

“Haydon’s Point”

A one-act
ghost play
by
Peter Bridge

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The scene is set within the location of an old Cornish Manor House, which is situated 'miles from anywhere', near to the coast. An almost untraversable rough road leads from its nearest neighbouring town, some twenty five miles away. There has been a recent family death at the manor, and various members of the family make their way to this remote spot to witness the reading of the will.

Various disturbances occur when, prior to the solicitor's surprising legacy details being revealed, the assembly attempt to contact the deceased during a psychic game using a Ouija board. The mood of the respective 'beneficiaries' changes following the will disclosures and to one of them, comes a mind shattering moment when he realises that both the location and its occupants are not all what they seem to be.

The Set

The essential furnishings in this set are: a table (that will cater for five people to sit round)...and five chairs. These to be positioned centre stage, set back, up stage. A settee to be positioned to centre/right of the stage and an easy chair to the far right hand side. There should be a main entry/exit to the right of centre and an entry to another part of the house stage right. Various other items can also be included...as there is a need to clear everything, bar the settee, to show by contrast, 'desolation', for the last 20 minutes.

Characters

1. Cynthia Any age from seventeen to thirty. She has a strong Cornish Accent. Cynthia is subservient and strangely embedded in the past.
2. Sarah Much as Cynthia in all facets...except, perhaps, she is a little more gregarious...and... adaptable ...as she has to completely change her character to one that is totally childlike in the final action.
3. Ring The solicitor's clerk who comes to read the will. Slightly starchy, solemn within his serious officiating role but can exhibit a more adventurous side. Not necessary...but I had in mind Scottish...though, in reality, he's more likely to have a broad Cornish accent: Probably in his early forties.
4. Queenie Needs to be 'elderly' (or made to look that way) as script suggests she's seventy plus. Queenie is the eldest sister...and the natural leader of the quartet of sisters. She naively believes in her own, so-called, psychic powers and keen to display a wide range of acts of sorcery...(fairly bonkers).
5. Freda. Next down the pecking order to Queenie. She must also fit into the elderly range. Freda is the only sister that ventures anywhere near to approaching normality.
6. Pearl Another elderly sister. Slightly annoying and fussy.
7. Sonia Ditto for her. Naïve and dotty.
8. Teddy Has the main part. Strangely...he can be almost any age...but preferably under forty...addressed as 'young man' by two of the sisters. Teddy is witty and light-hearted. He is cynical and has no time for the 'super

natural' elements. He has a complete change of character in the final action.

9. Brigadier Lostock High ranking army type. Strictly follows army regulations. Mature sort. Disciplined.

10. The voice of Bella (does not appear) Should sound like an eleven year old girl...with a slightly mystical quality.

Haydon's Point

The time is seven forty five pm. Cynthia and Sarah are together situated in the old Manor house. They await Mr Ring, a solicitor's clerk who is coming to read the will of the recently deceased occupant of the property, Isobel (Bella) White. Five beneficiaries named in the will are also due to attend. The weather outside is dreadful...with torrential rain pouring down. There is a knock on the door. Cynthia goes to open it...and meets Ring at the door.

Cynthia Goodness...you must be Mr Ring.

Ring That's right.

Cynthia Oh...Come in...You're wet through, poor thing.
It's really teaming out there.

Ring Thank you.

Cynthia I'd better take your coat. I'll hang it up in the
basement to dry out.

(Cynthia takes Ring's coat)

Ring I had a job getting here. The road is nearly washed away at Haydon's Point. I never thought I'd make it.

Cynthia Really. Is it that bad? I hope some of our other guests manage to make it tonight. We're still expecting another five people.

Ring Well I hope they can find their way out there. It's pitch black now...and there's no lighting at all on the road.

Cynthia It's always tricky in this part of Cornwall. We always advise against visitors travelling down after dark. Why don't you take a seat while I take your coat downstairs.

Ring Surely it would have been easier to conduct these proceedings in our Fowey offices.

Cynthia Not for us, Mr Ring. We don't have transport, like you...and it wouldn't be right...with Miss Bella here.

Ring Miss Bella...the deceased....Hasn't she even been....

Cynthia Oh yes...I meant, here....in spirit. I'll be hanging up your coat.

(Cynthia exits. Ring brushes himself down...then looks over to the settee stage left...and makes his way over to the seat before sinking into it. He leans back: wipes his brow as if in relief to finally make the destination after his hazardous journey)

(Sarah walks in stage right)

Sarah Hello...you just arrived?

Ring Aye...and it's only due to providence that I managed to find the place at all.

Sarah (chuckling) Yes it's rather remote out here.

Ring I'll say it is.

Sarah You probably noticed, there's no signposts around here after you pass Haydon's Point.

Ring Yes...most helpful...and no lights on the road either. I nearly found myself driving over a sheer drop a couple of times.

Sarah You know what the trouble is...

Ring Tell me.

Sarah This village don't exist.

Ring Doesn't exist!

Sarah That's according to the council. They took all the signs away years ago.

Ring Good heavens...why ever would they do that?

Sarah 'Cos the council's got no brains...and 'cos no one lives here 'cept me...and Cynthia.

Ring Well that explains the travelling problems....but what happened to the place. Was there *ever* a thriving community here at one time.

Sarah Oh definitely...but this manor was one of only thirty two properties in the small village of Hogsday....that's what it was called up to the start of the second World War.

Ring Really...I've never even heard of Hogsday before. It's certainly not part of your current address.

Sarah Oh no, Hogsday disappeared from the time it was commandeered for "Army games" ...you know....practises for coastal landings and for shelling the beaches and so forth. The people were all ordered to leave...no choice.

Ring Weren't the villagers allowed to return after the war?

Sarah No...They were promised they could...but when it came down to it, the War Office demanded that the land should be retained for army manoeuvres.

Ring Didn't the people complain?

Sarah Yeah...there were a few complaints...but it didn't last long...After six years of war, most of the

villagers had already moved away permanently anyway. There was only a few who wanted to return.

Ring Well I never...but the army doesn't still use this land, surely.

Sarah Ruddy 'ope not. We wouldn't want a tank coming through the hedge while we're having tea on the lawn.

Ring All I had to go on was the map sent to me by the family...showing all the twists and turns from the nearest town back there in Fowey. It stated that your address is...Branscombe Manor , Fowey ... but Fowey's twenty five miles back.

Sarah Yeah, we're a bit off the track...We aint got no post code...so a sat nav's no use...no phone, no electricity or gas...and we aint seen a postman round here since the army came. We've just got a generator to give us heat and light...and that's about it.

- Ring Sounds pretty cheerless to me. Can't you get any services laid on?
- Sarah Not really... We were the only owner occupants at the time of the take over...and we were the only family to receive any compensation....so the council owes us nothing. Eventually, they said we could return here at our own risk. It was the only habitable property...all the others have had their roofs demolished.
- Ring I don't think I'd want to return under those conditions...what keeps you here?
- Sarah Well...it's quiet.
- Ring I'd bet it is.
- Sarah And we don't have many problems from the neighbours.
- Ring What neighbours? There's no sign of habitation for miles.... unless you count the seagulls.

Sarah We like it quiet. I couldn't stand life in the city....anyway, I'm surprised you haven't heard about us. Your late great uncle, Oliver Ring was here all the time, as he had dealings with the family.

Ring No...all I know, is I've got to administer these proceedings tonight...and given the details I've yet to impart, I'm certainly not looking forward to the occasion.

(There is a knock at the door. Sarah goes to answer it)

Sarah Excuse me. That's either Bella's four sisters...or Mr Bear.

(She opens the door to the four sisters; Queenie, Pearl, Sonia and Freda)

Sarah (Upon seeing the four ladies' bedraggled appearance) Oh my goodness,

(They tumble indoors...all jabbering away about their adventurous journey)

Queenie What a night! ...There's floods everywhere.

Pearl The road's almost washed away at Haydon's Point.

Sonia I never thought we were going to make it.

Freda I just kept driving...but it's dangerous. We nearly 'had it' a couple of times. I thought that yellow car was going to hit us back at the Point.

Sonia I had my eyes shut most of the time.

Pearl The roads....they're all single tracks with massive potholes in them.

Freda You had to drive round the holes...and then make sure you weren't driving over a sheer drop. I've never experienced anything like it.

Sarah You were lucky...Oh, I'm Sarah by the way...No, the road's really unsuitable for motors, even in broad daylight.

Queenie You should have warned us before, Sarah. I don't want to go through another journey like that...ever again. This was so much different before the war.

Sarah Yeah , things round here have got a nasty 'abit of changing after sixty years or so.

Queenie I thought we were all going to plunge to our doom.

Sarah Well...you made it. That's the important thing. Leave your coats on the chair and I'll get Cynthia to put them downstairs for you.

Queenie We are of course, the four younger sisters of Bella....I'm Queenie...and this is Freda...she drove us here tonight...Bravo Freda.

Freda How do you do.

Sarah Hello.

Queenie This is Pearl.

Pearl Good evening.

Sarah Hello.

Queenie And this is my sister, Sonia.

Sonia Pleased to meet you.

Sarah Hello.

(The group take off their wet clothes and leave them draped over an easy chair as Sarah directs them to chairs for them to sit in)

Sarah Lovely...right, you Queenie and Sonia can sit over the far side...and Pearl and Freda can sit next to Mr Ring here. Everybody.... Mr Ring is here only for the reading of Aunt Isobel's will and then he'll be leaving later tonight.

Ring Er...yes...Good evening everybody...erm...(to Sarah) The only thing is, I'm beginning to have doubts about using that road again tonight. I thought I might just sleep in the car until the morning.

Sarah Nonsense, Mr Ring... We can easily put you up... one more tonight ain't gonna make any difference.

Ring Most kind of you Miss Dolly. I certainly wouldn't want to put you out.

Sarah It's better you stay, Mr Ring. I wouldn't want to be responsible for you out there in the cold... or if you got tempted to drive tonight and ended up in the river... and with that Hogsday flooding up, you could've been driving out with the tide tonight.

(Cynthia enters)

Cynthia Excuse me, Mr Ring... but could you tell me what time you'll be reading Miss Isabel's will tonight?

Ring (Looks at his watch) I'd say about nine o'clock... if that's all right with the rest of you. I notice, we're still one short... so to give me some respite from that rather arduous trek here... and also, to allow our last guest time to recover, we'll set it for then... rather than earlier.

Freda That sounds fine by me, Mr Ring...I'm sure Queenie's got a few of her little pastimes with her to keep us all amused till then.

Sarah Cynthia, Mr Ring's gonna be staying here tonight.

Cynthia O.K. Well, if you're ready, I've got all of your rooms prepared for you. If you'd like to freshen up after your journey, I could show you there now...and you can have tea in your rooms. I've just made a pot....Oh.. I'll put you in the attic, Mr Ring. I hope you don't mind. It's a little bit cluttered I'm afraid. All Miss Isabel's old toys are still up there.

Ring I'm lucky to have a dry place to go to...I thank your for your accommodating gesture. The attic'll be fine for me.

Sonia Come on, we'll take our coats with us. We'll leave our bags in the car till later.

(Cynthia leads the way as the four sisters and Mr Ring exit. They each collect their own coats from the back of the chair, before departing)

(There is a loud, frantic banging on the door. Sarah goes to open it...to find a wet and bedraggled Teddy standing there)

Sarah My word....You look like a drowned rat. Come in for goodness sake. You should have come earlier while it was still light.

Teddy That was absolutely horrendous! The road's in flood back there. I had to take a chance because there's nowhere on that single track you can turn the car round. I just ploughed on through the water... I had to.

Sarah Sounds like you were lucky.

Teddy Yes, It was over a foot deep. I couldn't see where the road started and the river began...I'll tell you ...It was bloody frightening.

Sarah Well, it's good to see you, anyway...Let's take your coat.

Teddy Thank you...by the way, my name's Teddy.

Sarah Yes, I know....you're the last person to arrive. My name's Sarah...but a lot of people call me Dolly...but only 'cos they get confused...that's 'cos Dolly's me second name.

Teddy I see...right then...Sarah...so I'm sorry if I'm late...I nearly didn't start out...because I've really no idea what this is all about. This letter (he brandishes it) says I'm a named beneficiary in a legacy left by a person that I've never even heard of.

Sarah But that person must know you.

Teddy If she does...or *did* know me, I haven't the faintest idea from where or when.

Sarah Sounds interesting.

Teddy Yes, it's a mystery....but I nearly threw the letter away.

Sarah What made you travel all this way, then.

Teddy Natural curiosity, I suppose...or natural greed maybe. Anyway...I've got nothing to lose. I did suspect this could be a scam...I mean, there wasn't even a phone number I could check with.

Sarah I'm sure it's all O.K.

Teddy I do hope so...but if someone here tells me I've won a free holiday in Portugal...and it'll only cost me three grand to get it...then I'll be off like a ruddy shot.

Sarah I don't think it's anything like that. Take a seat in there while I put your coat away.

(Sarah exits...leaving Teddy alone. He walks over to the settee, tentatively prods the seat before sitting down. After a couple of seconds Cynthia breezes in)

Cynthia Hello there....You must be Teddy.

Teddy Good evening. What's your name?

Cynthia Cynthia...

Teddy So what's the set up here? I've been asked to attend...but I haven't a clue what it's all about and I know nothing about you.

Cynthia There's only me and Sarah in the house these days, so really, we just share the household duties between us but I originally came here when the army let us reclaim the old family home. In those days, I'd acted as Miss White's maid.

Teddy Do *you* know why I'm here?

Cynthia Only from what you've told me. Mr Ring, the solicitor is here. I expect he'll explain it all when he reads the will at nine o'clock.

Teddy How many others are here?

Cynthia Well there's the four elderly sisters of Bella. They're a bit snobby but not very bright...and that's all really...except for me and Sarah...and Mr Ring of course. With you, there'll be eight of us altogether.

Teddy I may find that rather daunting.

Cynthia You'll be fine.

Teddy I'm afraid I have a problem dealing with these sort of situations. It's funny... but nerves sometimes get the better of me.

Cynthia Nonsense...just be yourself.

Teddy Be myself.....mmmm... the trouble is, by nature I'm a shallow, affected and arrogant little bastard who cares little for anyone but myself...so actually 'being myself' isn't exactly going to win people over....but I'll certainly give it a try, though How d'y' think I'll register with those cultured ladies.

Cynthia I don't really believe that's how you see yourself.

Teddy It's true. I'm just being honest.

Cynthia I definitely wouldn't think so.

Teddy Well, if you think I look respectable, I'll try to handle it. My self-consciousness is merely the product of a natural inborn conceit
....wouldn't you agree?

Cynthia I don't really follow you, sir...but anyway, you relax.

Teddy So who exactly is Miss Isabel White then? All I know is that she's recently died and she's left a will...and glory be...I'm in it. (rubs his hands)

Cynthia Miss White...we always called her Bella...lived and died in this house. She had very bad health problems as a child...sort of.... learning difficulties. She was never properly diagnosed...and the family were pretty ignorant about those problems...so Bella was neglected...and you could say, virtually.... left to rot.

(Sonia and Pearl enter...and catch the last sentence by Cynthia)

Teddy So Bella had a solitary life?

Pearl That's nonsense ...She loved her room in the attic with all her toys around her...and when she wanted food or anything, she had a bell in there that she'd ring... and then someone would always take her something.

Teddy Did you play with her?

Sonia Oh no...she was always a bit doolarly....wasn't she Pearl?

Pearl She was definitely deranged, I'd say. She'd never leave her room....

Sonia Well, she wasn't allowed to.

Pearl No but she couldn't play with us, really...could she?

Sonia She was all arms and legs (mimes a physically disorientated person).

Teddy So she was made to stay in a lonely room at the top
 of the house