

**THE HAUNTING
AT
WARLEGGAN RECTORY**

by

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THE HAUNTING AT WARLEGGAN RECTORY

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THE HAUNTING AT WARLEGGAN RECTORY

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TIME: 1953.
PLACE: Cornwall.
SET: A room in the rectory, the word Pizgah and a cross painted on the front door, also with four bolts. Two windows on either side, looking out on the garden. The word Bethany painted on stage left door, leading to music room, the word Emmaus painted on stage right door, leading to kitchen.

FURNITURE: A small table, two chairs and a settee with cushions.
A bookcase set in appropriate place.

ACTION:

ACT 1:

Scene 1: Early evening.
Scene 2: Mid-evening.
Scene 3: Late evening.

ACT 2:

Scene 1: Midnight.
Scene 2: Later on.
Scene 3: Morning.

CHARACTERS:

FREDERICK: Rector. (83) Fairly well built, obsessive, authoritarian and proud.
CHARLES: School teacher. (40) Small man, ambitious, manipulative, loves power.
LAURA: His wife, teacher (38) medium build, popular with people, controlling.
PHOEBE : Actress. (20) slim in build, flighty, stuck up, proud and showoff.
JANE : Servant. (19) medium build, caring, ambitious, two faced, worldly.
BERNIE : Carpenter. (22) Tall well built, violent, tormenter, moody.
RALPH DE TREMUR : A ghostly Priest.
KALI : Indian Goddess.
GWEN : Zombie.
KNIGHTS TEMPLAR : Ghosts.

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PREFACE

Reverend Frederick Densham was rector at Saint Bartholomew Church and he lived in a haunted Rectory at Warleggan for thirty years. Various disputes broke out with his Cornish parishioners; gradually he finished up with no congregation at all. He became so lonely and desperate that he preached to cardboard cut outs. He managed to maintain his position in spite of tremendous opposition and complaints to the Bishop, who stated he wasn't breaking any canon law. Things became worse over the years; he barricaded himself in with a twelve-foot high barred wire fence to keep his dogs in and the locals out. The only way to gain entry was to bang on an empty petrol can at the gate; the Reverend would emerge up the drive with his snarling dogs to vet the caller. Nobody knew the reason why he stayed so long, whether he was protecting the rectory's secrets, shrouded in mystery. The possible reason for the rectory's haunting was through Ralph De Tremur a heretical priest in the fourteenth century, who held a black mass in the church and set fire to the previous rectory burning it to the ground.

In the first act of the play, Reverend Fredrick Denson's horrified when teacher Charles and his wife Laura turn up at the rectory. Charles's steeped in the occult and motivated by revenge and curiosity, sought to uncover the Rectory's secrets. The Reverend's unaware Charles planted two of his former pupils Bernie and Jane, under his influence on the inside. Further trouble ensued when the demonic Ralph De Tremur appeared and formed a psychic link with Charles and he agreed to hold a black mass in the rectory. The Reverend's involved with further tension as Laura's shocked that her husband has got Phoebe an actress pregnant and arrives at the rectory. The Reverend's secrets are finally divulged by Ralph and informs Charles where the Knights Templar hid the holy Grail and the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant, that's down in the cellar.

In act two the Reverend fought back and converted Laura to Christianity and Jane and placed her in an untenable position. Ralph persuaded her to take part in the mass as a one off and escape certain death. Unfortunately, she refused the host and she's murdered by Phoebe and she filled the Holy Grail with Jane's blood. Bernie's devastated and Phoebe fled in terror, he held Charles responsible for his ills and he kills him in a fit of rage and then himself. As a result of all the deaths, the Reverend's resurrection symbols painted on his rectory doors for protection are reversed and the dead rose from the graveyard and tormented him and Laura. Ralph having completed his evil mission. Now victorious, he taunted the Reverend, who finally dies in the cellar.

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ACT 1 SCENE 1: EARLY EVENING

This scene takes place in the rectory;
some cardboard cut-outs of people are
set in the appropriate place. A
rumbling of thunder is heard.

ENTER FRED

FRED: (Wearing his cassock and hat) Hark at the thunder, surely an omen on this foul night on the spring solstice... I feel it in my bones...

A hammering sound's heard.

I... do wish that carpenter would hurry up and finish those repairs. I can't afford to wait any longer; it's time for me to tend to my congregation. (He stands before cardboard cut-outs) Men and women of Warleggan, I forgive you in Christ's name for leaving me to run the church in isolation and offer you absolution and protection for your sins and disobedience over the years. (He strikes a cardboard figure) As for you Billy Cornell... what kind of man would slaughter his own sheep and blame it on my dogs and force me to erect a twelve foot barred wire fence around the rectory to imprison me and my dogs for life... but things turned out on your own head, you deserve to die... do you hear? - God forgive me, I'm only human, Priests of Warleggan we stand together over the centuries, over the Knights Templar secret, in the cellar in Christ's name. Amen.

The lighting dims followed by a clap of thunder.

ENTER RALPH

(FRED'S startled and turns) Ralph de Tremur... the rogue priest... finally appears, I didn't summon you...

RALPH: (Wearing a black hooded cloak covering his face) I thought you'd prefer a spirit to talk, rather than cardboard cut-outs.

FRED: An evil spirit more like... I command you to depart in Christ's name.

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- RALPH: Calm yourself Reverend Frederick Densham, surely only an autocrat would preach to a congregation that can't talk back.
(Mocking laugh)
- FRED: (Angry) Get.... out of here and take your black magic with you...do I make myself clear?
- RALPH: You know as well as I do that the wall between life and death's thin on the eve of the spring solstice. (Points to the door) All your biblical painting scenes throughout the thirteen rooms in the rectory will offer you no protection.
- FRED: They've kept the wolf away from the door thus far.
- RALPH: Hmm.... not yet it would seem. (Laughs)
- FRED: Why do you laugh...?
- RALPH: Your naivety. (Sighs) At least that was something we had in common until-
- FRED: (Cutting in) You robbed the vicar and burnt the previous rectory to the ground.
- RALPH: Come you know as well as I do the vicarage was a complete wreck in those, long gone days. – The Bishop himself gave his consent in spite of me being the Rector to remain in Oxford as a scholar, being fluent in Cornish, Latin, French and English.
- FRED: Highly commendable, but please get to the point.
- RALPH: As you probably know, I embarked on a more itinerate ministry, dealing with idolatrous practices in the churches in Cornwall.
- FRED: I could never put that one together.
- RALPH: Really...I understand that you've formed good relations with the Methodist Church; also, you're serving Holy Communion in Saint Bartholomew's in preference to daily mass, scattering a number of the flock in the process I hear.
- FRED: Because the mass was illegal in-
- RALPH: (Cutting in) No need to explain yourself
- FRED: You do, why did you hold a black mass in the Church?

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- RALPH: Why...why...you know yourself the mass's magical, a continuous sacrifice of...
- FRED: Why do you pause?
- RALPH: (Laughs) Those crosses and names, where resurrections took place... on your doors. Pizgah where Moses looked out on the promise land for the salvation for his people, it's pathetic, it's not happening here in Warleggan, nothing but superstitious nonsense... can't you see you're stirring up the spirits?
- FRED: It's kept them from being effective thus far.
- RALPH: When are you going to face up to reality, you're nothing but a recluse!
- FRED: True, but I still have my God.
- RALPH: You're forgetting I too was ostracised from the community.
- FRED: With good reason.
- RALPH: Where did serving God get me? I did my uttermost to smash the idolatry in the Catholic Church, pointing out that worshipping the saints the other face of paganism.
- FRED: Ahead of your time... we scholars.
- RALPH: Indeed.... indeed.
- FRED: But I don't see burning the rectory down as serving God.
- RALPH: Firstly, the Rector saw I was disinherited from my property and secondly, he made my position in Oxford untenable and thirdly I was excommunicated from the Catholic Church.
- FRED: Well at least I know why you took your revenge.
- RALPH: My only regret's the Rector didn't perish in the flames.
- FRED: Indeed, your anger still flares up from time to time.
- RALPH: More like a volcano about to erupt!
- Thunder and lightning are heard.
- FRED: (Jumps back) I see... flexing your cosmic muscles, most impressive.

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RALPH: (Laughs) Enough to make you almost jump out of your skin, even you can turn back the tide of time.

FRED: And what exactly has this business got to do with me?

RALPH: Finally, the message's driven home after all these years; all you have to do is pack your bags and leave.

FRED: Leave.... leave... the Rectory's been my life... my existence... leave...never!

RALPH: I envisaged something like this might happen, but do have an alternative.

FRED: And what do you have in mind?

RALPH: You're forgetting that I know what it's like to stand alone.

FRED: As I've said before, your own doing... I see you want me to take revenge.

RALPH: Come... you've been doing it ever since you've been here, not to forget the way you've wrestled with your own thoughts.

FRED: You're the Devil himself.

RALPH: Say what you will, but remember you're only human, isn't it about time you ended this farce.

FRED: You know jolly well why I stick with my people through thick and thin...now get out of here...do you hear... (He goes to settee and picks up a cushion and throws it at RALPH)

RALPH: Temper...temper... I'll be back, enjoy the time you have left...in the meantime I bid you good evening. (Bows and laughs)

EXIT RALPH

FRED: (FRED follows him to the door at stage left) Good riddance and don't ever come back...!

The lighting returns to normal.

ENTER BERNIE

BERNIE: (From stage right) Bernie...here...!

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- FRED: (FRED is startled) What the blazes...at least you could have knocked...and I thought I made it clear under no circumstances were you to enter this room.
- BERNIE: Excuse me...I thought you were in trouble...I heard you shouting at someone.
- FRED: As you can see a mere figment of your imagination.
- BERNIE: I know what I... perhaps it was a ghost, the rectory's haunted.
- FRED: I think it would be more appropriate if you stuck to what you were required to do...by the way have you finished the repairs?
- BERNIE: I'm afraid not... (He goes over to the cardboard cut-outs) What the bloody hell's all this? (Laughs)
- FRED: It's none of your business and your language's somewhat to be desired.
- BERNIE: Alright keep your shirt on. (Stands before the cardboard cut-outs and gives them a Nazi salute) Achtung!
- FRED: I shall most certainly be writing to the district council about your brazen behaviour.
- BERNIE: Hmmm.... this answers a lot of my questions.
- FRED: I do beg your pardon!
- BERNIE: A twelve-foot barred wire fence around the Rectory to protect your cardboard soldiers. (Laughs) At least they're not like chocolate soldiers that melt in the heat of battle.
- FRED: Have you finished...do you normally behave like this with all your clients?
- BERNIE: There aren't that many clients around like you for a start. I've never been in a place like this before, rhododendrons flanking the drive, rooks cawing high in the beech trees, not a house or soul in sight, its spooky!
- FRED: It has its advantages; the thick undergrowth protects me from the icy winds from Bodmin Moor.
- BERNIE: But it's so isolated!

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- FRED: And you're acting above your station.
- BERNIE: What... who the hell do you think you are... a failed military commander, an autocrat?
- FRED: (Cutting in) Would you refrain from referring to me as a military man, a mere figment of your imagination.
- BERNIE: (Inspects the cardboard cut-outs) I don't believe this... (Laughs) a phantom congregation, well at least they can't answer back I suppose.
- FRED: You'll never understand.
- BERNIE: That's something we can agree on. (Pushes several figures over) They're stiff, dead people in a dead church. (Laughs)
- FRED: Sorry I can't tolerate your insolent behavior any longer, now pack your bags and leave this minute do you hear? I hasten to add that I shall be getting in touch with your superiors.
- BERNIE: There's no need to be like that... the figures aren't real, or are they? As for reporting me, my superiors would most likely give me a pat on the back, you're not exactly the most popular man in Cornwall!
- FRED: Now... listen here young man if I were a few years younger I'd forcibly remove you!
- BERNIE: (Laughs) Now you look here, I'm not one of your cardboard cut-outs.
- FRED: At least they're not so wooden!
- BERNIE: (Grabs FRED) Don't you call me wooden... you...you silly old bugger!
- FRED: Take your hands off me... (Struggles free) An eighty-three-year old man... you ought to be ashamed of yourself!
- BERNIE: Well... watch your big mouth then...
- FRED: Hmm...it seems you've done your fair share...would you care for some light refreshment?
- BERNIE: Now you're talking.
- FRED: (He rings the servants bell) What exactly do you fancy... some tea or coffee? (Pause)

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ENTER JANE

JANE: You rang Reverend?

FRED: My word that was quick Jane.

JANE: That's me right on the bell.

FRED: What's it to be Bernie?

JANE: A nice Cornish pasty and coffee with one good sugar.

BERNIE: Spot on as usual Jane.

FRED: Do you two know each other by any chance?

JANE: We went to the same school in Truro.

FRED: Is... this some kind of conspiracy?

BERNIE: You're not going all weird on us again?

FRED: Unfortunately, that's the price you pay for being a recluse.

BERNIE: Perhaps we ought to leave it there.

JANE: I must be getting along. (Stops at door and turns) Sorry, what do you fancy?

FRED: I should think so, a nice cup of tea and a cheese scone thank you.

JANE: Consider it done!

EXIT JANE

FRED: Perhaps you would like to take the weight off your feet?

BERNIE: (He sits on the chair at the table) I don't mind if I do.

FRED: The settee's far more comfortable.

BERNIE: That's the point I don't want to get too comfortable.

FRED: Please yourself. (He sits on the settee) My old bones need rejuvenating.

BERNIE: Just like the Rectory.

FRED: I agree the district council still has the nerve to charge me fifty pounds per annum, in spite of its state of dilapidation.

BERNIE: I agree it's an uphill struggle to keep the place safe.

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FRED: There's no need to be too fussy, I know the Rectory like the back of my hand, sometimes it seems more like an obstacle course and at least it keeps me on my toes.

BERNIE: All the same I wouldn't like to see you break your neck

FRED: That's most considerate of you; do you enjoy your work at the district council?

BERNIE: It pays the bills. – It's hard to believe that I once had my own carpentry business in Saint Neot and specialized in antique furniture, I also used to do church restoration carvings, but one thing lead to another and money being short after the war.

FRED: Those artisan skills can never be taken away from you and your circumstances could improve.

BERNIE: As a matter of fact, they have.

FRED: Go on...?

BERNIE: That's my business.

FRED: Why of course, there's no harm in being secretive.

BERNIE: You're one to talk; you're well beyond retiring age, why do you stick around...

ENTER JANE

JANE: Refreshments up gentlemen. (She puts the tray down on the table and offers the tea and scone to FRED)

FRED: Workman first...I insist. (She obeys)

BERNIE: Thanks... this lot should go down a treat. (Then she offers FRED his tea and scone)

FRED: Thank you... it's not often...years in fact since I've indulged in a cheese scone in the Rectory. (Sighs) I'm certainly going to miss you.

JANE: That's nice, all part of the service. I better push along; I've got one or two things to sort out in the kitchen.

FRED: Well don't let me hold you up.

EXIT JANE