

**THE HAUNTING AT WARLEGGAN RECTORY**

A full-length ghost play

by

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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. 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.  
CHARLES: School teacher.  
LAURA: His wife.  
PHOEBE: Actress.  
JANE: Servant.  
BERNIE: Carpenter.  
RALPH DE TREMUR: Devil in disguise.  
KALI: Indian Goddess.  
GWEN: Zombie.  
KNIGHTS TEMPLAR : Ghosts  
TWO DEMONS:

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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 FREDERICK**

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

A hammering sound is 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... ar 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 is startled and turns) Ralph de Tremur... the rogue  
priest... I didn't summon you...

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

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

- RALPH: Calm yourself Reverend Frederick Denson, 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 Reverend that the wall between life and death is thin on the eve of the spring solstice.  
(Points to the door) All those biblical painting scenes throughout the thirteen rooms in the rectory will prove utterly powerless.
- FRED: They've kept the wolf away from the door thus far.
- RALPH: Hmm.... not quite it would seem. (Laughs)
- FRED: Why do you laugh...?
- RALPH: Your naivety Reverend Denson. (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 quite put that one together.
- RALPH: Really... I understand that you have formed good relations with the Methodist Church; also you're serving Holy Communion in Saint Bartholomew's in preference to the daily mass, scattering quite 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?
- RALPH: Why...why...you know yourself the mass is magical, a continuous sacrifice of...
- FRED: Why do you pause?
- RALPH: (Laughs) Those crosses and names, where resurrections took place... (Laughs) 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: Oh when are you going to face up to reality, you're nothing but a recluse Reverend Denson!
- FRED: True in a manner of speaking, 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 is the other face of paganism.
- FRED: Ahead of your time... oh we scholars.
- RALPH: Indeed Reverend Denson 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 is 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 Ralph de Tremur.

RALPH: (Laughs) Enough to make you almost jump out of your skin, not even you can turn the tide of time Reverend Denson.

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

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

FRED: Leave...leave...the Rectory has been my life... my very existence... leave...never!

RALPH: I envisaged this might happen, although you do have an alternative.

FRED: And what exactly do you have in mind or dare I ask?

RALPH: Reverend Denson, you're forgetting that I know what it is to stand alone.

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

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

FRED: You're the Devil himself Ralph de Tremur.

RALPH: How perceptive of you, but remember you're only human, isn't it about time you ended this farce.

FRED: You know very 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 so enjoy the time you have left...in the meantime I bid you good evening Reverend Denson. (Bows and laughs)

**EXIT RALPH**

FRED: (Fred follows him to the door at stage left) Good riddance and don't ever come back again...wishful thinking though.

The lighting returns to normal.

**ENTER BERNIE**

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

- 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 heard 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 is 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) I suppose they're not like chocolate soldiers that melt in the heat of battle.
- FRED: Have you quite 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 quite like this before, rhododendrons flanking the drive, rooks cawing high in the beech trees, not a house or soul in sight for miles, it's so spooky!
- FRED: It has its advantages; the thick undergrowth protects me from the icy winds from Bodmin Moor.



- BERNIE: That's one way to look at it I suppose, but it's so isolated!
- FRED: And you're acting above your station Bernie.
- 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 get upset, 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) Er... what exactly do you fancy Bernie some tea or coffee? (Pause)

**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 Reverend?

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

BERNIE: Perhaps we ought to leave it there.

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

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?

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: 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.
- 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 Bernie; 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: Oh...being?
- 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, when the community's so hostile towards you?
- ENTER JANE**
- JANE: Refreshments up gentlemen. (She puts the tray down on the table and offers the tea and scone to FRED)
- FRED: No Jane... workman first...I insist. (She obeys)
- BERNIE: Thanks Jane that should go down a treat. (Offers FRED his tea and scone)
- FRED: Thank you... it's not very often...years in fact since I've indulged in a cheese scone in the Rectory. I'm certainly going to miss you Jane.
- JANE: That's nice, all part of the service. I better be going, I've got one or two things to sort out in the kitchen.
- FRED: Well don't let me hold you up.

**EXIT JANE**

That young woman has been a God send; more like a daughter, still what can one expect she's a staunch Methodist...why the sardonic smile?

BERNIE: No reason...

FRED: It's all rather strange my normal servant was struck down with some peculiar malady.

BERNIE: These things happen.

FRED: He almost died; still he'll be back the day after tomorrow. (Drinks his tea and puts his cup on the table) Drink your coffee Bernie it will be getting cold. (Eats his scone and Bernie eats his pasty)

BERNIE: I prefer my coffee luke warm... oh whatever you say. (Drinks his coffee and puts it down sharply)

FRED: Sorry...I use rainwater rather than from the well.

BERNIE: I see an acquired taste.

FRED: If you like, I have my other reasons.

BERNIE: Do I detect a hint of superstition?

FRED: Is that what you call it, it's a well know fact that Celtic spirits inhabit the rivers, springs and streams.

BERNIE: (Laughs) So you prefer the water straight from heaven?

FRED: Don't you dare mock me...you'll all a lot of heathens around here.

BERNIE: You just don't get it do you?

FRED: What's that supposed to mean?

BERNIE: You're the one who closed the Sunday school in Warleggan remember.

- FRED: Look... I bent backwards to accommodate Warleggan's children. I built a playground that contained a merry go round, a swing between the trees, including a sandpit and boating pool in the rectory garden. At least the evacuee children appreciated my efforts, not like the local children who seemed intent on cutting off their noses to spite their faces, just like their parents.
- BERNIE: That was ten years too late... you've failed to understand Cornishmen from the start, they don't give a toss on making an impression on you, as for you, over riding their opinions, that was the final nail in your coffin, that's the reason why Warleggan remains like granite towards you. – Where has this all got you, you've finished up with a cardboard congregation!
- FRED: So you keep frequently reminding me!
- BERNIE: You're stubborn as an old mule!
- FRED: And you've got a caustic tongue.
- BERNIE: Just trying to drum some sense into you-
- FRED: (Cutting in) Have you quite finished young man?
- BERNIE: Suppose so...you can't go on forever...on second thoughts you could haunt the place.
- FRED: Now that's a thought!
- BERNIE: I suppose you've gained celebrity status with the outsiders, still you've done me a favour.
- FRED: And what could that possibly be?
- BERNIE: My parents prevented me from attending your Sunday school. I now have an interest in the old Cornwall.
- FRED: I can understand that, Cornwall grabs us, one way or other, although I could have given you much more.
- BERNIE: Bible stories I suppose.
- FRED: Not exclusively, I once put on a fantastic show on Greek legends, tales from Arabian Nights and some film slides on my missionary days in India.

- BERNIE: (Laughs) Nobody turned up, at least that's what I've been told.
- FRED: Their loss entirely, I assure you.
- BERNIE: If you say so, I really can't get to grips with you being a traveling man.
- FRED: Many moons ago, when did you first take an interest in ancient Cornwall?
- BERNIE: During my last year at school, Mr. Cooper my English teacher was a real inspiration. (Pause) Er...anything wrong...you've gone white as a sheet!
- FRED: You... mean Charles Cooper?
- BERNIE: Is there a problem...? As far as I'm concerned Mr. Cooper helped me to connect to the Druids.
- FRED: It's paganism Bernie...paganism...I really felt guilty about this, if only you'd come to church, there's no problem in having knowledge about Cornish culture, but to identify one's self with culture is dangerous.
- BERNIE: I've written several poems on old Cornwall.
- FRED: I see a man of hidden talents, would you like to recite one of your poems...there's no need to look so surprised?
- BERNIE: (Rises) This one's called Bodmin Moor.
- FRED: Sounds intriguing...from memory.
- BERNIE: Of course. Gathering ravens circle and caw; a dragon's wings beat in the air, now darkness falls on Bodmin Moor, that dragon crouches on a tor, breathes his fire and lands in his lair, gathering ravens circle and caw, anger the dragon who gives a roar, over the blood stained altar there, now darkness falls on Bodmin Moor, some Druids souls begin to soar, almost seems more than they could bear, gathering ravens circle and caw, while Druids chant their ancient lore, by those Beltane fires that flare, now darkness falls on Bodmin Moor. The Druids ritual, demons war, forked lightning strikes everywhere; gathering ravens circle and caw, now darkness falls on Bodmin Moor. Well...what?

- FRED: (Rises and walks around) A dragon on Bodmin Moor. (He stops and turns) Have you any idea what you've unleashed?
- BERNIE: Chance would be a fine thing?
- FRED: That is what happens when one plays around with magic and the occult!
- BERNIE: Now you're lecturing me.
- FRED: That may be so, but the prophecy has been released as far as I'm concerned.
- BERNIE: Now you're speaking in riddles.
- FRED: How about hell on earth accompanied with death and the Devil?
- BERNIE: You're...you're off the planet!
- RALPH: (His voice is heard and laughs) The curse lives on...  
(Laughs)
- Thunder and lightning are heard and  
RALPH DE TREMUR stands at the  
window for a moment.
- BERNIE: Who...who...the bloody hell's...?
- FRED: Who do you think, that's confirmation?
- BERNIE: Look... you're scaring the shit out of me...what curse for God's sake?
- FRED: I won't tolerate any bad language or blasphemy in my rectory, do I make myself clear?
- BERNIE: Alright...alright...keep your shirt on, I thought that death and hell don't appear on earth until the four horses of the apocalypse appeared.
- FRED: You seem to know your bible well Bernie.
- BERNIE: I read it quite a bit thanks to-
- FRED: (Cutting in) Mr. Cooper, as you were saying glimpses of the future are present in certain moments of time, unfortunately it has been released and death will certainly pay a visit to the rectory tonight.

- BERNIE: (Goes to the cardboard cut-outs) I'm trying to get my head around...wait a minute...what have you been up to?
- FRED: What have I been up to...do you think I'm green, it's obvious you've been involved in some Druidic ritual.
- BERNIE: That's my business, you've been calling up some priestly spirit to curse your cardboard congregation...you're a wicked old hypocrite, seeking revenge!
- FRED: How dare you speak to me like that, as far as I'm concerned as a man is so he sees.
- BERNIE: Whatever. I've worked out who that priest was at the window, Mr. Cooper will be delighted.
- FRED: (Shouts) Will he now... you've made your point... now just get out of my sight.
- BERNIE: The feelings mutual...you silly old...oh what's the use.  
**EXIT BERNIE**
- FRED: (Sighs) What a tragedy, I could have done wonders with that young man.  
**ENTER JANE**
- JANE: Is everything alright Reverend Denson?
- FRED: As it ever will be I suppose, I honestly don't know what will happen to that young man.
- JANE: I shouldn't be too hard on him he's recently suffered a broken relationship from a really nice girl.
- FRED: Hmm...hardly surprising.
- JANE: I shouldn't upset yourself, his bark is worse than his bite, come and sit down and relax; (He obeys) now that's better. (He sits on the settee and she sits beside him)
- FRED: That's better; I honestly don't know what I'll do without you Jane.
- JANE: I'm so glad I've been of some service.
- FRED: You've been much more to me than that.
- JANE: That's very nice of you to say so Reverend.



- FRED: More like a daughter in fact, although I never married, you know what I mean.
- JANE: Now you're making me all embarrassed. – Still you've taught me so much during my short stay here.
- FRED: I really do appreciate that, although I could never quite understand why you put up with a miserable old so and so like me.
- JANE: You're anything but old, almost childlike in the nicest sense of the word, then your visits to the Methodist Church. – I saw a need...
- FRED: (Touches her arm) It's so good to see a young person in the faith these days, oh do promise me one thing.
- JANE: What could that possibly be?
- FRED: Never leave your caring profession.
- JANE: (Recoils) Er...it's a case...I need the money...one has to move on...
- FRED: I'm sorry to hear that, are you leaving Warleggan?
- JANE: I'm afraid so...I'm moving with a friend into Truro, where I'll be working as an assistant in the folk museum, hopefully I'll step into the shoes of the aging curator.
- FRED: You have an excellent knowledge of local history...but to step into the curator's shoes... a trifle ambitious.
- JANE: It's not a case of what you know, but who you know... what's the matter did...?
- FRED: Charles Cooper by any chance?
- JANE: I'm sorry that's my business... (Rises and notices the cardboard figures) Er...what's?
- FRED: (Cutting in) Sorry that's my business...
- JANE: I get it; they're a substitute for real people.
- FRED: That's what loneliness does to you...
- JANE: Well...if it keeps you sane!

FRED: In a manner of speaking, although I have other reasons which I'd rather not discuss.

JANE: Everybody has their little secrets I suppose.

FRED: Indeed, I wonder if you'd be kind enough to put my cardboard figures away in the cupboard.

JANE: I see... expecting some visitors? (She moves the cardboard figures off stage)

**EXIT JANE**

FRED: (Rises) I'll give you a hand. (Moves the rest of the cardboard figures off stage)

JANE: (Off stage) It's alright... I'll take it from here.

FRED: Thank you most kindly Jane. (He goes and sits on the settee and stretches his arms) Fancy Jane leaving the caring profession, it's a changing world and it certainly will be before this night is through... I feel it in my bones...

Three knocks are heard on the door.

(Rises sharply) Who the Devil is...? (He opens the door) Oh it's you. (He attempts to close the door) How did you get into the outside gate?

**ENTER CHARLES**

CHARLES: Is this usually the way you treat an ex-member of your congregation?

FRED: Certainly an uninvited guest... how dare you burst into my home Charles Cooper?

CHARLES: I just think you need to calm down Reverend Denson.

FRED: Very well... just state your business and leave!

CHARLES: (Turns) Are you coming darling?

LAURA: (Off stage) It doesn't sound like a very good idea.

FRED: At least somebody's grasped the message.

CHARLES: (Goes to the door in temper and grabs her) She who is hesitant is lost!

**ENTER LAURA**

This is my charming wife Laura.

- FRED: How do you do Mrs. Cooper? (They shake hands)
- LAURA: Oh do call me Laura...
- FRED: If you insist... can I offer you a nice cup of tea, you look damp and cold?
- LAURA: You know how quickly the fog comes down on the moor.
- FRED: (Looks out of the window) Hmm...the weather's certainly deteriorated within the last half an hour, still nothing what a nice cup of tea won't put right.
- CHARLES: Haven't you got something a little bit stronger?
- FRED: I'm afraid not, you've come to the wrong institution.
- CHARLES: I thought as much, but I haven't come unprepared. (Takes a silver whisky can from his pocket and drinks) I certainly need something to warm things up here!
- LAURA: Don't you think you've had enough for one day...Charles don't forget you're driving.
- FRED: That's very sensible Laura.
- CHARLES: You can save your sermons for your cardboard cutouts Reverend.
- FRED: How I detest sarcasm Charles, it's obvious who let you into the rectory grounds- forgive me Laura I'll ring for your cup of tea. (He rings the servants' bell)
- CHARLES: Nothing personal Reverend, its common knowledge since you've become a local celebrity, your curious congregations swollen by overseas journalists...every dog must have its day... (Laughs)
- LAURA: I find that remark most offensive Charles.
- FRED: Diabolical would be the more appropriate word.
- CHARLES: See what you've done Laura, I brought you here to sober things down, do I make myself...
- ENTER JANE**
- JANE: Tea up everybody. (She puts the tea tray on the table with some scones) There's no need to look so surprised Reverend.

FRED: I know you're efficient Jane...but it almost seems like...-

JANE: (Cutting in) Er...two sugars Mrs. Cooper?

CHARLES: Not for me thank you.

LAURA: One good sugar and a dash of milk for me please Jane.

JANE: Of course... (She pours the teas) There's also some cheese scones, I'll leave you to help yourselves, that's it (Rubs her hands together) Ring me if you should require anything else.

FRED: Thank you Jane.

**EXIT JANE**

LAURA: She's still the same Jane, a breath of fresh air... I think I'll have one of those cheese scones before I sit down. (She offers the plate around)

FRED: Thank you Laura. (Laura sits on the settee with her tea and scone) I might as well have a cup of tea; it seems we're going to be here for quite a while. (Picks up his tea and sits on the settee) Laura I'm also very fond of Jane, she's been like a daughter to me and unfortunately she's only here until the day after tomorrow.

LAURA: I'm not surprised, would you care to join us Charles, standing around like a loose canon about to fire!

CHARLES: How dare you speak to me like that, your so called Jane is moving along with the times.

FRED: Your influence I understand.

LAURA: Everything you touch turns sour these days.

CHARLES: So it would seem my dear, do I have to remind you I'm a highly respected freemason around here.

FRED: Hmm...freemasonry has dark undertones.

CHARLES: Oh really Reverend, you don't know what on earth you're talking about, we masons give thousands to charity- not like some hermit cooped up in a cage, preaching to cardboard cut-outs, while we're on the subject, what exactly has your contribution been to humanity?

LAURA: Charles isn't it about time you got off your high horse?

- CHARLES: Laura, will you stop your interfering, it's about time our Reverend was told one or two home truths.
- FRED: Since you've set your mind on being insolent under the guise of home truths Charles, fire away!
- CHARLES: Let's begin with some reminiscing; what man in his right mind would own a litter of dogs in a farming community, furthermore your so called Gandi and the rest of his pack slaughtered a considerable amount of sheep on the Moor.
- FRED: Obviously wrong breed.
- CHARLES: Are you trying to be funny?
- FRED: Just trying to humour the situation...you're being far too intense!
- LAURA: I agree...
- CHARLES: Laura I thought... it just goes to prove, you haven't got a clue with people Reverend.
- FRED: Yes, but have you any idea how lonely it can be in this rectory? As for my dogs I erected a twelve foot barred wire fence
- CHARLES: To keep the dogs in and public out?
- FRED: It seems I've not been quite so successful today, after a traitor-
- CHARLES: (Cutting in) Come Reverend you don't trust anybody.
- FRED: Justifiably it seems...
- CHARLES: (Laughs) Pull the other...
- FRED: Really... it seems you haven't changed much since your Sunday school days, the cheeky, butter wouldn't melt in his mouth; I'm the son of the local squire attitude!
- CHARLES: I see... so that's why you closed the Sunday school?
- FRED: Among other things.
- CHARLES: Then why the hell did you paint the church in red, yellow and blue, without the people's permission?
- FRED: A medieval feel, to lift the doom and gloom, take your pick.

- CHARLES: That you caused, you almost sold the church organ, a First World War memorial.
- FRED: Church funds were running low; I did make the effort to engage an organist.
- CHARLES: Twenty years too late! I understand he only stayed a night in the rectory and almost finished up having a nervous breakdown, you're inhuman...-
- FRED: Have you quite finished Charles?
- CHARLES: Not quite... you're nothing but a tyrant, removing all the names from the Parish Council electoral roll.
- FRED: Because nobody turned up, why are you persisting in this obsession of raking up the past?
- CHARLES: You've got a nerve... you've stewed yourself to death in your own prejudices.
- LAURA: (Starts shaking) Will you both stop this wrangling...stirring up hurt and bitterness!
- FRED: I'm so sorry Laura...
- CHARLES: I shouldn't worry yourself too much Reverend, she's a musician and very sensitive to the presence in buildings.
- FRED: Perhaps this is a good time to leave!
- CHARLES: I'm afraid not, have you still got the piano in the music room?
- FRED: Of course, I only had it tuned last week.
- LAURA: (Rises) Since you're so determined to stay Charles...I need to express my feelings.
- FRED: That's fine by me.
- LAURA: Thank you Reverend... I find music so therapeutic.  
**EXIT LAURA**
- FRED: You've never stated your reason, for your uninvited visit.
- CHARLES: You'll learn all in good time, although more to the point, I think it would be in your own interest for you to leave.
- FRED: What now... my own rectory?

CHARLES: Your, rectory?

LAURA is heard playing the last movement of Chopin's piano sonata in b flat minor op 35.

FRED: My word...she plays like some virtuoso.

CHARLES: That's something we can agree on, the downside is she's just like most musicians temperamental!

FRED: Hmm...I wonder...what's more disturbing is what she's actually playing; it sounds like restless ghosts moving swiftly through a graveyard.

CHARLES: A mere tip of the iceberg!

FRED: Really, I know every nook and cranny in the rectory.

CHARLES: Exactly... you've locked yourself in time.

FRED: For the people of Warleggan's sake.

CHARLES: Don't be so ridiculous, you know as well as I do, ever since the thirties the people of Warleggan are no longer under the church and great estates, church attendance is no longer obligatory, congregations have dwindled all over Cornwall. You've become a recalcitrant old clergyman, refusing to adapt to social change, you're nothing but a diehard and bigot!

FRED: Are you going to send me in the corner for being a naughty boy teacher, although there is something you have failed to take into consideration?

CHARLES: Being...?

FRED: The church is still under canon law, and as far as the Bishop is concerned, I'm completely exonerated.

CHARLES: You've failed to move with the times, you banned country dancing and whist drives from the church and the nerve to preach the follies of hell in the Methodist Church, such as reading novels, going to the cinema and having a drink in the pub, that's the very heart of culture!

FRED: The world as far as I'm concerned.

- CHARLES: Do you expect everybody to decorate their homes with biblical texts and symbols like here in the rectory? (He bangs on the cross on the door) Arrr.....! (Recoils)
- FRED: You were saying Charles; it seems your visit here today has nothing whatsoever to do with social change.
- CHARLES: Oh you needn't think you're all sunshine and light Reverend Denson... you...you...threatened to kill your own secretary, when he tried to stop you tearing up the church in a rage.
- FRED: Mere scandal, we finished up shaking hands, oh I might add, I'm human!
- CHARLES: Debatable, when quite a few of the entries in your church register have been, no fog, no rain, no congregation. I can never understand why you've stayed around for so long, when you're obviously not wanted here in Warleggan.
- FRED: If the congregation refuses to come to church on their feet, they'll certainly arrive in black carriages!
- CHARLES: What...what...an outlook, you're...just a deluded old man, whose time is almost up.
- FRED: As I've said before, I'm only human.
- CHARLES: I will say this... those corpses you buried will come back to haunt you before this night is through.
- FRED: Better late than never I suppose. Mr. Cooper this rectory is a reflection of my soul, all thirteen rooms are painted in biblical scenes and symbols, all soaked in prayer, they seem to come alive through God's spirit, as you see I'm not entirely alone.
- CHARLES: You're behaving like some child.
- FRED: I take that as a compliment, except you become as a child-
- CHARLES: (Cutting in) Alright...cut the preaching, so you think being like a Christ like figure gives you authority over Warleggan?
- FRED: Something like that.
- CHARLES: You're suffering from delusions of grandeur.
- FRED: So you're constantly been pointing out.



CHARLES: You're like some medieval hermit.

FRED: Saint Guthlac in fact.

CHARLES: I understand he lived on a remote island in the fens, constantly tormented by evil spirits.

FRED: It does bare some relation to my situation, as you know Saint Guthlac was taken to the jaws of hell and Saint Bartholomew gave him a whip to scourge the snarling demons.

CHARLES: Are you trying to frighten me? (Points to himself)

FRED: Clearly, you're too puffed up with power.

A clap of thunder is heard.

**ENTER LAURA**

LAURA: (Screaming) Let me out of here...let me... (Moves around the room)

CHARLES: Laura... will you stop that screaming, this is dramatic even by your standards.

FRED: Charles can't you... (She goes to FRED who comforts her)

CHARLES: Most impressive, Reverend, some pastoral care at last.

FRED: Come and sit down Laura. (He helps her to the settee and she's still shaking)

CHARLES: Pull yourself together Laura!

FRED: What the Devil's got into you Charles?

CHARLES: Ever since I set foot into this rectory.

**ENTER JANE**

JANE: (Rushes in) Is everything alright...I heard some screaming?

FRED: Everything is under control Jane; would you care for another cup of tea Laura?

LAURA: (Composes herself) No thank you Jane. Reverend, I seem to have recovered my equilibrium and it must have been some sort of illusion. I'm afraid I don't believe in the supernatural and all that mumbo jumbo. (Rises) Thank you Charles for your sympathy, you've made our position abundantly clear.

CHARLES: Communication hasn't been our strongest point in recent years.

LAURA: I'll... tell you why Charles Cooper, I ate, drunk and slept your interest in witchcraft and paganism and your constant attempts to control me, all under your cloak of respectable freemasonry.

CHARLES: That's quite enough!

LAURA: Hmm... you haven't been too fussy in sharing your views.

CHARLES: I said that's enough Laura!

LAURA: Indeed, the operative word, I watched you slowly destroy yourself.

CHARLES: I said for the last time... will you shut up or-

LAURA: (Goes up to him) Or you'll what... our marriage is over Charles Cooper. I met the nadir of our miserable existence this evening.

FRED: I think it's time we simmered things down.

CHARLES: That's the best suggestion I heard thus far, what did you exactly see in the music room Laura?

LAURA: Some medieval black hooded priest.

A flash of lightning is seen at the window and a clap of thunder is heard.

**ENTER RALPH DE TREMUR**

RALPH: (He stands at the door) I Ralph de Tremur stand at the door to usher in a new age tonight. (Laughs)

FRED: I've seen enough of you this evening. (He picks up a whip from under the table and uses it on RALPH)

RALPH: Arr.....! I'll be back the night is young. (Laughs)

**EXIT RALPH DE TREMUR**

CHARLES: What do you think you're doing? (He grabs FRED)

FRED: (Pushes him away) Get your hands off me!

CHARLES: Give me that whip I say...

- FRED: Here, take it.
- CHARLES: (He takes the whip) Arrr.....! (He shakes and throws the whip down) That felt like an electric shock. (Stumbles)
- FRED: Can I lend you a hand?
- CHARLES: Keep away from me. (He stumbles to the settee) I'll have you excommunicated for this do you hear?
- LAURA: You're not having a very good day Charles.
- CHARLES: I've just had about...oh I shall.... you'll see, as for you using magic Reverend.
- FRED: Sorry...I thought that's more in your field.
- CHARLES: Don't you dare play around with me!
- FRED: You grabbed the whip. (CHARLES rises and sits) I think you need to take it easy Charles.
- CHARLES: I'll be fine, the power in that whip, is it some kind of relic?
- FRED: You'll be surprised what happens when one becomes a hermit.
- CHARLES: To run away from your missionary exploits in India!
- FRED: I don't think that's any of your business Charles Cooper.
- CHARLES: What are you trying to hide Reverend Denson?
- FRED: I repeat that's none of your business, as for the whip, you may be aware the church is named after Saint Bartholomew, he appeared to me in a vision, when every demon seemed to be tormenting me from hell, at a particularly all time low for me in the rectory.
- CHARLES: (Laughs) Just like Saint Guthlac?
- FRED: That's exactly what I'm saying his whip kept the demons at bay, until I completed the biblical texts. A word of warning Charles, you're facing the evil sprits from eternity.
- CHARLES: Indeed, that visit from Ralph de Tremur had some unfinished business.
- FRED: Obviously... or he'd finished up in hell!

The thunder sounds and the lightning  
flashes.

Take that as a warning Charles Cooper.

CHARLES: The time has come to finish what he started and I'll find out  
what that is tonight.

FRED: You're a fool Charles Cooper, he who held a black mass in  
the church is up to no good!

CHARLES: It depends why...then we shall see who the fool is. In the  
meantime I need to find some more congenial company  
Bern...

FRED: (Pause) You were saying? - Oh you mean Bernie, he's  
floating somewhere around in the rectory, careful where you  
tread, the stairs can be quite perilous, just like your journey.

CHARLES: No need to worry Reverend, I will fulfil my destiny.

**EXIT CHARLES**

FRED: Come and sit down Laura, you've had quite a traumatic day.  
(They both sit on the settee)

LAURA: You can say that again, I faced up to my demons today.

FRED: And you've handled the situation with great fortitude

LAURA: Thanks for your encouragement.

FRED: Look... I don't normally agree with divorce, but I think it's  
completely justified on this occasion.

LAURA: As you can see, we've completely grown apart; it hasn't  
always been like that.

FRED: Would it help...if you talked about it?

LAURA: Are you sure?

FRED: It would be to a listening ear for a change.

LAURA: Charles and I met at university in London, he studied  
English and I studied music and philosophy, I subsequently  
changed to teachers training, being more interested in  
children rather than concepts.

FRED: I know the feeling.

- LAURA: Yes... I do believe you're a softie under that shell.
- FRED: (Laughs) Please don't spread it around.
- LAURA: Would anybody listen.
- FRED: Certainly not up till now, you have a wonderful musical talent Laura.
- LAURA: Thank you Reverend, I'm so glad you enjoyed it, I almost decided to make it a career, but the hours of practising and solitude soon took off the shine, I'm more of a people's person.
- FRED: Most of us eventually find their niche I suppose.
- LAURA: I thought that once, although it's unbelievable to think that Charles and I are facing divorce, once we were very much in love, we both taught in the London area for a while, that's when he became a freemason. - We eventually finished teaching in Truro.
- FRED: Cornwall seems to have that effect on one.
- LAURA: You can say that again, Charles continued in the masons and raised thousands for charity.
- FRED: A good cause I suppose, but you know my opinion on free masonry.
- LAURA: Of course...now where...he turned out to be a really good English teacher and managed to get quite a number of underprivileged youngsters to university. He became quite a prominent figure in Truro.
- FRED: A mere shadow of his former self.
- LAURA: Exactly.... all went down hill after that. (Tearful) I'm so sorry...Reverend.
- FRED: There's no need to be, perhaps a cup of tea would salvage the situation.
- LAURA: What an excellent idea. (He rings the bell for the servant)
- FRED: I know only too well, unfortunately there are things we cannot change. (Pause)

**ENTER JANE**

- JANE: What can I get you Reverend Denson?
- FRED: A pot of tea for two please...is everything alright Jane, you seem very distressed?
- JANE: I'm fine... (Tearful)
- FRED: (Rises) Are you quite certain-
- JANE: (Thrusts out her hands) I said I'm fine.... just leave it...!  
**EXIT JANE**
- FRED: (Sits) My word, she doesn't normally behave in that way.
- LAURA: She's obviously in conflict over my husband's behaviour. (FRED buries his hands in his face) What is it Reverend?
- FRED: Things are not what they seem and then they never are.
- LAURA: Sorry.... I don't understand...
- FRED: (He faces her) And you can cut out the playacting!
- LAURA: I do beg your pardon!
- FRED: You can cut out the innocence; you and your husband are out to crack me up...
- LAURA: Don't be so absurd, can't you see you're playing right into his hands.
- FRED: (Pause) I'm so sorry Laura...please forgive me....Jane has been like a daughter to me...
- LAURA: There's nothing to forgive as far as I'm concerned, you've carried all those years of hurt around for far too long.
- FRED: (Bursts into tears) You've got no idea... there's no fool like an old fool.
- LAURA: (She hugs him) It proves you're human... now just get it out of your system. (He breaks down)  
**ENTER JANE**
- JANE: (She sets the tea tray on the table and coughs) Er.... Tea up!  
(She makes a quick retreat)
- LAURA: Jane...just a minute. (JANE stops and turns) Perhaps we could have a quiet word later on?

- JANE: (Tearful) I very much doubt it... (Turns sharply and proceeds)
- LAURA: Can't you see what you've done?  
**EXIT JANE**
- JANE: (Off stage) It's got nothing to do with me you bitch!
- FRED: That's... like a bolt shot right into my heart.
- LAURA: I shouldn't worry Reverend, Jane will come round.
- FRED: I only wish I had your optimism.
- LAURA: Twenty years in the rectory hasn't exactly helped. (She rises and pours the tea in a cup, and gives it to FRED) There this will help to keep our spirits up.
- FRED: Thank you Laura...the good old English cup of tea works wonders.
- LAURA: That's the spirit. (They both sit and drink their tea)
- FRED: Laura, are you religious by any chance?
- LAURA: I believe in God, but that's just as far as it goes, why do you ask?
- FRED: Your life could be in danger tonight.
- LAURA: Now.... you're scaring me, but what about you?
- FRED: (He rises and looks out of the window) You know me, I stick through things thick or thin. I've never seen the fog so thick, it looks so eerie, do you think you can find your way to the village?
- LAURA: (Puts her cup down and rises) I think so; oh I've just remembered what my husband said in his sleep, he mentioned a brazen serpent and it doesn't look very good by the look on your face.
- FRED: It's the twenty fifth degree in the masons, the symbol of a serpent entwined around an egg, that's used in Egyptian, Indian, and Celtic mythology.
- LAURA: The Druids use the egg in the spring equinox!
- FRED: Exactly, the egg is buried for three days and dug up symbolising rebirth.

- LAURA: A resurrection!
- FRED: That's why I used the resurrection symbols on the door, to keep the old Celtic forces at bay, as for the Egyptian egg, it symbolises the creation of the universe.
- LAURA: Now you've lost me.
- FRED: And me... it's just a piece of the jigsaw that's missing.  
(Walks around) Your husband has set his heart on destroying me as a man and in the spiritual sense, in other words body, soul and spirit. (Stops and faces her) Wait...I have it the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail are the ultimate objectives of the Knights Templar!
- LAURA: That makes sense the stone cross in the churchyard.
- FRED: It used to mark the path at Carbarrow across the Moor, from Temple to Warleggan, forming a link between the two churches.
- LAURA: Warleggan means high place; according to the legend of the Knights Templar, who found the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem... now what if...why do you have that look, as though you're hiding something?
- FRED: You're imagining...don't you think it's about time you went on your way, before you lose the opportunity?
- LAURA: What and have me die of curiosity in the meantime.
- FRED: If you insist, the earthly temple is a replica of the one in heaven, designed by God, his relationship plan with man at creation. During Satan's rebellion in heaven, he formed a counterfeit trinity, the anti-Christ his son, who I believe sat in the holy of holies in the heavenly temple. Are you still with me?
- LAURA: I think so...it's intriguing!
- FRED: As a result Satan was cast into the mid-heaven, still having access into heaven, however his son and the false prophet were cast down into the abyss. At the end of time, Satan will be cast down to earth to reunite with his son and the false prophet who will emerge from the abyss, to reform the counterfeit trinity.



- LAURA: Interesting, but complex!
- FRED: Let me put it another way, the temple represents man's; body, soul and spirit, remember, at Christ's crucifixion the curtain in the Holy of Holies, was torn from top to bottom, and Christ himself became the holy temple.
- LAURA: So the Holy Grail and the Ark of the Covenant represent the two covenants.
- FRED: Exactly, after the Anti-Christ is raised from the dead, during the end times, he goes and sits in the Holy of Holies in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.
- LAURA: Taking control of man's spirit with the three sixes, perverting God's original plan.
- FRED: But only in the negative, that also exists in every man since the fall, when the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil stood side by side at the centre, in the Garden of Eden.
- LAURA: So if Adam and Eve had chosen from the tree of life they would have lived forever with God?
- FRED: Indeed, through Adam's sin, came sophistry and idolatry, soul power!
- LAURA: Plato and Aristotle had exactly the same problems with sophistry. I attended several lectures on the subject at university. Socrates an innocent man was put to death for the corruption of youth, while his accusers were the guilty culprits.
- FRED: I know the feeling...
- LAURA: You mean my husband?
- FRED: I wasn't going to say that, God was put on trial and found guilty and crucified, while Barabbas a murderer was set free.
- LAURA: Are you preaching to me by any chance?
- FRED: Please forgive me Laura... it's so refreshing to preach to flesh and blood rather than cardboard cut outs!
- LAURA: (Comforts him) There's nothing to forgive Reverend, please continue.

- FRED: All I'm saying is, that sophistication in all its shapes and forms, robs the ordinary man of his freedom, some biblical knowledge is essential for his well being.
- LAURA: I believe you!
- FRED: (Emotional) You've...no idea how this makes me feel.
- LAURA: Oh do stop punishing yourself, as far as I'm concerned, you still have a heart for the people.
- FRED: Laura... under the current circumstances...you need Christ to take away your sin and come into your heart.
- LAURA: Whatever for...I've always been a good person...so this is your punch line, alright why....? (Pause) Why....?
- FRED: If you don't...you'll finish up in hell!
- LAURA: What! I... find that remark most offensive... people are right what they say about you, you're a tyrant!
- FRED: You couldn't be further from the truth, I love my sheep.
- LAURA: Huh! Not the farmer's sheep, that's for sure...sorry I'll take that back, you can't live with somebody like Charles for twenty years without something rubbing off.
- FRED: Now you're passing from the sheep to the goats.
- LAURA: So you're accusing me for using my husband as a scapegoat, while you're projecting your bitterness onto your flock, it's them not me attitude!
- FRED: Do I detect an air of derision in your voice... your so called people have sentenced me here in this benighted rectory, like some prisoner for the last twenty years.
- LAURA: Accusation and self justification are all part of the Devil's vocabulary.
- FRED: Have you any idea what's it like to be isolated?
- LAURA: Stop beating yourself up, well if it helps to keep you sane. (Comforts him) Just try and relax Reverend.
- FRED: Laura... it's been so good to have contact with a human being, you've been a real tonic!
- LAURA: I've always been a people's person.

- FRED: You most certainly are... I've never been so uplifted for many years. I know one thing for certain, it's the Devil who's the real tyrant and he never leaves one alone.
- LAURA: You surely must have been tempted to leave the rectory?
- FRED: Many times, but I've never got round to it, it's my wish to be buried here in the Garden of Remembrance I created myself here in the rectory grounds.
- LAURA: Sorry I didn't mean...
- FRED: You're quite right I'm eighty three years old.
- LAURA: (Laughs) A bit late in the day to change, are you sure I can't persuade you to retire?
- FRED: I'll give you a quote from Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon' my very chains and I grew friends, so much a long communion tends to make us what we are.
- LAURA: That's in the human sense, but in your spirit you've been an overseer for the souls of Warleggan.
- FRED: My word...Laura I'm impressed.
- LAURA: I've been thinking about what you said earlier, it's been nagging at me.
- FRED: Sorry remind... oh about conversion?
- LAURA: Although I still need a bit more time to think about it.
- FRED: Why of course, but please don't hesitate to inform me when...now as much as I've enjoyed your company. I think its time for you to leave. (Goes to the window) I think the fog has lifted slightly, although it's awfully quiet, even the rooks seem subdued.
- LAURA: Reverend Denson. (She hugs and kisses him on the cheek) It's been an absolute pleasure talking to you.
- FRED: And you my dear, I shall always treasure these moments in my heart Laura... you put new life in the old dog...now hurry along and be careful! (He opens the door and closes it)

**EXIT LAURA**

(Sighs) My only regret is that I didn't get to know the Warleggan people better. (He sits on the settee) How fleeting are these precious moments, how quickly the darkness rests over my heart again, whatever would I do if anything happened to Jane or Laura, I've never felt quite such a strong presence of death in the rectory, whatever has been birthed in the spring solstice? (Laura is heard screaming; he rises, goes out and leaves the door open)  
Please spare her Lord!

**EXIT FRED**