to phone the boss back and argue

with him?

Herbert Don't do that...he scares me half to death. I've heard the rumours.

Ernie Yeah me too. They say he's half mad.

Knuckles (looking frightened) Hur! Hur!...me Knuckles!

Fingers Why do they call him the "Masked Cloak"

Cecil Oh I don't know...could it be that he wears a mask and a cloak?

Colin I heard he only goes out at night so no one knows what he looks

like...he probably wears the mask to cover a horrible disfigurement!

Jimmy ...and he's ten feet tall...(everyone looks at him)...Not that I believe

them...what do you think I am? Stupid?

Cecil I won't answer that one. Now come on...untie them and get them in

the car.

They take them out. Betsy leads out with Cecil on his arm. Arthur

hangs back.

Arthur I'll catch you all up. I need to make a quick phone call.

They leave and the scene ends.

Scene 12 Cecil (holding a gun) leads in Gerry and Cat, accompanied by

Arthur into a room which is bare except for a a swivel chair which is facing the wrong way. The boss (Clarence) is hooded and cloaked and wears a white mask. All we see of the big boss to start with is his

hand...

Cecil (calling offstage) You boys wait out by the car. I don't want the boss

to see how incompetent you are.

Boss (distorted voice) Ah welcome...welcome...please make yourself

(Clarence) comfortable.

Gerry Huh...some chance of that.

Cecil Silence! Show some respect.

Cat Why? You're probably going to kill us anyway!

Cecil (grudgingly) Well yes...you're probably right. But there's no excuse

for rudeness

Gerry I hope you don't mind me asking...but how tall are you?

Big boss (melodramatically) I tower over the city like a black cloud, casting

my evil shadow over its weak willed inhabitants. Not a crime is carried out without my knowing and permission. In fact...I am the

city's super criminal.

Song 9: "He's so Evil!"

Big boss Well does that answer your question?

Gerry Er...yes. Thankyou.

Big Boss And now to business...Miss Montreux...I believe you have

something I want.

Cat I'll never tell you...never!

Big Boss Oh yes you will.

Cat Oh no I won't!

Big Boss Oh yes you will...oh for goodness sake...this isn't a pantomine. If

you don't tell me you will be tortured...ok?

Cat (bravely) I can stand any torture.

Big Boss How about having your fingernails pulled out slowly?

Cat (looking scared) No!...No!...I've only just had them manicured. I'll

talk.

Gerry Cat...no!

Cat Be quiet Gerry...nails like these don't grow on trees!

Gerry Oh!

Cat The will is in...

The cast all move towards her to hear when suddenly the door bursts

open and Grayson the butler enters. He is carrying a revolver.

Grayson Don't move...any of you. Drop that gun.

Cecil drops the gun and he, Arthur and the big boss put their hands

ир.

Gerry Grayson! What are you doing here?

Grayson I was told you were in danger sir so I came as quickly as I could.

Cecil But how did you get past my boys?

Grayson Quite easily I'm afraid. Two of them were playing cards three were

asleep and one was just grunting and polishing his knuckles.

Cecil Hopeless! I give up!

Gerry But what are you doing in America?

Grayson Your Aunt didn't trust you to look after yourself I'm afraid sir...she

sent me a ticket so I could keep an eye on you.

Gerry Ah...jolly good...but I had everything under control.

Grayson If you say so sir.

Cat How did you know where we were though?

Grayson My friend Mr Longfellow here tipped me off.

Cecil Arthur? You traitor...

Grayson Not so fast Cecil. Remember who's got the gun!

Cat So is this the point where we get to find out who the mysterious, evil

Mr Big is?

Grayson Not quite my dear. First of all I have to point out that Mr Arthur

Longfellow is really an undercover agent working for the FBI.

Cat Ah right...(pause)...NOW can we find out who HE is (points at big

boss.)

Grayson Ok then if you must. (He moves over to the chair and prepares to

turn it around) The mystery Mr Big is...

Gerry Hang on...I can't see...(he moves around)

Grayson (annoyed) Can I continue? Thankyou...the mystery Mr Big is...

He pulls off the mask and cloak to reveal Clarence

Gerry, Cecil, CLARENCE!

Cat, Ernie, Herbert and Arthur

Clarence Yes indeed...and I'd have got away with it it wasn't for you pesky

kids!

Cat Clarence! How could you?

Clarence Quite easily! Anyway...you can't pin anything on me...you've got

no proof!

Arthur Maybe not...but we can get you for breaking the prohibition laws in

your club. I have all the evidence I need.

Clarence Oh!

Gerry Why Clarence? Why did you do it?

Clarence For the money of course...why else. I've seen how you live your

pitiful, debt ridden life and I was determined not to let the same thing happen to me. Then I guess I just got greedy with the Will

thing.

Cat You pushed your luck just a bit too far!

Clarence I don't regret anything.

Cecil Nor do I!

Grayson You've both got plenty of time to consider your actions in jail.

They're all yours Arthur.

Arthur Come on then boys...you're under arrest. Let's go and gather up

your accomplices.

Clarence It's a fair cop.

Cecil and Clarence leave the room with Arthur at gunpoint.

Gerry Well, I think I've had my fill of America. I want to go home.

Grayson I anticipated that sir. I have your return ticket here and I took the

liberty of packing your bags.

Gerry Righto then. Lets go.

Grayson and Gerry leave the room. Cat is left on her own.

Cat Don't you want to know where the Will is?

Grayson and Gerry return.

Gerry Oh yes? Where is it?

Cat Here actually. I meant to put it somewhere safe but never actually

got around to it. So I kept it on me.

She pulls out a roll of paper. They begin to move offstage.

Gerry What does it say?

Cat It says that she wants to leave everything she owns to...

They have moved offstage and the scene ends.

Scene 13 Gerry and Grayson are in the room together. Gerry is sat down

drinking a cup of tea.

Gerry Has it really been a months we got back Grayson? So much has

happened.

Grayson Indeed sir, who'd have thought that Aunt Agatha would leave all her

money to her butler? I was sure she was going to leave it to you.

Gerry Well to be honest, me too. But they had been an item for a long time

apparently.

Grayson Yes sir.

Gerry Anyway...who'd have dreamt that there were such rich deposits of

oil under this estate eh? And how much money there was to be made

from it?

Grayson Yes sir...you're now a very rich man. I'm very pleased for you.

There is a ring from the door bell.

Grayson Ah...that will be the guests arriving for the party. I'll just go and let

them in. (he leaves the room)

Gerry gets up and goes to the door.

Gerry (shouts) Darling...are you ready...the guests are arriving. Ah...here

you are!

Cat enters the room in evening dress.

Gerry Darling...you look lovely.

Cat Thank you my love. It's wonderful to have so many people coming

to help us celebrate our engagement and our new found wealth.

Gerry Absolutely my dear...it's fortunate for me that Felicity ran off with

her gardener before I got back.

Grayson Indeed it is...all's well that ends well eh?

Cat I'm so happy I feel like singing...

Song 10: "I feel like dancing!" During this song the cast enter to

attend the party and take their bows.