

THE HEIRS

By Jean Blasiar

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ACT I

TIME: January, 1986

PLACE: Greystone Castle
outside London

SETTING STAGE RIGHT: a room with a very high ceiling and one large window, undraped. An open casket with the body of MARGARET HUBBARD at rest, a huge spray of flowers at her feet. Candles light the bier, a spotlight on the casket.

Outside a terrible thunderstorm is in progress, flashing lights and loud claps of thunder. The castle is temporarily cut off from the outside world by a major thunderstorm.

The SERVANTS of the castle enter the spotlight from a dark CENTER STAGE, one by one. Each is grief stricken, dabbing at his or her eyes upon passing the casket. Slow procession of people, in order:

MISS CHESHIRE: Margaret Hubbard's personal maid
and secretary.

MRS. PIMM: cook, in white uniform and apron,
wiping her eyes with a corner of the
apron.

MR. PIMM: butler, in black tie and tails.

GEORGE: chauffeur, in livery.

MR. OTTO: the Hubbard's Solicitor, in rumpled
tweed suit and bow tie.

JEREMY HUBBARD: Margaret's husband, in dressing
jacket and ascot.

The last of the mourners, Margaret's husband, Jeremy,
is bent over his wife's bier for 30 seconds, while
the others stand around dabbing at their eyes and
sighing.

After a respectable length of time, Mr. Otto, the
Solicitor, comes up to Jeremy and gently announces
to him and to the others:

MR. OTTO

Jeremy...

(Mr. Otto puts a hand on Jeremy's shoulder.)

It was Margaret's last wish that her Will be read as soon
as possible after her death.

(Jeremy and the others make one long, very loud
blow into their handkerchiefs, tuck their handkerchiefs
into their cuffs, stiffly erect themselves and file out,
STAGE LEFT. Stoic, no nonsense Englishmen everyone.
The grieving is over - on with the reading of the Will.)
(The procession of mourners enters a door, STAGE CENTER,
leading into a library, STAGE LEFT. A light goes on
in the room as Miss Cheshire, who is first, opens the
door. Mr. Otto sits behind a desk; the others take
a chair facing Mr. Otto. All are situated so they can
be seen by the audience.)

MR. OTTO

(In typical "legalese" tone and aloofness, as though he did not know the deceased)

"I, Margaret Hubbard, do aver this day in January, nineteen hundred and eighty six, that all former Wills written by my hand, including the Will that my husband, Jeremy, and I wrote together in November, nineteen hundred and eighty five, are here and forever null and void."

(Jeremy stiffens in his chair and folds his arms hostilely)

MR. OTTO (CONT'D)

"I, Margaret Hubbard, being of sound mind...

(Jeremy coughs disdainfully, doubtingly now that he has been made aware of a new Will by his deceased wife)

..do hereby bequeath the following:
To Miss Cheshire, my personal maid and secretary of some eighteen years, the sum of ten thousand pounds and my emerald necklace which she has long admired and frequently borrowed without my consent."

MISS CHESHIRE

(Shrinks in her chair in embarrassment, but manages to say..)

A very generous lady.

MR. OTTO

"To Mrs. Pimm, my cook, and to her husband, Noel Pimm, my faithful butler, I bequeath the sum of eight thousand pounds each, the remaining cases of Chateau V'quem.. if there are any bottles left, Mr. Pimm."

(Mr. Otto looks over his glasses at Mr. Pimm, chastisingly. Mr. Pimm cowers in embarrassment.)

MR. OTTO (CONT'D)

"And to Mrs. Pimm, my mother's set of antique Beleek china, of which there are probably only a few pieces remaining, those Mrs. Pimm has not yet thrown at her husband."

(Mrs. Pimm stiffens, and blows ner nose quite loudly)

MRS. PIMM

(In thick cockney accent)

Lovely.. just lovely.

MR. PIMM

(Not too sincerely)

Yes. Lovely.

MR. OTTO

"And to George, my trustworthy chauffeur.. the Rolls."

(Jeremy looks around sharply at the chauffeur,
looks him up and down and frowns)

MR. OTTO (CONTINUING)

"Perhaps he will take better care of it now that it is his."

(Mr. Otto looks chastisingly over his glasses at
George, who is obviously uncomfortable as he pulls
at his collar)

MR. OTTO (CONTINUING)

"And lastly to my high-principled, devoted, loyal, honest,
faithful..

(At this word, Miss Cheshire and Mrs. Pimm both raise
their eyes at the ceiling and Jeremy throws them a
scoffing look)

.. reliable..

(Jeremy puffs up once again)

..scrupulous, upright, doting, self-sacrificing..

(Jeremy shrugs modestly)

..foolishly extravagant, love sick..

(Jeremy turns to the audience with a questionable look)

..adoring, martyr of a husband..

(Jeremy nods, agreeing)

MR. OTTO (CONTINUING)

..I leave the remainder of my estate including Greystone Castle and its contents..

(Jeremy smiles and nods)

..our villa in the south of France..

(Jeremy nods faster and smiles bigger)

..my Swiss and American bank accounts..

(Jeremy nods faster and smiles bigger)

..our yacht, Britannia, and last but most importantly to me, I leave the papers for Winston, my prized kitty, to my loving husband, whom I know will pay meticulous attention to his care and comfort."

(Jeremy turns with an evil side look to the audience)

MR. OTTO (CONTINUING)

(Pauses, at which time the inheritors stand and prepare to leave.)

One moment, please.. there are conditions to the Will.

(Everyone sits down suspiciously)

MR. OTTO (CONTINUING)

"To insure that each of you will continue to work together after I am gone..

(They all smile weakly at each other)

..and to insure that Winston will have good care in his waning days.. all of the above will be bequeathed one year after my death.. provided.. that Winston is still alive.

(Mr. Otto looks over his glasses at Jeremy at what he is about to add)

..AND Jeremy has remarried within forty eight hours of my passing and has remained married for one year."

(Mr. Otto looks over his glasses at Jeremy again.)

"If all of these conditions are NOT met, I have asked Mr. Otto to turn over my entire estate, including that which I bequeathed above, to my favorite charity."

JEREMY

(Sits frozen for a few seconds. Then he sits up suddenly and checks his watch.)

But... but... but...??

MR. OTTO

(Removes his glasses and addresses Jeremy.)

You can see why I was so anxious to get on with the reading, Jeremy. I'm afraid that you have very little time left to comply with the conditions of your wife's Will.

JEREMY

(Distraught)

Forty eight hours?! But that's... that's...

MR. OTTO

Yes. That's tomorrow morning, at precisely..

(Checks his watch)

Nine.

(Mr. Otto sits thoughtfully, pondering Jeremy.)

JEREMY

(Stands. In a flustered state he whips around..)

I must get on the phone, immediately!

MR. PIMM

I'm afraid it is out of order, Sir. The storm, you know.

JEREMY

What? Well, my God, man, get it fixed! Call someone!

MR. PIMM

I don't see how I can call someone if the phone is out of order, Sir.

JEREMY

Then hang it all, man, have George drive you into town to see about it.

(Thinking better of that..)

No. George will drive ME into town. I will make my phone call from the station.

(The servants leave the library through the door, STAGE CENTER, into darkness, mumbling to themselves as they go. Mr. Otto gathers his papers. Jeremy leaves and then decides to pay one more last respect to his wife, Margaret. A lone spotlight follows Jeremy. Light goes out in the library. As Jeremy walks STAGE RIGHT, a spotlight comes on again over Margaret's casket.)

JEREMY

(Pacing before Margaret's casket)

I can't thank you enough, Margaret Darling. You thought you had me, didn't you? You had to die in a thunderstorm, didn't you? So typical of you. You knew the lines would be down. They always are. You planned it this way, I have no doubt. But I shall live up to the letter of your damn Will. I will marry Jane, who loves me.

(Sneers at his wife's body)

You didn't know that, did you. You didn't know everything, Margaret. I could marry Marsha. Or Monica. Or Mildred.

(He thinks twice about that.)

No.

(Shakes his head.)

Not Mildred. Penelope... if I have to. And I will wait one entire year, holding that miserable flea bag of a cat on my lap, if I have to... watching him devour every single can of Russian caviar in London, which is all the damned beast will eat.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

(In an aside to the audience..)

.. and one year and one day from now..

(He points to the sky)

..I will throw Winston out the tower window!

(He shakes his head and his finger at the casket)

You haven't gotten even with me, Margaret Hubbard! I have
gotten even with you. I will live happily ever after..
if I have to kill myself and that damned cat doing it!
HAPPILY!

(He starts to leave the room)

EVER AFTER!

(As he exits..)

George! Bring the car. Mr. Pimm! Hold onto that cat until
I return.

(Spotlights out.
Curtain. End of Scene One, Act I.)

ACT I
Scene Two

PLACE:

Greystone Castle
The Drawing Room

TIME:

Midnight, the same evening

Same large, undraped window, STAGE RIGHT.

The casket of Margaret Hubbard has been removed. The stage is one large room; a fireplace CENTER STAGE, rear; large coffee table in front of the fireplace; love seat right of the coffee table; (2) comfortable chairs left of the coffee table; bar with brandys and whiskey bottles and large glasses STAGE RIGHT where casket was; halltree STAGE LEFT; large potted plants around the room; bookshelves with books; magazines scattered on end tables; flowers in a vase on the small round table with skirt to the floor left side of the room near the door leading to the hallway; telephone on the side of the love seat end table facing the audience.

AT RISE, Mr. Otto is slumped in the large comfortable chair nearest the fireplace. There is a fire in the fireplace. OFFSTAGE a clock chimes twelve as Jeremy enters, soaking wet, STAGE LEFT. Mr. Otto rouses as he hears Jeremy enter. Jeremy walks over to stand before the fire. Occasional thunder OFFSTAGE.

MR. OTTO

Jeremy? I was getting worried.

JEREMY

(Observing that Mr. Otto was half asleep when he entered)

I see how worried you were. And dry!

MR. OTTO

Take off those wet things, old man.

(He assists Jeremy with his coat, which Mr.

Otto then hangs on the halltree, STAGE LEFT.)

Were you able to get a call through?

JEREMY

(Backing up to the fire..)

Not one call. FIVE calls.

(He shakes his head forelornly.)

I've about given up.

MR. OTTO

What? Oh, surely. What about Jane? You and she have always had a thing for each other. Everyone knew that.

JEREMY

Everyone except Margaret, of course.

MR. OTTO

Oh, of course.

JEREMY

(Sighs)

Jane married last year and is already being sued for divorce.

(Looks out at the audience and cringes)

A messy divorce, they say. Thank God, I was not on the Continent last year.

MR. OTTO

Too bad about Jane. But there were others. What about Marsha? Or Monica?

JEREMY

Margaret knew this. I am certain of it.

MR. OTTO

Knew what?

JEREMY

That Marsha has also married. And Monica...

(He swoons)

Poor Monica is terminal.

MR. OTTO

(Shocked)

Terminal? You mean she is dying?

JEREMY

Of some horrible thing she picked up in Spain.

MR. OTTO

Spain? Ghastly. I tell you... I always carry bottled water.

JEREMY

(Ignoring Mr. Otto)

I asked Monica's sister how long she had and she said maybe six months.

(He shakes his head)

I can't spend the next year wondering every day if she is going to die on me.

MR. OTTO

(Nods, agreeing)

Bad show, I must say. Anyone else?

JEREMY

There's Penelope. She's cruising the Greek Isles. She couldn't fly here by tomorrow morning even if I could reach her.. which I can't.

(Desperate)

I even phoned up Mildred.

MR. OTTO

Oh, Jeremy, you didn't!

JEREMY

I was that desperate. Out of my head actually.

MR. OTTO

Did you reach her?

JEREMY

Yes. Her mother was on the other phone.

(Shakes his head)

I couldn't, when push came to shove. Not for all the money in the world.

(Looks up to heaven)

Not even for ALMOST all the money in the world.

(Nods.)

It was Mildred that Margaret thought I would have to turn to in desperation. She would have had her revenge if I married Mildred.. and her mother.

MR. OTTO

Not revenge, Jeremy. Margaret only wanted you to be happy.

(He sits on the love seat, faces Jeremy.)

JEREMY

HAPPY! HAPPY? You ARE mad. Margaret's planned this whole thing. Don't you realize that? She knew about Jane and me. She must have. She also knew that Jane was unavailable. Marsha was unavailable. Monica.. oh, poor Monica. Margaret had the audacity to die when there was no one left but Mildred. She wanted me to be miserable for one entire year with Mildred. And then how would I ever get out of it? No. This was Margaret's revenge.

MR. OTTO

Surely, Jeremy, you could face Mildred for one year. One year isn't very long.

JEREMY

(Shaking his head)

Her mother would come to live with us. No... I couldn't face Mildred's mother even one DAY of my life. I will die penniless before I live under the same roof with that woman.

MR. OTTO

(Sighs and stands)

You may very well do just that, old man.

(Looks around the room)

Shame to see this wonderful old castle and all its lovely antiques given to the S.T.C. Society.

JEREMY

The what?

MR. OTTO

The S.T.C. Society. For the preservation of persians.

JEREMY

For the preservation of Iranians?

MR. OTTO

Persian.. cats. Save The Cat Society.

JEREMY

(Loud and sarcastically)

GOOD GOD!

MR. OTTO

Pity.

(He starts to leave)

I would stay around for the wedding tomorrow morning, if there is going to be one.

JEREMY

Stay. Please stay. I may need you in the morning.

MR. OTTO

I'll stay if you want me to.

(Miss Cheshire comes back into the room, knocking first and then immediately entering.)

MISS CHESHIRE

I didn't leave my glasses in here, did I?

MR. OTTO

You are wearing your glasses, Miss Cheshire.

MISS CHESHIRE

What?

(She touches them)

Oh. It must be time for my checkup. Goodnight, Mr. Otto. Goodnight, Jeremy.

(She leaves. Slowly it dawns on Mr. Otto and Jeremy that Miss Cheshire is a single woman.)

JEREMY

(Quickly, before Mr. Otto can suggest her)

NO!

MR. OTTO

(Protesting his quick decision)

But she is available.

JEREMY

I LOATHE that woman. I don't even think of her as a woman. I think of her as one of Margaret's cats.

MR. OTTO

You could do worse, old man.

JEREMY

I could not do worse.

MR. OTTO

(Resigned)

Well, then, I'll turn in. Waken me early.. if there is a wedding, won't you?

JEREMY

(Sighs)

You will be the first to know.

MR. OTTO

Goodnight, old man.

(Jeremy nods and sits down forelornly on the love seat.

Mr. Otto exits, STAGE LEFT.

Jeremy gets up after a few seconds and walks over to the bar on the right wall and pours himself a brandy. He walks over and stands before the fireplace, staring into it. After a few seconds the door, STAGE LEFT, opens and a cute, perky, sweet looking young maid enters, wearing a chic uniform, tightly fit, very short. The maid has excellent legs, good figure. She carries a feather duster.)

MAID

Sir?

JEREMY

(Does not turn around)

Yes?

MAID

May I get you anything before you retire, sir? A cup of hot cocoa or a glass of warm milk?

(The maid proceeds to dust the lampshade with her feather duster.)

JEREMY

(Turns, focuses on the maid)

Who...? Where...?

MAID

Me, sir? I'm the new maid. Cook hired me.

JEREMY

But where did you come from? The roads are practically washed away.

MAID

Just down the road a piece, sir. I've been attending Miss Pringle's School for Girls until recently. I heard you might be looking for a... maid.. and so, I applied this afternoon.

(Begins dusting again)

JEREMY

(Staring unbelievably at the maid)

Are you married?

MAID

Me, sir?

(She laughs)

Oh no, sir. I'm not even going with anyone. It was a school for girls, sir.

(Shows her displeasure by wrinkling her nose.)

All girls.

JEREMY

You're in good health, are you?

MAID

Oh, the best, sir. Don't I look it?

JEREMY

(Noding vigorously)

Yes, my dear, you do. You certainly do. The picture of good health.

(He asks cautiously)

Do you have a mother?

MAID

A mother?

(She looks downcast)

I'm afraid that I'm an orphan, sir. And no brothers or sisters to comfort me. I'm all alone in the world.

JEREMY

(Grins out at the audience)

Brothers and sisters only complicate life, lovely lady. You are a most attractive woman. Are you English?

MAID

French, sir.

(She smiles coquettishly)

JEREMY

(Turns to the audience again and grins broadly, his eyes closed. He whispers..)

Happily. Ever after.

MAID

Sir?

JEREMY

(Opening his eyes)

Come have a brandy with me.

(He walks over to her)

We must get better acquainted.

(Jeremy quickly checks his watch.)

MAID

Oh, I don't drink, sir.

JEREMY

(More interested in how much time he has left,
is barely listening)

What? Oh, well.. a cup of tea, then. Or.. what was it you offered me? Warm milk? Do people actually drink warm milk? I thought they rubbed it on their chest or some place.

MAID

(Gliding up to Jeremy provocatively)

Maybe just this once, sir. To celebrate my new position as your maid. I might just have a sip or two of something bubbly.

JEREMY

(Excited)

Bubbly! Wonderful!

(He starts to go in two different directions.)

I'll get it myself. Wait right here.

(Talks as he exits, STAGE LEFT)

Always keep a bottle of bubbly chilled, just for emergencies.

(Glances out at the audience slyly)

Don't go away. I'll be right back.

(He exits.)

(The maid wets both of her hands and straightens her stockings, starting at the ankles and smoothing them all the way to her thigh, which is barely covered by her short dress. She fluffs up her hair, unbuttons her dress, sits down on the edge of the sofa, legs crossed, to wait.)

(Jeremy returns in a very short time with an opened bottle of champagne wrapped in a linen, and two glasses.)

JEREMY

Everyone's gone to bed. We have all night to.. celebrate.

(Jeremy pours the champagne, offers the maid a glass, which she accepts.)

JEREMY

Very, very old champagne, my dear. Older than you are. If you like it, I know where there's a cellar full.

MAID

(After tasting the champagne)

Oh, it's lovely all right, isn't it?

(She finishes her glass, before Jeremy even begins.)

I might have a spot more.

(Jeremy obliges happily. He pours another glass for the maid and raises his own glass in a toast.)

JEREMY

To us.

MAID

To us, sir?

JEREMY

Of course, to us. To our.. relationship.

MAID

Oh.

(She giggles)

Whatever you say, sir.

(Jeremy sits down on the sofa beside the maid.

He glances at his watch inconspicuously, trying
to decide how to approach the subject of marriage.)

JEREMY

Have you ever thought of marriage, sweet child?

MAID

Marriage, sir? Well.. I only really know boys, you know.
In the neighborhood. I have always dreamed of a mature man..
a man like.. you'll forgive me, sir.. but a man like yourself.

JEREMY

(Ecstatic)

Oh, wise beyond your years, my child. You are a charming,
delightful creature who needs a mature man.. a WEALTHY,
mature man who will take care of you and all those little
nuisances in life, like a castle and a villa and a bank
account and a yacht, that only money and maturity can provide.

MAID

(Delighted to be swept off her feet; allowing the
warm fire, the champagne and the flattery to
overwhelm her)

Oh, you understand, sir.

(She looks away)

If only I could find a mature man who has all of those things
who would be happy and content with an obedient, loving, young,
unspoiled orphan, with no brothers or sisters, who would spend
every moment of her life seeing to his... needs. That is all
a young woman, such as myself, could ever hope for, sir.
That is why I left Miss Pringle's School for girls. To find
someone I could make deliciously happy.. rapturously happy.

JEREMY

(In a euphoric state of anticipated tantalizing
pleasure she promises..)

Darling.. will you marry me?

MAID

Oh, sir, don't tease me. If you really meant it, I would.

JEREMY

Immediately?

MAID

Sir, do not toy with me.

(Jeremy sets his glass down on the cocktail table, stands and holds out his hand for the maid. She stands up beside him, very close.)

JEREMY

I assure you, my lovely one, that I am not toying with you.

(Quietly, he adds..)

Not yet, anyway. I cannot live alone. I have to have a woman, a compassionate, passionate, understanding, obedient young woman beside me.

MAID

I am compassionate, passionate, understanding and obedient, sir.

JEREMY

And young. I can see that you are all those things, my darling. You are everything I have sought since my wife died. I see no reason to delay even one more lonely day without a woman such as you in my life.. or in my bed. Will you marry me at dawn this morning?

MAID

At dawn? How romantic. But I haven't anything to wear?

JEREMY

You don't need anything.

MAID

Pardon?

JEREMY

There are rooms of clothing upstairs, my pet. You may pick your wedding dress from a hundred gowns. Cook can pin you in.

(Jeremy glances down at the maid's bosom)

JEREMY

Or let you out, whichever you require.

(Jeremy picks up his glass of champagne, refills hers
and he toasts..)

To Margaret.

(Jeremy raises his glass high.)

MAID

Was that your wife's name, sir? Cook told me about the poor
lady.

JEREMY

Not poor, my dear.

(Shakes his head)

Definitely not poor. But wise. Very wise indeed. She wanted
everyone to live happily ever after.

(Looks up to heaven and raises his glass again.)

Thank you, Margaret, for wanting... no for INSISTING that
I live happily ever after.

MAID

(Looking up)

Thank you, Margaret. Wherever you are.

(Lights out.
Curtain
End of ACT I.)

ACT II

PLACE: Greystone Castle
The Drawing Room

TIME: Very early the next morning

Mr. Otto is helping Jeremy with his white tie.
Mr. Otto is standing in front of Jeremy trying
to do what Jeremy is obviously too nervous to
do himself.

MR. OTTO

Hold still now, old man.

JEREMY

I wish you wouldn't call me that, especially not THIS morning.

MR. OTTO

Sorry. She is a young thing, isn't she.

JEREMY

And lovely.

MR. OTTO

Oh, delightfully so. Still.. it is curious how she just
popped in here at the right moment, isn't it?

JEREMY

It's fate, that's what it is.

MR. OTTO

Fate?

JEREMY

Of course. You believe in fate, don't you?

MR. OTTO

No, I don't actually. I mean, I believe that we make our own destiny, don't you?

JEREMY

Definitely not. I believe that someone makes it happen for us. Like Margaret has made it all happen for me. Oh, I was furious at first, of course, but it has all turned out wonderful, hasn't it? Are you finished with the tie yet?

MR. OTTO

Just am. There. You're very well turned out, I must say.

(Jeremy pulls at his cuffs.)

I suppose you've told her.

JEREMY

Told her what?

MR. OTTO

About the conditions of the Will.

JEREMY

Well, of course, I felt I had to. I mean, I couldn't just ask her to marry me in the morning and not tell her what the rush was all about, could I?

MR. OTTO

I suppose it was the decent thing to do... to tell her.

JEREMY

(Boastfully)

Actually, she agreed to marry me even BEFORE I told her, but I felt honor bound to be truthful with her. I guess I swept her off her feet, so to speak.

MR. OTTO

Hynnnnn. Strange.

JEREMY

(Indignant)

Well, don't sound so doubting. I'm quite a woman charmer, you know.

MR. OTTO

I never doubted it for a moment, Jeremy. Jane attested to that. And Marsha. And Penelope. Not to mention Margaret, of course.

JEREMY

(Thinks about that..)

Did they? Penelope as well?

(He sighs)

Too bad about Penelope being unavailable today.

(Resigned..)

Ah, well.

MR. OTTO

What was your new bride's reaction to the conditions of the Will?

JEREMY

She was quite agreeable. In candor, I told her that we wouldn't have to LIVE together - consumately, that sort of thing - until we got to know each other better.

MR. OTTO

And what did she say to that?

JEREMY

She said she would prefer it that way at first, if I didn't mind.. just until we get better acquainted.

MR. OTTO

(Checking his watch..)

Seeing how fast things happen around here, that ought to be about half an hour after the ceremony.

JEREMY

(Grinning)

That long?

MR. OTTO

You rogue. Don't tell me you are starting to believe your reputation.

JEREMY

Well, I wouldn't believe Jane. Or, for that matter, Marsha. And certainly not Margaret. But Penelope could make any man believe anything.

MR. OTTO

Really? She is an attractive wench, isn't she?

JEREMY

And she has always had a thing for me.

MR. OTTO

Jeremy! Such modesty.

JEREMY

We're speaking truthfully, aren't we? Penelope has made suggestions, even when Margaret was alive... Oh, forget it. It's in the past.

MR. OTTO

Sometimes the past catches up with us, old man.

JEREMY

Let's bury that "old man" right here and now, shall we?

MR. OTTO

(Reaching for an opened bottle of champagne on the cocktail table)

Agreed. And shall we toast the bride and groom?

JEREMY

If you don't mind, I think I'll pass.

(He touches his forehead.)

I loathe champagne, and she loved it so.

MR. OTTO

What is your new bride's name?

(Jeremy looks at Mr. Otto blankly.)

JEREMY

My God! I don't know!

MR. OTTO

(Non-plused)

Would you like me to inquire for you?

JEREMY

Would you? I'd be so grateful. I'll have to say..
"I, Jeremy, take you, so-and-so."

MR. OTTO

I'll go and find out and come back.

(Mr. Otto exits, door STAGE LEFT. Jeremy walks
back and forth nervously.)

(Miss Cheshire enters, door STAGE LEFT.

She is very cool to Jeremy.)

MISS CHESHIRE

I hate to tell you this, on your wedding day..

(She says "wedding day" with her total
disapproval tone..)

..but Winston appears to be ailing.

JEREMY

What?

MISS CHESHIRE

He is brooding for Mrs. Hubbard.

JEREMY

Well, pull him out of it! Call the Vet or something.
Don't just stand there!

MISS CHESHIRE

I have called the Vet. He insists that Winston misses the Mrs.

JEREMY

Oh, he does, does he, and what does he think we can do about that, exactly?

MISS CHESHIRE

He suggested that you might sleep with him.

JEREMY

(Taken back..)

I might what?

MISS CHESHIRE

Sleep with him.. in his bed.

JEREMY

(Astounded)

In his bed? You mean...

(He holds up both hands about three feet apart.)

MISS CHESHIRE

(Shakes her head)

Winston has a king size bed of his own in the suite off Mrs. Hubbard's room. Didn't you know?

JEREMY

(Amazed)

You're kidding me!

MISS CHESHIRE

I thought it would be better, under the circumstances, if you slept in his bed than that he slept in yours.

JEREMY

(Stiffening)

Of course, it would be.

(Jeremy suddenly realizes the ridiculousness of the suggestion that he sleep with Winston.)

JEREMY

What am I saying? Why does it have to be ME that sleeps with Winston? Why can't YOU sleep with him or one of the servants?

MISS CHESHIRE

He hates me. Something about my body scent.

JEREMY

Your what?

MISS CHESHIRE

My scent. I make him bristle.

JEREMY

(Turns around to avoid laughing in front of Miss Cheshire.)

That is a problem.

MISS CHESHIRE

There is one other thing that might be wrong with Winston.

JEREMY

(Turning around to face Miss Cheshire quickly.)

Well, say it.

MISS CHESHIRE

What's good for the goose.. I mean, Winston may need another kitty to share his bed.

JEREMY

But he's so old!

(Miss Cheshire stares at Jeremy smugly. Jeremy becomes noticeably uncomfortable. He relents.)

JEREMY

For God's sake, Miss Cheshire, if you think that's what is wrong with Winston, get him a companion. Make him happy, whatever it takes. We can't have him pining away.

MISS CHESHIRE

(As she exits..)

I'll call the Society and arrange for an adoption of a suitable mate.

(Said in an aside as she exits..)

This could very well become something of a cat house.

(She exits on that.)

(Seconds after Miss Cheshire exits, Mr. Pimm enters the door, STAGE LEFT.)

MR. PIMM

(Announcing to Jeremy..)

Miss Williams is ready.

JEREMY

(Puzzled)

Who?

(Mr. Otto comes rushing in the open door. He comes close to Jeremy to whisper, loud enough that the audience can also hear.)

MR. OTTO

It's Melodie. Melodie Williams.

(Mr. Pimm also overhears and raises his eyebrows in obvious disapproval that Jeremy did not even know the name of the lady he is about to marry.)

JEREMY

(Harrumphs and nods)

Of course, Melodie.

(To Mr. Pimm..)

I'll be right there.

(Strains of the Wedding March on a piano are heard OFFSTAGE as Mr. Pimm exits, leaving the door open behind him.)

(Mrs. Pimm peeks in and gingerly tiptoes over to Jeremy. Mrs. Pimm slips a flower into Jeremy's lapel buttonhole.)

MRS. PIMM

There. Now, you're a handsome bridegroom, Mr. Hubbard, sir.

(She wipes her eye with her apron corner and blows into the apron, to Jeremy and Mr. Otto's horror.)

She's going to make you a good wife, Mr. Hubbard. You're going to be happy again.

JEREMY

(Beaming)

Thank you, Mrs. Pimm. I have you to thank for hiring the lass. Nice choice, I must say. I wasn't even aware that we were seeking a new maid.

MRS. PIMM

Oh, yes, sir. The Mrs.....

(She sobs once at the "Mrs." name.)

..was most actively looking, sir.

JEREMY

Well, I'm glad you were doing the choosing and not Margaret, Mrs. Pimm. I dare say she wouldn't have selected Melodie.

MRS. PIMM

(Somewhat embarrassed)

She is a pretty little thing, isn't she, sir? And so..

(Whispers to Jeremy)

...unspoiled.. if you know what I mean.

JEREMY

(Looking pleased, but slightly embarrassed)

I do indeed, Mrs. Pimm. I'm amazed you would know that. I do admire a young lady who is "unspoiled".

MRS. PIMM

Yes, sir.

(Agreeing heartily)

And I'll be seeing to it that she is a proper wife for you, Mr. Hubbard. Lady of the castle and all that..

JEREMY

I have no doubt, Mrs. Pimm. Miss Pringle has always trained her girls to be ladies.

MRS. PIMM

Yes, sir.

(Looking very pleased)

(Mr. Pimm returns.)

MR. PIMM

(Announcing to Jeremy..)

Miss Williams and the Minister are waiting, sir.

(Jeremy straightens, pulls at his cuffs, shakes hands with Mr. Otto, kisses Mrs. Pimm on the forehead and proceeds ceremoniously out the door, STAGE LEFT.

Mrs. Pimm is crying into her apron behind Mr. Otto as they follow Jeremy to the strains of the Wedding March.)

Curtain.

ACT II
Scene Two

PLACE: Greystone Castle
The Drawing Room

TIME: The next morning.

A breakfast tray, containing a coffee carafe, toast, and a cup and saucer, is on the table before the fireplace. Jeremy is sipping coffee, looking into the fire. He is dressed in his dressing jacket and ascot.

He is alone on stage.

OFFSTAGE the clock chimes ten. The sun is shining brightly through the large window.

The door, STAGE LEFT, opens. Mr. Pimm steps inside to announce that a guest has arrived at the castle.

MR. PIMM

Miss Penelope Pendergas.

PENELOPE

(Enters, but not before she turns to Mr. Pimm and corrects him.)

That's "ghast" with an "h" and a "t".

MR. PIMM

(Looking straight ahead, over Penelope's head)

Yes, Miss.

(Mr. Pimm exits, closing the door behind him.)

(Penelope enters much to Jeremy's great surprise.
Jeremy stands immediately as Penelope walks over
to him, her arms outstretched.)

PENELOPE

Jeremy, my love! How good you look!

JEREMY

(Quite taken back, but opening his arms to
accent Penelope's embrace)

Penelope! I don't believe it! They told me you were cruising
the Greek Islands.

PENELOPE

Of course, I was, Darling, but when I heard all that
excitement with Jane's divorce, I thought perhaps you might
be needing a little support about now.

JEREMY

(Indignant)

Me? I'm not involved in that.

PENELOPE

(Smiles coyly at Jeremy)

Really?

(She turns idly as she removes her gloves.)

How's Margaret?

JEREMY

(Looks startled, stares out at the audience.)

Margaret is...

(He gulps)

..dead.

(Penelope turns around abruptly to face Jeremy.)

PENELOPE

WHAT? DEAD?

(Jeremy nods)

When? How did she die?

JEREMY

(Shrugging his own disbelief)

Monday morning. She just slent away.

(Shakes his head)

Bad heart for years.

PENELOPE

(Comes over sympathetically to Jeremy to put her
head on his shoulder.)

How terrible for you.

(Looks up at Jeremy seductively)

And... lonely.

JEREMY

(Nodding vigorously)

Yes. Yes.

PENELOPE

(Takes another good look at Jeremy.)

But you look fit and wonderful, actually.

(Jeremy nods, embarrassed.)

PENELOPE

When was the funeral?

JEREMY

(Hesitates, then stammers...)

Tuesday. Tuesday afternoon.

PENELOPE

You didn't wait long, did you?

JEREMY

(Shaking his head vigorously)

She wanted it that way. She left explicit instructions in her Will.

PENELOPE

In her Will? You mean you've had the reading already?

JEREMY

(Nods)

Tuesday, actually.

PENELOPE

Well, I must say, you didn't waste any time.

(Jeremy is very embarrassed.)

JEREMY

Let me get you some juice or a sherry. I'll ring for Mr. Pimm.

PENELOPE

(Becoming curious about Jeremy's strange behavior)

Never mind. Something strange about you. I can't...

(With that, the door STAGE LEFT opens and Melodie Williams Hubbard, in a flowing peignoir, enters, all adazzle, her hair cascading down her back.)

MELODIE

Good morning, my husband.

PENELOPE

(Absolutely shocked)

HUSBAND!

MELODIE

(Having been unaware that anyone else was with
Jeremy, now steps back to look at Penelope.)

Oh, I am sorry. I didn't know we had guests.

PENELOPE

(Stares horrified at Melodie, then wide-eyed
at Jeremy for an explanation)

WHAT is going on here?

(Jeremy gulps.)

(The door, STAGE LEFT, opens again and Miss Cheshire
enters with an abrupt..)

MISS CHESHIRE

Well, it's done. She's probably pregnant already.

(Noticing Penelope for the first time.)

Oh, hello, Miss Penderghast. Good to see you.

(Miss Cheshire exits, not realizing the damage
she has done.)

(Penelope swoons into Jeremy's arms.)

JEREMY

(To Melodie..)

Get some water, will you Love?

MELODIE

(Looking at the lady in Jeremy's arms..)

WHO is she?

JEREMY

An old girl friend of... my wife's.

PENELOPE

(From her swoon..)

Not old!

JEREMY

Of course, Darling.

(He helps Penelope to the love seat.)

Come and sit down and I'll try to explain.

MELODIE

(Exits, remarking..)

I'll send Mr. Pimm with the glass of water.

(She is very cool to Jeremy and Penelope who are sitting next to each other on the love seat.)

(After Melodie exits, Jeremy turns to Penelope and tries to explain.)

JEREMY

Penelope, you have no idea what I've been through.

PENELOPE

(Nodding toward the door where Melodie has just exited)

I think I have.

JEREMY

(Shrugging that off)

No, you haven't. It was Margaret's Will. And that blasted cat. What Miss Cheshire said was about the cat. And Melodie calling me "husband".. well, that was in name only.

PENELOPE

(Looking at Jeremy curiously)

What ARE you talking about? You know I have always adored you, Jeremy. I am almost as wealthy as Margaret. If you were going to turn to anyone in your grief, surely it would have been me. I know how much you adore rich women.

JEREMY

I do, Darling. That's absolutely true. Something about rich women excites me more than anything else on earth. I tried to reach you on Tuesday after the reading of the Will. Your sister told me that you were cruising the Greek Islands. There was no way on earth that I could reach you, even by wireless, so I gave up all hope of marrying you Wednesday morning.

PENELOPE

You don't remain celibate very long, do you?

JEREMY

I couldn't!

PENELOPE

You could try!

JEREMY

(Shaking his head)

You don't understand.

(He kisses Penelope's hand)

It was the condition of the Will that I had to remarry within forty eight hours of Margaret's passing.

(Penelope stares at him, puzzled but very interested.)

And I have to remain married for one year before I inherit anything.

PENELOPE

I don't think I can stand it.

JEREMY

(Trying to hold Penelope upright)

What is keeping Mr. Pimm? I'll get that water myself. Stay quiet, Darling. I'm certain I can straighten all of this out for you, if you'll just give me time to pull myself together.

(He motions to the breakfast tray in front of them on the cocktail table.)

I haven't any appetite. Help yourself to breakfast while I see about that water.

(Jeremy kisses Penelope's cheek and gets up.
He mops his forehead with his handkerchief as
he exits, STAGE LEFT.)

(After a few seconds, Penelope straightens herself
on the love seat. She studies the breakfast tray
before her and decides to take a piece of toast and
pour herself a cup of coffee. She is alone for
about two minutes having several bites of toast
and several sips of coffee when Miss Cheshire
bursts into the room again, door STAGE LEFT.)

MISS CHESHIRE

(Announcing gleefully to anyone in the room,
totally oblivious to the fact that the only
one in the room is Penelope.)

I have gotten him to eat! And he's heading back to bed
where she is waiting.

(Penelope swoons as Miss Cheshire exits
triumphantly.)

Curtain.

ACT II
Scene Three

PLACE: Greystone Castle
The Drawing Room

TIME: Later that day.

Jeremy is in the drawing room, alone, reading a note. After reading it, he crumbles it into a ball and tosses it into the fireplace. The door, STAGE LEFT, opens and Miss Cheshire knocks lightly on the open door for Jeremy's attention.

JEREMY

(Looking over at Miss Cheshire in the doorway..)

Well.. what is it?

MISS CHESHIRE

(Walks slowly and solemnly over to Jeremy.

She faces the audience and sighs deeply.)

I'm afraid that I have some very bad news.

JEREMY

More bad news? Penelope stormed out of here mumbling something about lascivious appetites. She left me a viscious note.

(He hangs his head woefully.)

I'll never see her again.

(He shoves his hands into his dressing jacket pockets. Suddenly he looks over at Miss Cheshire, remembering what she has said.)

What's happened now?

MISS CHESHIRE

(Holding her head in her hand, her other arm around her waist, walks to CENTER STAGE and stops, faces the audience and announces..)

Winston is dead!

(Jeremy, in utter shock, wide open mouth, falls back onto the love seat.)

MISS CHESHIRE

I suppose it was all too much for him. He must have died of ecstasy.

(Jeremy is completely slumped into the love seat. Suddenly, Mr. and Mrs. Pimm come rushing into the room. Mrs. Pimm is crying.)

MRS. PIMM

Oh, the poor lamb. The poor, poor lamb.

MISS CHESHIRE

(Looking at Mrs. Pimm curiously..)

Who?

MRS. PIMM

Winston.

MR. PIMM

(Said while he makes his way straight to the bar, STAGE RIGHT, and pours himself a glass of brandy.)

Don't waste your tears on that beast. Besides, he died happy, didn't he? If you want to cry for anyone, cry for us. We're the ones thats out.

(Having said his piece, he drinks the entire contents of the glass he is holding.)

(Jeremy is shocked at Mr. Pimm's outrageous behavior.)

JEREMY

(Stands and walks over to Mr. Pimm. Jeremy takes the glass out of Mr. Pimm's hand.)

What do you think you are doing?

MR. PIMM

(Said haughtily, nose in the air..)

I'm about to be handing in my resignation.. SIR.
You can no longer afford a butler and a cook the calibre of the Pimms.

JEREMY

This is outrageous! I may be disinherited, but I'm not...

(He glances at Mrs. Pimm and Miss Cheshire, who are nodding, and Jeremy realizes that what Mr. Pimm has said is true.)

..My God, I am! I'm penniless!

(Jeremy hangs his head.)

(There is silence for a few seconds while everyone in the room ponders their sudden loss.)

MISS CHESHIRE

(Thoughtfully..)

What if...?

(Jeremy looks over at her, waiting for her to go on.)

JEREMY

What if what? What are you thinking?

MISS CHESHIRE

(Begins to pace while she ponders the fate of them all.)

What if..

(Mr. and Mrs. Pimm, as well as Jeremy, are hanging, literally, on Miss Cheshire's every word, following

Miss Cheshire as she paces, practically pulling the words out of her mouth.)

MISS CHESHIRE

What if.. that adorable little enchantress upstairs is pregnant?

(Mr. and Mrs. Pimm and Jeremy slouch back, hoping that Miss Cheshire had something better to offer in the way of a plan.)

JEREMY

(Sluffing it off)

What if she is?

MISS CHESHIRE

(Still pacing and thinking)

And... suppose she has a little one who looks exactly like Winston. I mean, same lineage, isn't it? Who would know the difference? He was, after all - despite what Margaret tried to palm off as extraordinary breeding - a very ORDINARY looking cat.

JEREMY

(Becoming interested in that last thought)

That's true, isn't it? There must be a hundred cats right here in London who look exactly like Winston.

MISS CHESHIRE

And if we can't find the one who looks exactly like him, there is always the possibility that Aphrodite upstairs is expecting.

JEREMY

(Now excited about the idea and pacing himself)

The only one we have to look out for is Mr. Otto.

(Thinking about it..)

What will we say if he stops by and wants to have a look at Winston?

MISS CHESHIRE

We'll say that he's at the Salon being brushed.

JEREMY

(Clapping his hands together and rubbing them excitedly.)

Exactly!

(Mr. Pimm heads for the bar again, only Jeremy grabs him by the long tail of his black coat and pulls him back.)

JEREMY

Oh, no you don't, Pimm. You're back on duty. And your first mission is to get out there..

(Said most officiously, pointing to the window to indicate the outdoors..)

..and FIND US ANOTHER CAT!

MR. PIMM

(Sighs, and heads for the door, STAGE LEFT.)

Come along, Lovey.

(Said to Mrs. Pimm.)

I'll need you for bait.

MRS. PIMM

(Starts to follow her husband, and then, on second thought, turns to JEREMY.)

What about Miss Williams, Sir? I mean, Mrs. Hubbard.

(Jeremy looks at Mrs. Pimm, then out at the audience and raises an appreciative eyebrow, having temporarily forgotten the lovely lass upstairs.)

JEREMY

(Nodding)

I'll tell Melodie myself, Mrs. Pimm. Leave Melodie to me.

MISS CHESHIRE

(Admonishing Jeremy as she walks in front of
him on her way to the door, STAGE LEFT.)

Careful... lover. Remember poor Winston.

(Jeremy cringes as the others leave the room.)

Curtain
End of ACT II
Intermission

ACT III

TIME: Early evening
PLACE: The streets of London

The house lights are out. The stage lights are out.
In front of the curtain appears two lighted flashlights.
Mr. and Mrs. Pimm are searching the back streets of
London for a cat identical to Winston.
STAGE LEFT is a grouping of trash cans.
(Depending upon budget, a fog machine would be most
effective and a dim street light (lamb post).)
Mr. and Mrs. Pimm cannot be seen except when they move
past the street light. Sounds of several meowing cats
(recording or tape) in the background.

MRS. PIMM

Noel... these cats are full of fleas. I'm bein' eaten' alive.

MR. PIMM

Stand still so's I can check them for color.

MRS. PIMM

How come they're around me and not you?

MR. PIMM

You got the food.

MRS. PIMM

I put it down so's they could eat.

MR. PIMM

It could be the catnip I put in your shoes.

MRS. PIMM

What? Get down! Get down! Wait till I get my hands on you,
Noel Pimm!

MR. PIMM

Look at this one. Is he Winston's twin or ain't he?

MRS. PIMM

Someone's comin', Noel!

MR. PIMM

Turn off your light.

(The flashlights go out.)

MRS. PIMM

Ouch! Owwww! Noel! They're scratchin' at my feet.

MR. PIMM

Let's get out of here. Run!

(There is a terrible noise of the trash cans being
knocked down as the street light goes out.)

MRS. PIMM

(Moaning..)

Oooooooooohhhhhh. Noel!

ACT III
Scene Two

PLACE: Greystone Castle
The Drawing Room

TIME: A few days later

Jeremy is seated in a chair by the fire, reading.
He is dressed in a long dressing robe. Suddenly,
Mr. Otto sticks his head in the doorway, STAGE LEFT.

Mr. Otto

Jeremy? Oh, here you are.

(He enters, closing the door behind him.)

JEREMY

(Jumps up when he sees who it is and nervously
closes his dressing gown and smooths his hair.)

Well, well, Otto, good to see you. Good to see you. Come in.
What brings you up here?

MR. OTTO

(Shakes hands with Jeremy)

Well, I heard from George that Penelope was here last week.

JEREMY

George told you that?

MR. OTTO

Yes, when I ran into him in town.

JEREMY

(Said to the audience mostly..)

Cheeky of him.

MR. OTTO

You weren't trying to keep it a secret, were you... you old
rascal, you.

(He elbows Jeremy playfully.)