

AN EVENING AT GRANGE MANOR

A 20-minute Play

by

Jeff Gallagher

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

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Characters:-

MRS. BRADLEY

JOHN, *a schoolboy*

TIM, *his friend, about the same age*

GLURK, *a butler*

MINCEMEAT O'MALLEY, *a gangster*

2 SERVANTS

2 GHOSTS

The play is set in the drawing room of Grange Manor, towards midnight, and is played in one continuous scene.

Several sound effects are required.

PRODUCTION NOTES.

Good lighting can create the right 'spooky' atmosphere in this play. It is quite feasible also to decorate the room with dust and cobwebs.

Tim should be seen as the naive visitor, whereas John seems rather aloof, as though he has something to hide - which of course he has! Mrs. Bradley should not reveal anything of her true character until the right moment. Glurk should move slowly and ponderously at all times; by contrast, O'Malley is impulsive and energetic. The two undertakers should be pleasantly cheerful, and the two ghosts should not be particularly frightening.

Costumes:

Mrs. Bradley: housekeeper's uniform/Victorian dress.

John: ordinary casual clothes. He needs a werewolf mask for the transformation at the end.

Tim: ordinary casual clothes.

Glurk: a butler's outfit of top coat, black trousers, black bow tie, black shoes.

O'Malley: grey raincoat, check trousers, brogues, fedora hat.

Undertakers: dark suits with decorated top hats, black shoes.

1st Ghost (Ranulph): the best effect is achieved by a white plastic face mask and a black silk or cotton smock painted with white 'ribs' and 'bones'. A ball and chain adds to the effect, and some careful lighting - e.g. black out with a single spot - will hide any shortcomings in the costume.

2nd Ghost (Basil): He should be completely covered by a white sheet. Spatter it with fake blood if you don't need to put it back on your bed afterwards.

Props.:

John: rucksack with sleeping bag; werewolf mask.

Tim: rucksack with sleeping bag.

Glurk: tray with four beefburger sandwiches and four glasses of bourbon.

O'Malley: machine gun. He also chews gum.

Notes on the script:

'he was playing by himself': in suicide chess the first player to lose all his pieces is the winner; but it still requires two players.

'bourbon' (pronounced 'ber-bun'): American whisky.

'Hale Barns': a posh suburb of South Manchester. Change the name to suit your location.

'Everybody's body needs Bottle': this was originally a slogan advertising milk.

AN EVENING AT GRANGE MANOR

(Enter MRS. BRADLEY, JOHN and TIM)

Mrs. Bradley: Well, I must say it's very nice to have visitors here at Grange Manor. But what exactly brings you here?

John: We won the prize, Mrs. Bradley.

Tim: Yes, the one in 'Ghouls and Spooks' magazine.

John: You see, everyone knows that Grange Manor is the most haunted country house in England.

Tim: Yes, and first prize in the competition is to spend a night in this room - with only one companion.

John: More like a booby prize really.

Tim: So here we are - ready to see a few ghosts!

Mrs. Bradley: Very well. But first you will be wanting some tea. . . . Glurk!

(Enter GLURK, the butler)

Glurk: Yes, your ladyship?

Mrs. Bradley: Tea and scones for three, please.

Glurk: Very good, ma'am.

(Exit GLURK)

Tim: Crikey! Was that a ghost?

Mrs. Bradley: Good heavens, no! That was Glurk, my manservant. Mind you, from the look of him, it won't be long before he IS a ghost.

Tim: Phew! I'm getting nervous already!

Mrs. Bradley: There's nothing to be nervous about. All the ghosts here are very friendly.

Tim: You mean - we WILL see some ghosts?

Mrs. Bradley: Oh, of course you will. But there's nothing to be afraid of. It's only if THEY see YOU that you need to worry.

Tim: Oh. I see.

John: Well, I suppose if there ARE so many ghosts, the chances are we're bound to see at least one.

Tim: Well, I hope it's not that one who threw himself over a cliff.

John: Oh, I suppose he might be dropping in

Tim: Very funny!

John: Then there was Basil, the fourth earl of Grange. He was hung, drawn and quartered. All at the same time.

Tim: Ugh! I hope HE doesn't turn up.

John: Well, I don't suppose you'd recognise him if he did Then there was Sir Ranulph, who was locked in a dungeon for seven long years. And when they

opened the door, all they found was a skeleton and an unfinished game of chess.

Tim: Was it suicide?

John: I don't think so. He was playing by himself.

Tim: Oh. Well, I don't really mind who turns up, as long as it's not the one who was a witch.

John: Oh, you mean Lady Matilda!

Mrs. Bradley: I don't remember that one. What did she do?

John: Well, Lady Matilda married into the family. Before she got married she was a schoolteacher. And if any of her children were naughty, she used to turn them into toads!

Mrs. Bradley: Good heavens, she sounds awful! I wouldn't like to meet HER! Now I wonder where Glurk's got to with our tea?

(Effects - a loud creaking door)

Tim: Wait! Did you hear that?

John: Hear what?

Tim: It was a door creaking.

John: You're hearing things.

Mrs. Bradley: Perhaps you did hear something, young man. This house is full of things that go bump in the night. Usually it's Glurk falling out of bed Ah, Glurk! There you are!

(Enter GLURK with MINCEMEAT O'MALLEY behind him)

Glurk: Mr. Mince meat O'Malley, ma'am.

(O'MALLEY brushes past him. He carries a machine gun)

O'Malley: O.K., blue eyes, get this. I ain't no kinda schmuck. Go fix me a bourbon and a beefburger sandwich. And pronto!

Glurk: Very good, sir. Shall I dispense with the tea and scones, your ladyship?

Mrs. Bradley: If Mr. O'Malley wants beefburgers, he must have beefburgers.

O'Malley: You bet your sweet life I will.

(O'MALLEY grabs GLURK by the lapels)

O'Malley: And listen - those finks ain't got nothing on me - O.K.?

Glurk: Very good, sir. A bourbon and a beefburger sandwich.

(O'MALLEY releases GLURK. Exit GLURK)

O'Malley: Eugh! Schmuck!

Mrs. Bradley: Boys, this is Mr. Mince meat O'Malley, the rightful owner of Grange Manor,

Tim: Good evening, Mr. O'Malley.

O'Malley: What the kid say?

Mrs. Bradley: He said good evening.

O'Malley: Yeah? Well, don't give me no lip, kid, or I'll blow your brains out,

O.K.?

John: Better do as he says and keep quiet.

(Enter GLURK, with four beefburger sandwiches and four glasses of bourbon on a tray)

O'Malley: Say, what kept you? Gimme that glass. *(O'MALLEY takes a glass from the tray, and drinks the contents)* O.K. Now gimme another. *(He drinks that one too)* And another. *(He drinks that)* Aw, shucks, who's counting *(he drinks that)* O.K. Glurk, go get some more while we eat the burgers.

(O'MALLEY takes a burger and begins to eat it. GURK passes the other burgers around)

Gurk: Shall I bring you some more lemonade, your ladyship?

Mrs. Bradley: No, Glurk. That will be all. Thank you.

Glurk: Very good, your ladyship.

O'Malley: Hey, you! Old man! C'm'ere!

Glurk: My name is Glurk, sir.

O'Malley: O.K., Glurk, you berk. Where's the john?

Glurk: I beg your pardon, sir?

O'Malley: The john, you dummy. The men's room. The toilet. *(to AUDIENCE)* Or lavatory, if you live in Hale Barns* *(*alter as appropriate)*

Glurk: Come along, sir. I'll show you.

O'Malley: And don't you guys move a muscle till I get back. I got you covered - O.K.?

(Exit O'MALLEY followed by GLURK)

Tim: Crikey, Mrs. Bradley! I don't mean to be rude, but, well, how does someone like Mincemeat O'Malley become the rightful owner of Grange Manor?

Mrs. Bradley: Well, no one's quite sure. He's not related to anyone in the family. But he does have lots of money. And he IS very persuasive.

Tim: But he can't just take over a stately home whenever he feels like it!

Mrs. Bradley: With money and a machine gun you can do anything you want.

Tim: Well, I don't think it's right. I think we should tell the police and have him arrested.

John: Now don't be so hasty, you twit! Remember why we're here! If you 'phone the police, we won't be able to stay in this room for the night. And there **IS** a prize of two hundred pounds if we manage to stay here till dawn without being spooked. . . .

Tim: All it would take is a phone call!

John: Yes, but the police station's ten miles away. Ten miles of treacherous road over dark and boggy moorland. And no one's going to come out here in THIS weather!

Tim: What weather?

John: This weather! Listen!

(JOHN opens a door. Effects: thunder and lightning etc. JOHN shuts the door. The noise immediately stops)

Mrs. Bradley: Yes, the weather's remarkable round here. It changes so quickly . . .

John: So, come on, Tim. We might as well think about why we came here, and worry about O'Malley later.

Tim: Well . . . all right, then. But first stop tomorrow is the police station!

John: Whatever you say.

Mrs. Bradley: Right, boys, I think it's time you made yourselves comfortable . . .

(Enter GLURK) Ah, Glurk, I shall need some blankets and hot water bottles and some more wood for the fire . . . (GLURK stands erect and does not reply) Glurk? Are you all right?

Glurk: Goodbye . . . your ladyship . . . ugh . . . *(GLURK falls dead. JOHN rushes across to check GLURK'S pulse)*

John: Glurk! . . . he's dead!

Mrs. Bradley: Oh, dear.

Tim: This is terrible! Now we MUST 'phone the police!

Mrs. Bradley: No, it's all right. I'll get some of the servants to remove him.

Tim: But you can't leave a dead body lying around!

Mrs. Bradley: Can't you? We do it all the time.

Tim: What are you talking about?

John: She's only joking, Tim. Come on, let's lend a hand with this body *(TIM and JOHN each take an arm and begin to drag GLURK off stage. Enter two SERVANTS dressed as undertakers)*

1st Servant: We'll take over now, thank you.

2nd Servant: We're experienced in these matters.

1st Servant: If you need us again just give us a ring.

2nd Servant: We run an all night service.

1st Servant: Here's our card. Remember the name. Bottle

2nd Servant: And Bottle.

1st Servant: Everybody's body needs Bottle.

2nd Servant: And Bottle. See you later. *(The 1ST SERVANT has handed a calling card to TIM. The SERVANTS drag GLURK off stage, and exit)*

Tim: Why were those servants dressed as undertakers?

Mrs. Bradley: I've really no idea. Poor old Glurk! Still, I suppose he WAS rather old . . .

John: No, you've got it all wrong, Mrs. Bradley. Glurk didn't die of natural causes. He was poisoned.

Mrs. Bradley: Poisoned?

John: Yes, Glurk was poisoned by Mince meat O'Malley. To stop him talking.

Tim: But how do you know all this?

John: Listen, who got the form prize last term? I'm not just a pretty face, you know.

Mrs. Bradley: We'll 'phone the police first thing in the morning. Now I'd better sort out some blankets and hot water bottles before you settle down for the night. .

(MRS. BRADLEY gets up)

John: Oh, that's quite all right, Mrs. Bradley. We can manage without.

Mrs. Bradley: Oh, well, if you're sure you'll be all right, I'll leave you to spend the night . . . alone. Good night, boys.

John: Good night.

Tim: Good night. *(Exit MRS. BRADLEY)* Crikey, I'm scared already! I mean, if the REAL people in the house are so weird, what are the ghosts going to be like?

John: Don't worry. We'll be all right. We can 'phone the police in the morning and have O'Malley arrested.

Tim: Oh, heck! I'd forgotten about him! He's going to come back and blow our brains out!

John: Don't worry! He's drunk himself unconscious. Lying by the fridge, he is, with an empty bottle of bourbon. You won't see HIM till the morning.

Tim: Just a minute! How do you know that? You've never even left the room!

John: I tell you, there's nothing to worry about! Now let's settle down and get some sleep.

Tim: Well . . . O.K., then . . .

(JOHN and TIM settle down in chairs - - Pause)

John: Hey, aren't we forgetting something?

Tim: What?

John: The most important thing of all! We don't win the money unless we spend the whole night with the lights turned off!

Tim: Oh, yes, I forgot . . . Go on, then. *(JOHN switches off all the lights. The stage is in total darkness)*

John: Right! Here we go! *(JOHN finds his way back to his chair and settles down - Pause . .)*

Tim: John?

John: Yes?

Tim: Are you scared?

John: Of course not. There's nothing to be scared OF.

Tim: Oh. Right. Good night, then.

John: Night.

(Pause . .)

Tim: John?

John: Yes?

Tim: Are you asleep?

John: Yes.

Tim: Very funny! Listen, will you set your watch alarm for six o'clock? So we can leave as soon as it's daybreak?

John: O.K. Night.

Tim: Night.

(Pause . . . JOHN falls asleep. Enter 1ST GHOST, dressed as a skeleton)

1st Ghost: Fancy a game of chess?

Tim: What? Who said that?

1st Ghost: I did. Listen, I spent seven years in that dungeon. I must have played queen's knight to bishop's pawn five about ten million times. Come on, now, give us a game!

Tim: Wh-who ARE you?

1st Ghost: I'm Sir Ranulph Grange. Don't you recognise me? No, I don't suppose you would. I've lost a bit of weight recently.

Tim: The . . . the chess player!

1st Ghost: That's right. Fancy a game, then, do you? You any good?

Tim: I . . . I'm sorry. I only play draughts.

1st Ghost: Draughts? Huh! You're not much use, then, are you? I'm off. *(Exit 1ST GHOST)*

Tim: John! John! Wake up! I've just seen a ghost!

John: What? Oh, shut up! You're seeing things! Go back to sleep!

Tim: No! No, listen! You must keep awake! There might be another one!

John: Oh, all right, then. I can't sleep anyway. You get some sleep and I'll keep a look out.

Tim: What time is it?

John: Ten minutes to midnight.

Tim: I'm sure I saw a ghost. It was Sir Ranulph. The one who was locked in a dungeon.

John: The chess player?

Tim: Yes.

John: Well, don't worry. If he turns up again, I'll keep him in check.

Tim: Very funny.

John: Just go to sleep. It'll be O.K.

Tim: Well . . . all right, then.

(Pause . . . TIM falls asleep. Enter 2ND GHOST, under a white sheet)

John: Blimey! Tim! Tim! *(No response)* He's asleep. I can't wake him. *(JOHN speaks to the GHOST)* Who are you? What do you want?

2nd Ghost: Oooooohhhh!

John: I ask you again. Who are you? What do you want?

2nd Ghost: Oooooohhhh! I heard you the first time. Oooooohhhh!

John: Well, spit it out, then. Who are you? What do you want?

2nd Ghost: I am the spirit of Basil, fourth earl of Grange. They took my lands and killed my servants and sold my wife and children. I was hung, drawn and quartered at the king's command. If I were to remove this sheet, you would see a most horrible sight . . .

John: You don't frighten ME. What do you want?

2nd Ghost: I come to warn you that I know your secret. You must leave this house by twelve o'clock.

John: What? You don't mean . . . ?

2nd Ghost: Yes, I do.

John: Not THAT? Not tonight?

2nd Ghost: Yep. 'Fraid so.

John: But that's two hundred quid down the drain!

2nd Ghost: It's up to you, mate. You've got five minutes.

John: But wait! It isn't fair!

2nd Ghost: Oooooohhhh! See you later, chum. Oooooohhhh. (*Exit 2ND GHOST*)

John: This is terrible. This is really terrible. . . .Tim! Tim! wake up!

Tim: Eh? What is it? What's wrong?

John: Come on, Tim, I think we'd better go.

Tim: What do you mean?

John: We've lost the money. I've just seen another one. We've been spooked twice over. Let's go home.

Tim: What across ten miles of treacherous road over dark and boggy moorland? You must be joking!

John: But you don't understand . . .

Tim: No, I certainly don't! How come you're so keen for us to leave when before you were so desperate for us to stay? Yes, and there are one or two other questions that need to be answered while we're about it. I think we'd better have the lights on! (*TIM has got up. He switches on the lights*)

John: Look, I'm warning you, Tim. You must get out of here!

Tim: No, let's have some answers first. How do you know O'Malley's in the kitchen unconscious? What about Mrs. Bradley, the so-called housekeeper? Didn't you notice how Glurk kept calling her 'your ladyship'? And how were you both so sure that Glurk had been poisoned? There's something awfully strange about this house! (*Enter MRS. BRADLEY, dressed very grandly in Victorian costume*)

Mrs. Bradley: Perhaps I can answer your questions?

Tim: Mrs. Bradley!

Mrs. Bradley: Mrs. Bradley indeed! Kindly address me as 'your ladyship'!

Tim: Your ladyship! But why? Who ARE you?

Mrs. Bradley: You foolish boy! I am none other than Lady Matilda Grange, professional schoolteacher and witch! And if you don't mind your manners, I'll turn you into a toad!

Tim: Then - then YOU'RE a ghost as well!

Mrs. Bradley: Of course I am! We ALL are! Come in, everybody! (*Enter the two GHOSTS, the two SERVANTS as undertakers, and O'MALLEY*)

O'Malley: Say, there's one swell thing about being a ghost - you sure get over a hangover quickly. That bourbon went straight through me!

Mrs. Bradley: Now, Mincemeat, it was really naughty of you to poison Glurk like that.

O'Malley: Hey, that guy Glurk really gets on my nerves. He's such a schmuck!

Mrs. Bradley: That's still no excuse to poison him. You gave these poor boys a terrible fright. Thank goodness for reincarnation, that's all I can say. Come in, Glurk. (*Enter GLURK, as before*)

Glurk: Yes, your ladyship.

Mrs. Bradley: Don't keep calling me that! You'll give the game away!

Glurk: I keep forgetting. Sorry, Doris.

Tim: Hey, this is amazing! All of you are ghosts! I wish I had my camera!

Mrs. Bradley: I'm afraid you have seen too much already. It's time to say goodbye.

Tim: You don't mean . . . ?

Mrs. Bradley: Yes! Mincemeat! Kill him!

O'Malley: O.K., blue eyes, this is where you get yours!

John: No! Wait! I forbid it!

Mrs. Bradley: What? How dare you!

John: By the force of my right arm, listen to my magic charm - spirits of the night and day, frighten all these ghosts away! (*Effects - a horrible noise. The GHOSTS all take fright, and run off stage, screaming: all except O'MALLEY*)

O'Malley: I'm still here, kid. I'm gonna blow your brains wide open.

John: I'll take away your French fries.

O'Malley: No more French fries? This guy's a real sadist. I'm gettin' outa here!
(*Exit O'MALLEY*)

Tim: Crikey, John! What have you done?

John: I've scared them all off. With a magic charm. It's something I learned from my father. He had a lot to do with ghosts. But never mind that now. There isn't much time . . .

Tim: But that's amazing! I've never seen anything like it! That's really brilliant! Now we can spend the night here in peace, and collect the money in the

morning!

John: But you don't understand. We've still got to get away from here. We've still got to *(Effects - a clock strikes twelve (fading out after the first three or four strikes) JOHN suddenly goes rigid. TIM does not notice this, but walks about the room, speaking confidently)*

Tim: What an amazing place! All those ghosts and spooks and things.! I tell you, I was terrified for a moment back there! And if you hadn't been with me, I'd have been done for! Old Mincemeat O'Malley would have shot me full of holes! Hey, it was really good, that bit of mumbo-jumbo you gave them! It scared them all silly, didn't it? I tell you, I'll never be worried in the dormitory any more when someone starts making stupid noises and trying to spook you after lights out! I'll just get you to say all that stuff to them. That'll shut them up all right! *(TIM turns to speak to JOHN directly)* Seriously, though, John, I'll never forget what you did for me just then. You've probably saved me from a horrible death John? *(TIM moves downstage towards JOHN)* John? Are you all right? *(JOHN, his face transformed, looks up at TIM and howls eerily)* John? No! Aagh!

(As JOHN puts his hands around TIM'S neck, the stage is plunged into darkness).

CURTAIN