Written by David Schmidt

Adapted from the works of Edgar Allen Poe

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CAST

Baroness Ritzner Von Jung

LIGIEA

Dr. Lucinda Lazarus

Lady Rowena

Ligiea

Henry Brighton

MORELLA

Jonas Caste

Eric Locke

Morella

Father Michael

Young Morella

THE TELL-TALE HEART

Henrietta (Hetty) Von Hesslar

Rachel

Roger

ACT ONE

LIGIEA

SCENE ONE

SETTING: UC an archway leads on and off stage. The walls are made of gray stones. DL is a desk. UR is a large bed. Next to the bed is a night stand with a wine cruet and a goblet upon it. A spot picks up VON JUNG as she enters and crosses to Down Center.)

VON JUNG:

Good Evening and welcome to the Golden Raven Social Club. Allow me to introduce myself; I am the Baroness Ritzner Von Jung. I am Grand Master of the Golden Raven Society. The Society was established by my dear friend Edgar Allen Poe as a place for persons, such as himself, with a fascination for the occult and the supernatural to come together and share in their passions on the subject. It wasn't long, however, when the visitors to the club were not only scholars and fellow enthusiasts but Mystics and Mediums, Psychics and Cabalists, Diabolists and Witch Hunters. It was their tales that fueled Edgar's imagination and presented him with the materials for his dark, haunting tales. Of course in the writing of these dark tales Edgar had an obligation to protect the identities of the clubs members. So the stories, while similar in their contexts when first told to Edgar, were reworked to keep the tellers identity secret. But tonight three of the societies members will share with you their stories as they were first told to Edgar.(As she steps out of the spot light the lights come up on the audience. VON JUNG crosses to DR. LAZARUS who is seated in the audience)

VON JUNG:

We begin with the strange affair of Ligiea. It is a haunting tale of love, death and reincarnation. Meet Dr. Lucinda Lazarus, physical medium. When Lucy was a child she had a near death experience. When she returned from the land of the dead she discovered she could see and speak to the dead and they talked back. Now she uses her ability to bring peace to the living and the dead.

LUCINDA:

(Getting up and moving to Center Stage) As the Baroness has told you my name is Dr. Lucinda Lazarus. I am not a medical doctor. Rather I am a doctor of the Metaphysical. I talk to the dead and they talk back. You see Metaphysics is the study of a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses. It is the study of the supernatural. In this I am more an observer than a participant. I have witnessed many frightening things. Survived horrors no other person has. But nothing unsettled me more than the affair of Ligiea. Even now as I begin to relate this tale to you it still sends chills down my spine. It all began when I received an urgent missive from my cousin Henry Brighton requesting my help. Rowena, his wife, it seems was being haunted....(On this final line the lights go out and then come up dimly lighting the stage. LADY ROWENA is in the bed. Sitting on the bed is LIGIEA. Her face is pale, her eyes sunken. As LADY ROWENA begins to stir LIGIEA caresses her hair.)

ROWENA: (Weakly) Henry...... (When she doesn't get an answer she calls out louder) Henry! LIGIEA: (Stroking ROWENA'S hair) Shhh........... ROWENA: (Suddenly comes awake. She bolts up in bed and moves away from LIGIEA) Where's Henry!?

LIGIEA:

He's with Dr. Lazarus.

ROWENA:

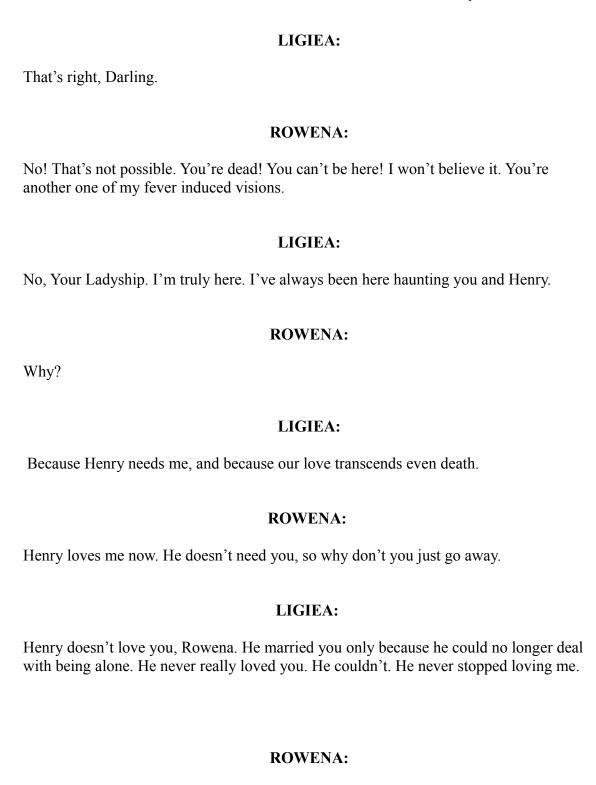
Who are you? How did you get in here?

LIGIEA:

You know who I am, Lady Rowena. Henry has spoken about me often enough.

ROWENA:

Ligiea!



How could Henry love an evil, spiteful woman such as you; he married me so he could

finally be rid of the memories of you.

LIGIEA:

You truly are naïve, Rowena. You put on a good front, but in truth you're afraid of Henry – of his temper – of his fierce moodiness – I have watched as you've shunned Henry, loving him little. Now I am here to reclaim what is mine.

ROWENA:
I don't understand. How is that even possible?
LIGIEA:
It's already started.
ROWENA:
What has? What has already started?
LIGIEA:
The transition.
ROWENA:
(Frightened) what transition? What are you talking about?
LIGIEA:
It's nothing for you to worry about. You'll already be dead.
ROWENA:
(Angry) Get out! (Shouting) Get out of here! (HENRY enters as ROWENA screams.

HENRY:

LIGIEA moves into the shadows. LUCINDA follows HENRY in.)

(Rushing to his wife) Rowena what is it? Are you all right?

ROWENA:
(Hysterical) she's here!
HENRY:
Whose here? Who are you talking about?
ROWENA:
Ligiea.
HENRY:
(Angered.) Shakes ROWENA) Don't say that! You have no right to speak her name. She's dead!
ROWENA:
Henry, please, you're hurting me.
HENRY:
(To LUCINDA) Lucy, would you bring me a goblet of wine from the night stand.
LUCINDA:
Wine?
HENRY:
It's a light wine prescribed by her Physician.

LUCINDA:

I'll get it. (LUCINDA crosses to the night stand, pours wine into the goblet and hands the goblet to HENRY)

HENRY:

(Taking the goblet from LUCINDA and handing it to ROWENA) Here, drink this. It'll help you relax.

ROWENA:

(Taking the wine) I'm not crazy, Henry, I know what I saw.

HENRY:

I believe you saw something, Rowena. But it wasn't a ghost. It wasn't Ligiea.

LUCINDA:

What did the apparition look like?

HENRY:

Don't encourage her, Lucinda. She needs her rest.

ROWENA:

I want to tell her. I'm not crazy, Henry, nor am I delusional. I know what I saw. Ligiea was here.

LUCINDA:

Tell us what you saw, Rowena. Tell me what this shade looked like.

ROWENA:

In stature she was tall, with naturally curling tresses.

HENRY:
That's enough!
LUCINDA:
Go on, Rowena, what else do you remember about the apparition?
ROWENA:
Her eyes.
HENRY:
Stop this. Stop talking about her. She's dead.
LUCINDA:
What about her eyes?
ROWENA:
They were far larger than the ordinary human. They were fuller too.
HENRY:
This is madness, Lucinda. I want to hear no more about this ghost. It wasn't Ligiea. Ligiea is dead. (<i>To ROWENA</i>) Now drink your wine and climb back into bed. You need your rest.
ROWENA:
But Henry
HENRY:

I said that's enough, and that's the end of it.

ROWENA:

Alright, Henry. (She drinks from the goblet and gets back into bed. Once she is settled back in bed HENRY and LUCINDA cross down to the sofa)

LUCINDA:

You were rather harsh with her, Henry. She obviously saw something or someone to be able to give such a detailed description. Had you ever told her what Ligiea looked like? Shown her a picture?

HENRY:

No.

LUCINDA:

Judging, then, by your reaction to Rowena's description about the ghost she claimed to see I'd say she described Ligiea perfectly.

HENRY:

I don't want to talk about it.

LUCINDA:

Why did you ask to see me tonight, Henry? I'm sure it wasn't to make a social call.

HENRY:

No, you're right. This is not the first time Rowena has had these night terrors. She has spoken to me before about sounds which she had heard, but that I had not. Of motions she had seen but that I had not seen. I told her it was the wind rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries. But no matter how I tried to reassure her I could see it was obvious she was terrified of something.

LUCINDA:

Then why	is it so	hard for vo	u to believe	she may	have seen l	Ligiea's ghost?
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HENRY:

Ligiea is dead! Her body cold in the ground. I do not believe in ghosts, Lucinda, that's your department. I asked you here *initially* to alleviate any fears Rowena may have not fuel them

LUCINDA:

Initially? Then, something else has occurred since you sent for me?

HENRY:

Yes, this time to me.

LUCINDA:

What happened?

HENRY:

Two circumstances of a strange nature. The first occurred a few nights ago. I was getting Rowena some wine when I felt some palpable, although invisible, object lightly pass by me. Then I saw there, on the carpet, a faint, indefinite angelic shadow. But I myself had had a little too much to drink that night and heeded those things but little, and never spoke to Rowena about them.

LUCINDA:

And the second incident?

HENRY:

Occurred last night. This one more unnerving than the first.

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Go on.

HENRY:

Again I was getting some wine for Rowena. She had had another of her fainting spells. I poured out a goblet full of wine, which I then held to her lips. She had partially recovered by now and she took the goblet from me. It was then I became distinctly aware of a gentle foot fall upon the carpet near the couch. But there was no one there. The next moment, as Rowena was in the act of drinking the wine I saw fall within the goblet, out of thin air, three or four large drops of a brilliant ruby colored liquid. But before I could say anything she drank the wine.

LUCINDA:

Did you tell her what you saw?

HENRY:

To what point? I chalked it up to the tricks of a tired mind. I haven't slept in days.

LUCINDA:

You still should have said something to her.

HENRY:

Maybe, or maybe her paranoia has me jumping at shadows, seeing things that aren't really there. (Suddenly there is a gasp from ROWENA and she sits up in bed having hard time breathing.)

ROWENA:

(Gasping) Henry... Henry I can't can't breathe.

HENRY:

(Hurrying to her bed side) Lucinda, help me!

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ACT TWO

MORELLA

The setting for MORELLA is a split set. The right side of the stage is The Church of The Holy Ghost. CR is a wooden pew. Down stage right is a baptismal font. The left side of the stage is the living room of the Locke home. CL is a sofa; right of the sofa is an overstuffed chair. Like the setting for LIGIEA a single arch leads on and off stage. The walls are of gray stone. As the lights come up VON JUNG enters from the archway and crosses down to center stage.

VON JUNG:

The idea of what happens to our identity, our soul, after we die has long fascinated Edgar. Think about it. If our identity survived death it could exist outside the human body and return to a new body. So intrigued by this idea Edgar crafted the tale of Morella after visiting with a dark, brooding man named Jonas Caste. What follows is a dark, haunting tale of sorrow and possession and it begins in The Church of the Holy Ghost. (*The lights go down and when they come up again it is only the RIGHT side of the stage that is lit. JONAS wearing a broad brimmed hat and a long black coat sits in the pew. In his hand is a skull headed cane. ERIC LOCKE kneels next to the prone form of YOUNG MORELLA.*)

	ERIC:
She's dead.	
	JONAS:
She is free.	
	ERIC:
You killed her!	
	JONAS:

I saved her. The child's death is on your head. I warned you what would happen, but you chose to ignore my warnings. I told you you were dealing with forces you could not

possibly understand, but you gave the child her mother's name after I specifically told you not to. The blame for what happened here is squarely on your shoulders

ERIC:
How did it all come to this?
JONAS:
You tell me.
ERIC:
Where do I begin?
JONAS:
At the beginning, When did you first meet Morella?
ERIC:
We met purely by chance.
JONAS:
Where Morella is concerned nothing is left to chance. She's too calculating for that. Go on.
ERIC:
When first I laid eyes on her I burned with a fire I had never known before. We met and fate bound us together at the altar. I was happy. I thought she was to.
(The lights fade on the church and come up on the living room of the LOCKES. ERIC crosses into the scene and MORELLA enters from the archway)

MORELLA:

Here you are. I wondered where you had gotten to.		
ERIC:		
I just needed time to myself.		
MORELLA:		
(Crossing to ERIC and embracing him) Aren't you happy?		
ERIC:		
I couldn't be happier. I was just thinking		
MORELLA:		
What? What were you thinking?		
ERIC:		
How is it possible that I ended up with the most beautiful girl in the world.		
MORELLA:		
You really think I'm beautiful?		
ERIC:		
I do. There is no one I would rather share my life with.		
MODELLA.		
MORELLA:		
Good, because there is so much I want to share with you too.		
ERIC:		

I am eager to learn all you wish to teach me. (They kiss as the lights fade to black).

(ERIC crosses back to stage right as the lights come up once more upon the church. JONAS still sits in the pew and YOUNG MORELLA lies quietly upon the floor)

ERIC:

Morella's knowledge, I came to learn, was profound. The powers of her mind enormous.

JONAS:

She has had several lifetimes to learn all the knowledge she had acquired.

ERIC:

Be that as it may, I was enamored with the scope of all that she knew and I soon became her pupil.

(Once more the lights fade from the church and come up once more on the LOCKE'S living room. MORELLA enters with a large book and crosses to the sofa. ERIC enters and joins her on the sofa).

MORELLA:

Tell me, my love, what do you know about mysticism?

ERIC:

Not much I am afraid. Like most people I associate it with the occult, magic.

MORELLA:

Magic! You need to broaden your mind, My love. Everyone knows magic isn't real.

ERIC:

Then enlighten me, my love. What is mysticism?

MORELLA:

Mysticism, My Dearest, can be found in all cultures and all religions of the world. It is an individual spiritual encounter that conveys a sense everything is somehow connected. The mystic is someone who not simply knows about, but is what he or she experiences. There are a great many mystical writings in German literature that explain these ideals. One writer even compared Mysticism to the feeling of being in love.

ERIC:

(Taking MORELLA'S hand) That's a feeling I know well.

(The lights fade once again and come up on the church and ERIC crosses back into the church)

ERIC:

At the time I knew not why these ancient, forbidden texts were her favorite but it wasn't long and they soon became a favorite of mine as well.

JONAS:

When did everything start to change?

ERIC:

I'm not sure, but at some point I abandoned myself to the guidance of my wife and entered into the intricacies of her studies. Then one night, while reading over the forbidden pages of some mystical texts I felt a dark spirit build within me.

JONAS:

How so?

ERIC:

Morella would place a cold hand upon my own and draw forth from the ashes of a dead philosophy some low, singular words whose strange meanings burned into my memory

and then hour after hour I lingered by her side and dwelled upon the music of her voice. At length, however, the melody became tainted with terror and a shadow fell upon my soul. I grew pale and shuddered inwardly at those too unearthly tones and the most beautiful became the most hideous.

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That's how she fed. She used the arcane language of the texts to enthrall you then she
would feed off the energy of your psyche. When she had her fill she would release you.
Once freed you experienced the full effect of her attack, suffering the mental trauma
inflicted upon your psyche, your life force. That's how a Siphon works.

ERIC:
A Siphon?
JONAS:
A demon that feeds on psychic energy, a person's life force, what happened next?
ERIC:
Then you came into our home.
(The lights fade on the church and come up again on the living room of the LOCKE'S. As the lights come up ERIC sits in the over- stuffed chair reading a book. From the archway comes JONAS)
JONAS:
Where is she?
ERIC:
Who are you?
JONAS:

It doesn't matter who I am. Where is sh	e?
	ERIC:
Who are you looking for?	
	JONAS:
Morella, is she here?	
	ERIC:
What do you want with my wife?	
	JONAS:
(Appalled) Your wife?!	
	ERIC:
You make it sound like it's a bad thing.	
	JONAS:
In this case it is.	
WIL O	ERIC:
Why?	JONAS:
Because Morella is not what she appear	
	ERIC:

The Dark Chronicles of the Golden Raven Society
I don't understand.
JONAS:
I don't expect you do and I do not have time to explain. Suffice it to say that as long as you stay with her you're in danger.
ERIC:
What kind of danger? (From the archway MORELLA enters.)
MORELLA:
Yes, what kind of danger?
JONAS:
Hello, Morella!
MORELLA:
Hello, Jonas.
ERIC:
You two know each other?
MORELLA:
We go back a long ways don't we, Jonas?

JONAS:

ERIC:

Too long.

Who is he?
MORELLA:
Didn't he tell you? He's Jonas Caste.
ERIC:
The Demon Hunter?
MORELLA:
More like the Devil's soul collector. He hunts down souls who have escaped from Hell and sends them back.
ERIC:
Why is he here?
MORELLA:
He's here for me, Love. He's come to take me away.
ERIC:
(Confronting JONAS) You cannot have her. She's my wife. If you want her you'll have to go through me.

MORELLA:

That won't be necessary, My Love. He cannot harm me while I am in this vessel. He will not slay an innocent to get what hides inside it.

JONAS:

(*Crosses to MORELLA and touches her with his cane.*) It is true I cannot touch you as long as the vessel you hide in lives. But in nine months' time this vessel you are hiding in will die, and when that happens I will be back to collect your foul soul.

	ERIC:
What's he talking about? Are you sick?	

JONAS:

Not yet, but she soon will be.

MORELLA:

(Frightened) What have you done?

JONAS:

I have merely awoken a dormant cell in that body you hide in. It will spread a wasting disease through your body and there is nothing you can do to prevent it from happening. (Touching ERIC with his cane.) When that happens you will come to learn how evil she really is. (JONAS turns and starts to exit).

MORELLA:

I have escaped your curses before. Old Man, and I will find a way to escape this one as well.

(JONAS exits. As he does the lights fade on the living room of the LOCKE's and come up once more on the church. ERIC and JONAS once more take up their positions, one on the pew the other by the child.)

ERIC:

True to your words the time arrived when the mystery of my wife's manner oppressed me as a spell. I could no longer bear the touch of her hand or the low tone of her musical language, nor the luster of her melancholy eyes. In time the wasting disease fell upon her, she grew gaunt, and the veins in her forehead became prominent. My countenance waivered from pity to contempt as I looked into the dark pools of her eyes and saw the truth. I longed then for the moment of Morella's death. Then one autumn evening Morella called me to her bedside.

(Once again the lights go down on the church and come up on MORELLA'S bedroom. MORELLA lies on the sofa now serving as her bed ERIC enters and sits next to her)
MORELLA:
My time is almost ended, My Love.
ERIC:
I wish that it were not so, Morella.
MORELLA:
I am dying, yet shall I live. The days are gone when you had loved me- but I who in life you came to abhor in death you will come to adore.
ERIC:
I loved you, how could you say otherwise?
MORELLA:
Once, maybe. But these past months you have withdrawn from me. The love you once held for me has turned to contempt.
ERIC:
That's not true.
MORELLA:
Yes it is! I repeat, I am dying. But within me is a pledge of what we once meant to each

Yes other. A child. Our child. When my spirit departs the child shall live. But with my last dying breath I place a curse upon your head. For you the days that follow will be filled with sorrow. The hours of your happiness are over and never again shall you know joy. You shall bear your sorrow like a shroud upon the Earth.

(The lights fade on the bedroom and single spot is brought up on ERIC)

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ACT THREE

THE TELL-TALE HEART

SCENE ONE

VON JUNG:

The power of the mind had always fascinated Edgar. In several of his stories he wrote about the powers of mystification and mesmerism. A student of the works of Anton Mesmer, Edgar was fascinated with the subject of hypnotism. The ability to alter a person's actions with just a thought intrigued him. It was for this reason I introduced him to a dear colleague of mine Henrietta Von Hesslar. Hetty is an empath, a person who can physically tune into the emotional experiences of a person place or animal. She has often helped the police expose a heinous criminal using Clairempathy, the ability to feel within oneself the attitude, emotion, or ailment of another person or entity. It was this ability that helped her uncover the truth about a heinous act of violence perpetrated by the subject of our next tale titled "The Tell-Tale Heart."

(The lights come up upon the living room in Von Hesslar's home. As the lights come up HETTY and RACHEL enter from Left)

HETTY:	
My dear, Rachel, it's good to see you. How have you been?	
RACHEL:	
Fine.	
HETTY:	
And your uncle?	

RACHEL:

I'm not sure.
HETTY:
Has something happened to him?
RACHEL:
I'm not sure about that either.
HETTY:
What's going on, Rachel? I get the sense you're distressed about something.
RACHEL:
I think something evil has been done to the old man and I think Roger has something to do with it.
HETTY:
(Directing Rachel to the sofa) Please sit.
DACHEL.
RACHEL:
(Crossing to the sofa and sitting down) Thank you.
HETTY:
(Also sitting on the sofa) Now tell me, what makes you think something has happened to the old man and that your cousin Roger has anything to do with it?
RACHEL:
Because Roger refuses to let me see him. Always before when I have gone to visit

him Roger has	let me in.	But today	when I	went to	visit him	Roger	barred	my	way,	said
uncle was sick	and did n	ot want to	receive	visitors.						

unicie was siek and that want to receive visitors.
HETTY:
Is that unusual?
RACHEL:
Always before, even if the old man were sick, he always had time for me. He told me once I reminded him of my mother, his sister, whom he loved very much. He would never have allowed Roger to turn me away. I'm afraid Roger has visited some evil upon the old man.
HETTY:
(Leaning back against the sofa) What makes you believe that?
RACHEL:
(<i>Rising off the sofa</i>) Intuition I suppose. When Roger met me at the door he was nervous. Very nervous. Like someone who got caught doing something he shouldn't have been doing. You know what I mean?
HETTY:
I do, yes.
RACHEL:
That's when I knew something terrible had happened.

HETTY:

But why would Roger want to hurt the old man? He loved him.

RACHEL:
It was not the old man Roger hated - But his eye.
HETTY:
His eye?
RACHEL:
You know the one I mean.
HETTY:
Yes I do the pale blue one with the film over it.
RACHEL:
Roger said it looked like the eye of a vulture. He had become obsessed with it. Claimed every time the old man looked at him with that eye his blood ran cold. It was slowly driving Roger mad to the point where he started to talk to himself. During one of these bouts of madness I heard him say the old man had to go so he could be free of the eye.
HETTY:
And you think Roger might have cracked and carried out that threat?
RACHEL:
I don't think it, Hetty, I know it.
HETTY:
What do you want me to do?

RACHEL:

Find out if Roger really did do something to the old man.

HETTY:

And if he did?

RACHEL:

Put him in an institution before he brings harm to someone else. Maybe even me.

HETTY:

(Getting off the sofa and crossing to Rachel) I'll do what I can, Rachel. I loved the old man too. (The lights fade to black)

SCENE TWO

(The lights come up on a dark dreary living room. The stage is lit in blue and white light

giving the room a ghostly, eerie feeling. From Right come HETTY and ROGER)

ROGER:
As you can see, Hetty, he isn't here. He's gone into the country for a few days just like I said.
HETTY:
I find that peculiar considering earlier today you turned Rachel away because the old man was sick. Now you say he's gone into the country?
ROGER:
What can I tell you, he got better.
HETTY:
Rachel thinks otherwise.
ROGER:
Does she? What did she tell you?
HETTY:
She told me when you turned her away you seemed very nervous about something.
ROGER:
Like what?
HETTY:

Like someone who got caught doing something they shouldn't have been doing.

ROGER:

She thinks I did something to the old man.
HETTY:
Why do you think that?
ROGER:
What other reason could there be for your sudden, unannounced visit. You think she might be right.
HETTY:
I know she is
ROGER:
I forget, you're a mind reader.
НЕТТҮ:
I'm not a mind reader, Roger, I'm an Empath, I read Emotions and yours are conflicted between guilt, a sense of elation and something else, fear. It's the fear that tells me you're hiding something.
ROGER:
Nice try, Hetty, but I am wise to your mind tricks.

HETTY:

Really? Then why, since I have come into the room, has your heart beat accelerated and your breathing shallower than normal? Aside from those two things you're sweating. All signs pointing to the fact that you are indeed nervous about something. Then there's this

room.

ROGER:

The room? Aren't you reaching a little bit?

HETTY:

Places, like people, Roger, can also hold residual emotions and this room is giving off some strong, negative emotions. Something bad happened in this room I can feel it, something recent. What happened in here, Roger?

ROGER:

How should I know?

HETTY:

You can't lie to me, Roger. I feel your guilt. What did you do?

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