

THE TROUBLE WITH TOURISTS

By Becky Kimsey

Copyright © MMXXIII by Becky Kimsey, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-61588-524-4

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Heuer Publishing LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Heuer Publishing LLC.

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

THE TROUBLE WITH TOURISTS

A Comedy Thriller

By Becky Kimsey

SYNOPSIS: In Harrogate England 1816, Lord and Lady Harrison are unexpectedly visited by a group of Time Travel Tourists from the future. When a murder takes place (which was NOT on the itinerary), it's a madcap race against time to stop the killer. This zany, twisted, sci-fi comedy will leave the audience begging to go on a time-traveling adventure of their own!

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: Whitehall Estates in Harrogate, England.

TIME: 1816.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 females, 5 males)

ARTHUR HARRISON (m) Lord of Whitehall Estate. He's kind, affable and easy-going. 50-60. *(103 lines)*

OLIVIA HARRISON (f) Arthur's wife. Sharp-witted and extremely clever. Late 40- 50. *(179 lines)*

JOHN HARRISON (m) Their son. He's not clever. At all. He dies in the play. Often. Early 20's. *(91 lines)*

WARREN TAYLOR (m) The new Vicar. Handsome and mysterious. 30-50. *(91 lines)*

MRS. PHILLIPS (f) The Housekeeper. Aims to please, but prone to the occasional panic. 40-50. *(38 lines)*

MR. BARTON (m) The Butler. He's everything a good Butler ought to be. 50-60. *(51 lines)*

FANNY (f) The Maid. Accident prone; not the brightest of flames, but she does burn hot. 20-45. *(76 lines)*

BERLIN (f) A female tourist. She's a bit lusty, enthusiastic and low-class. 20-30. *(155 lines)*

JOEY (m).....	Berlin's boyfriend. Seems like a dullard but is surprisingly clever. 20-30. (132 lines)
VERA STAPLETON (f).....	Berlin & Joey's Tour Guide. Fiercely committed to providing an exceptional tour. 40-50. (179 lines)

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

THE TROUBLE WITH TOURISTS premiered at Stage Coach Theatre in Boise, Idaho. The production was directed by Becky Kimsey with the following cast, production designers, and crew:

FANNY	Cat Waite
JOHN	Nameer Age
OLIVIA	Kathy Green
MRS. PHILLIPS.....	Glenda Talbutt
VERA	Kathi Duggan
BERLIN.....	Erin Jackson
JOEY	Triston Jackson
BARTON.....	Brad Ooley
ARTHUR.....	Justin Larson
TAYLOR.....	Kevin Kimsey

Director: Becky Kimsey

Technical Director: Kevin Kimsey

Stage Manager: Harmony Soto

Set Designer: Kevin Kimsey

Backstage Tech: Ava Yorgensen, Ken Yorgensen, Johnny Green, Jake Stradley

Prop Master: Greg Woods

Lighting Designer: Dan Allers

Lighting Operator: Ashleigh Walker

Sound Designer: Becky Kimsey

Sound Operator: Christian Hampton

Costumes: Elizabeth Greeley

Portrait Painter: Tim Schmidt

Cover & Poster Artwork: Becky Kimsey

DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to Virginia Rose and Mabel Lee.
I would travel through time and space for you both.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING: *The Drawing Room of Whitehall; a well-appointed estate north of Harrogate, England. The room is comfortable and lavish with a Persian rug center stage atop which sits elegant Edwardian furniture; a settee with a coffee table in front of it and two elegant chairs; one on each side. There is an archway USL which leads to the outer entry hall and another archway USR which leads to the library and another archway DSR which leads to the library. There is a large fireplace DSL with an enormous carved mantelpiece decorated with various forms of fragile finery. The walls are elegantly decorated with fine art of the period but the one over the mantelpiece is a portrait of a tall older gentleman standing beside an Irish hound and a horse carrying a burden of pheasants dripping with blood. SR up against the wall is a small bar with all the appropriate alcoholic vintages and crystal drinking ware. USC is a large sideboard; on top of which is a bell, various trays of fruit, and anything else the elite would wish to consume or imbibe in while they are drawing conclusions about the lower class. That is what one does in a drawing room, is it not?*

AT RISE: *FANNY is dusting the mantelpiece while humming a tune. She is an attractive woman in her late 20's. We hear arguing coming from DSR. She stops to admire the painting above. She seems rather fascinated by it and, in her distraction, her duster knocks into a statuette which falls to the floor with an impressive CRASH! She squeaks, then looks around hastily as she falls to her knees in an attempt to clean it up before she is discovered. JOHN HARRISON bursts in from DSR. He is a handsome, well-dressed man in his early 20's. JOHN desires very much to be likeable but manages to succeed only in being tolerable. FANNY throws herself onto the floor shielding the broken pieces from view and freezes in place.*

JOHN: *(Crossing DSL.)* Mama, I'm sorry, but I truly feel that I must!

OLIVIA: *(Offstage.)* No!

JOHN: But Father said that I could.

OLIVIA: *(Offstage.)* And I said that you could not!

Entering from DSR. OLIVIA HARRISON is a mature but attractive woman in her late 40's.

OLIVIA: We made an agreement, your father and I, on the day you were born.

JOHN: But you don't—

OLIVIA: It took me twelve brutal hours to push you out of my womb, John.

JOHN: *(Sits SR in Settee.)* Mama, not again...

OLIVIA: *(Sits in SR chair.)* The midwife placed you in the bassinet for cleaning.

JOHN: I've heard this a thousand times.

OLIVIA: There you were, mewling like a hairless cat in the corner shifting from pink to blue from blue to pink. Your father, who finally braved entry, stood there in awe and remarked upon how your complexion continued to undulate in a kaleidoscope of colors. When suddenly, he turned to me and declared that we should name you Seraphina—

JOHN: Wait, What?

OLIVIA: I said: 'Seraphina?' He said: 'Yes. Seraphina. It means full of color!'

JOHN: I've never heard this—

OLIVIA: Then I said: 'Forgive my confusion dearest, for I have just passed a human between my legs, but isn't Seraphina meant to be a girl's name?'

JOHN: You can't be serious—

OLIVIA: He said: 'Of course. Isn't it perfect, darling? Just look at her!' *(Beat.)* And I said: 'Look again.'

FANNY, though still frozen, can't help but let a tiny giggle escape. JOHN turns but OLIVIA continues.

OLIVIA: It was then and there that I made your father promise me that I would have the final word on every matter that concerns our children. Given the astonishing lack of observation and forethought he had just revealed to me, he emphatically agreed. You will not be joining the military, John. The fact that your father said that you could is simply a confirmation that I must forbid it. You will not step

foot near a recruitment station as long as I hold breath. And if you do, I shall see to it that your inheritance becomes irrevocably forfeit. That, my dear, is the final word on the matter!

JOHN: But—

OLIVIA: (*Sternly.*) Final! Word. (*Beat. She stands.*) I almost lost you last week, my dear. I'll not risk losing you again to the sword of some foreigner. Let's have tea, shall we?

JOHN: Yes, Mama.

OLIVIA Crosses USC to the sideboard and rings a bell. She sees FANNY.

OLIVIA: Oh, do get up Fanny. There's no use pretending you're a piece of the furniture; John might put his feet up on you.

FANNY: (*Not moving.*) Yes, mum.

OLIVIA: Well?

FANNY: (*Still not moving.*) Right away, mum.

OLIVIA: Indeed. (*A beat. To JOHN.*) Have you taken to experimenting with your fathers' glue again?

JOHN: Mama, I was six!

OLIVIA: Fanny, I insist that you get a move on. Did you not just hear me say the word "tea"?

FANNY: Yes, mum.

OLIVIA: (*A sigh.*) Are you deliberately trying my patience?

FANNY: No, mum.

OLIVIA: Are you so convinced that you are irreplaceable that you choose to remain immovable?

FANNY: No indeed, mum. It's just that—

OLIVIA: That what? What? Out with it!

JOHN: (*Standing.*) Easy, Mama... easy! I think you've frightened the poor girl. (*Beat.*) Fanny, fetch us our tea now or you're fired.

JOHN crosses proudly DSR.

FANNY: Ah!

She snatches what pieces she can with her bare hands and bolts out the USL door.

OLIVIA: (*Sarcastic.*) So that's where you've been keeping your gentility. I thought you were saving it for the next ball but you've been hiding it in your trousers all along, haven't you?

JOHN: Mama, if I could just—

OLIVIA: Uh uh! It's no use, my dear. (*Seeing the rubbish on the floor.*) I've got a new distraction; it's useless to compete for my attention now. (*Shouting.*) PHILLIPS!!

JOHN: It's not fair! Johnson said that he and Cuthbert are signing up. And George's father agreed to let him go!

OLIVIA: PHILLIPS! (*To JOHN.*) Next, you'll be telling me that everyone is doing it so that I, in turn, will decide that I was in the wrong; 'Oh, you are absolutely right, John. Why, if everyone is doing it, you should do it as well! Go upstairs straightaway and pack your things! Off you go! Sign up for the army my boy; it is your manly duty to seek out new and improved ways of getting yourself butchered.' (*Beat.*) My word, what a sheep you are!

JOHN: It might do me some good!

OLIVIA: My dear John, if you are so eager to experience violence, why not simply pick a quarrel with Duke-something-or-other, have a civilized duel in a field somewhere at dawn and be done with it? Barton will see to it that you have sandwiches.

PHILLIPS enters. She is a mature and stoic housekeeper in the best sense.

PHILLIPS: Yes, mum?

JOHN: I don't want sandwiches!

OLIVIA: (*Re: Broken pieces.*) Phillips, it appears we've had another accident.

PHILLIPS: Oh, not again! I'm terribly sorry my lady—

OLIVIA: This is the third family relic she's broken in a month. I know that she is still relatively new, but I'm beginning to wonder if the girl has a deep-seated resentment towards porcelain.

PHILLIPS: Shall I look for another—

OLIVIA: (*Interrupting.*) What? Another statue for her to smash? We may have to settle for something constructed out of metal instead. See what you can find in the silver cabinet; something with a good deal of bounce would be preferable.

PHILLIPS: Yes, my lady.

OLIVIA: And I think it best if we simply keep her out of this room for the time being since this seems to be the only place where she has the propensity towards vandalism.

PHILLIPS: Pardon my lady, but I might have an idea what her distraction could be.

OLIVIA: Oh, do tell; you know how much I hate gossip.

PHILLIPS: (*Re: painting above mantle.*) It's that portrait, my lady.

OLIVIA: (*Turning.*) Lord Sanderson? Why should he be the cause? He's just standing there.

JOHN: (*Attempting a joke.*) Perhaps he winked at her.

OLIVIA: Oh, don't be flippant, John. Lord Sanderson never winked at anybody. He was too much in love with his own horse.

PHILLIPS: Well, she's always staring at it. I think she might be rather infatuated with Lord Sanderson.

OLIVIA: Well, she won't get very far. He's been dead for twenty-five years.

JOHN: Perhaps she's a necromancer?

OLIVIA: The term is necrophilia, John. If you're going to be vulgar at least do it properly.

PHILLIPS: Perhaps she just has a fondness for older gentlemen. Lord Sanderson was such handsome fellow.

OLIVIA: Mmm. Lord Sanderson would have agreed with you.

PHILLIPS: I'll see to it that she remains supervised while she is in this room. Shall I clean up the—uh...

OLIVIA: Yes, yes. (*PHILLIPS begins to pick up the pieces.*) If Fanny is quite recovered from her Sanderson swoon, have her bring in our tea. I'm expecting the vicar shortly and I'd like to be finished before he arrives.

PHILLIPS: Certainly, my lady. (*She exits USL.*)

JOHN: Why don't you want to have tea with our new vicar?

OLIVIA: Dear me, did it sound as awful as that?

JOHN: Yes.

OLIVIA: Good.

JOHN: He saved my life, Mama! I should think that counts for something!

OLIVIA: It does. And I shall be eternally grateful to him for that. The fact that he just happened to be walking by was incredibly fortunate.

JOHN: It was a miracle!

OLIVIA: Call it what you will.

JOHN: I think we should give him a reward!

OLIVIA: He's a vicar, John. It is my understanding that the only reward he requires is in heaven.

JOHN: But couldn't we give him something to show how grateful we are to him for saving my life?

OLIVIA: I invited him to tea, isn't that enough?

JOHN: Mama, I'm talking about money.

OLIVIA: You know, he did save me the great expense of a funeral... (*Off his look.*) Oh, John. I am grateful to him. But I cannot bring myself to offer him a cash reward... it's not that I don't like Mister Taylor; he's just—There's something about him that puts me off. Something I can't quite put my knuckles on. Although it could be owing to the fact that he claims to be a man of God.

JOHN: Well of course he is.

OLIVIA: I've always been suspicious of anyone who professes to have direct access to the wishes of the Lord; especially when they are financially compensated for it. (*JOHN is now pouting.*) But for you John, I shall reserve my full judgement of the new vicar until after his visit today.

JOHN: Excellent. I think you'll find he is a very agreeable fellow. I like him a great deal.

OLIVIA: Of course, you do.

JOHN: He and I are going to be very good friends!

OLIVIA: Of course, you are.

JOHN: I should like to have a very good friend.

OLIVIA: Yes, that would be rather refreshing.

JOHN: Oh, are we still opening the house up?

OLIVIA: Much to my dismay, yes. Your father rules over the estate so I have no say in the matter. But, if he wishes to open the house up for tourists, I can always hide myself in the garden.

JOHN: I was thinking about it this morning and I rather like the idea. We'd get to meet new people and see new faces. I had no idea that the common people would be so eager to see the estate.

OLIVIA: They can see the estate from the hilltop. No, what they are eager to see is what's on the inside. If the common people are so desperate to gawk at our furnishings and crystal and art, so be it. But under no circumstances am I going to let them appraise me like some ancient bronze statue. It may be difficult for you to imagine now, but I was a trophy once. And it left a distinctly metallic taste in my mouth. I'll not be displayed like that again.

JOHN: I wonder what sort of questions they'll ask. Do you think they'd be interested in the history of the place or simply the architecture? Do you think the tourists will be tradesmen or artists? Perhaps there will be journalists in the mix!

OLIVIA: It doesn't matter what manner of debris ends up swirling about in here, as long as Phillips sees to it that it's swept out properly.

JOHN: Mama!

OLIVIA: Be it dust or sand or soil, all of them end up sticking to our boots.

BARTON: (*Entering USR.*) My Lady, Mister Taylor has arrived.

OLIVIA: Oh, what a nuisance. I thought Vicars were supposed to be fashionably late. Well, we can't have tea in here with this rubbish on the floor. Show him to the parlor, Barton. Inform Fanny where we are and to provide us with another setting.

BARTON: Yes, my lady.

OLIVIA: And where is Lord Harrison? Surely, he's given up on his hunt by now.

BARTON: He will be joining you for supper.

OLIVIA: (*Rising.*) Very well. Thank you, Barton. (*BARTON bows and exits USR.*) Well, John? Shall we proceed with the un-pleasantries?

JOHN: Mother, please be kind to Mister Taylor. Don't hold his professional status against him.

OLIVIA: My dear John; at my age, status is the only thing I can hold against anyone.

They exit USR as PHILIPS enters USL with a hand broom and a dustpan. As she is sweeping up the rest of the broken pieces, we hear a very low single pulse. There is a brief blackout and a Zap! PHILLIPS looks up, startled.

PHILLIPS: What in heaven?

She hears voices from behind the DSR entry. PHILLIPS approaches it slowly during the following.

VERA: (*Offstage.*) Here we are then! Here we are! Whitehall Estates.
Go on, my dears. Drink it all in!

BERLIN: (*Offstage. A squeal.*) Oooooohhhhh!!! Look at it, Joey! Isn't this place romantic!

JOEY: (*Off. Unimpressed.*) Yeah, yeah. It's great, Berl. Really bloody great.

PHILLIPS is now listening intently.

BERLIN: (*Offstage.*) It's so lavish and charming! This is perfect, Miss Stapleton!

JOEY: (*Offstage.*) Now, this is a two-fer, right?

VERA: (*Offstage.*) As I explained—

JOEY: (*Offstage.*) We paid a lot of money for this tour—

VERA: (*Offstage.*) I assure you—

JOEY: (*Offstage.*) How long is it gonna take to get her fancy-nancy tour out the way so we can move on to something more interesting?

BERLIN: (*Offstage.*) Joey! Don't spoil it!

JOEY: (*Offstage.*) Just makin' sure, that's all.

VERA: (*Offstage.*) As I said before, this is a relatively new property we've acquired—

BERLIN: (*Offstage.*) I think it's lovely!

VERA: (*Offstage.*) —so I'm not completely familiar with the family history. But I believe this experience will meet all your expectations. If my calculations are correct; the family is away at a funeral so let's go over the ground rules one more time before they return.

FANNY enters USL holding a chamber pot. She sees PHILLIPS listening at the door.

FANNY: What's goin' on, then?

PHILLIPS: *(Startled.)* Ahhh!

FANNY: Why are you eavesdropping?

PHILLIPS: Quiet, Fanny!

She listens again, then realizes the talking has stopped. She backs up as VERA appears through the entry. VERA is an attractive woman with an enthusiastic aim-to-please personality.

VERA: Oh! Hello, dear!

FANNY: Who are you?

VERA: *(Entering.)* I'm terribly sorry—

PHILLIPS: How did you get in here? We haven't opened the house to visitors yet!

VERA: Yes, yes. Of course. I apologize—

BERLIN shoves her way past, she is in her early 20's, attractive and a bit lusty. Though we can't quite figure why, she looks out of place in her period dress. She is towing JOEY along by the arm. If BERLIN seems uncomfortable in her Regency attire, JOEY is behaving like a tomcat wearing a wet jumper. He's in his late twenties and is not overly impressed with the place.

BERLIN: *(Shoving past.)* Hello! My name is Berlin.

VERA: *(Quickly.)* Bertha!

BERLIN: *(Quickly.)* Bertha! And this is my fiancé, Joey.

VERA: John.

BERLIN: John.

PHILLIPS: I don't care what your names are. The master isn't opening the house until next week. You'll just have to wait like everyone else.

VERA: Oh! Really? Oh dear. I'm terribly sorry for the um... misunderstanding. I was under the impression that it had already begun. *(She looks at her pocket watch.)*

BERLIN: *(An excited squeal.)* Is that a bedpan?

FANNY: It's a chamber pot.

BERLIN: A chamber pot! (*To JOEY.*) A chamber pot, Joey! Isn't it charming?

FANNY: Charming?

PHILLIPS: What's so charming about a chamber pot, miss?

JOEY: Yeah, isn't that where they used to take a sh—(*VERA grabs his arm.*) ow! Er.

PHILLIPS: Beg pardon?

JOEY: Show—er?

VERA: (*Brightly.*) Right then!

PHILLIPS: Fanny what are you doing with that in here?

FANNY: It's for the mantelpiece.

PHILLIPS: The mantelpiece!!

FANNY: Yes! You said the mistress told you to find something in the cabinet that's made of metal and has a great deal of bounce. I should think this would bounce rather nicely!

PHILLIPS: Are you mad? We can't put a chamber pot on the mantelpiece!

FANNY: Well, it's not just any chamber pot, mum. I think it might have belonged to *him*. (*She gestures to the portrait.*)

PHILLIPS: Lord Sanderson?

FANNY: Sanderson? Is that his name?

PHILLIPS: Yes! And I don't care if that chamber pot belonged to King George! It doesn't belong on the mantle!

ARTHUR HARRISON enters from USR followed by BARTON. ARTHUR is in his late 50's and is dressed for sport shooting. BARTON is the butler and is dressed... butler-y. ARTHUR is charming and care-free, BARTON on the other hand, is neither.

ARTHUR: I agree with you, Barton. I most certainly do! We'll try that next week, shall we?

BARTON: I think that could be arranged, my Lord.

ARTHUR: Good morning, Phillips! Fanny.

PHILLIPS: (*A curtsy.*) My Lord.

FANNY: (*The same.*) My Lord.

ARTHUR: (*Seeing the guests.*) Well then, who do we have here?

PHILLIPS: Sorry, sir. I—

BARTON: What's the meaning of this? I didn't let you in. Phillips, what's going on?

ARTHUR: Hush hush, Barton. Let the poor woman answer.

VERA: (*A curtsey.*) Good evening, my Lord! I apologize for the interruption, but we were under the impression that your estate was open for visitors today and—

The following dialogue should run on top of one another.

BARTON: Yes, but that's not until next week! We haven't even advertised—

PHILLIPS: I tried to tell them—

JOEY: If this tour's cancelled, I'm gonna be askin' for a refund.

VERA: A refund?

BERLIN: Joey, don't start that again. You promised me—

BARTON: (*To PHILLIPS.*) You just let these complete strangers into Whitehall without so much as an explanation—

PHILLIPS: I never let them in, sir! I swear on it!

ARTHUR: QUIET!! (*Everyone stops.*) Thank you. Now, since everyone seems to be in the dark, let's begin with introductions, shall we?

BARTON: Of course, My Lord.

ARTHUR: (*To VERA.*) Lord Arthur Harrison at your service. And you are?

VERA: Vera Stapleton, my Lord.

ARTHUR: Miss Stapleton. Welcome to Whitehall Estates. Would you introduce me to your companions?

VERA: Yes, of course! This is Miss Bertha Atwood. (*BERLIN curtsies dramatically.*) And her fiancé, Mister John Dixon. (*He nods.*) They are on holiday together and I am their chaperone for the duration.

JOEY: Chaperone?

BERLIN: (*Through her teeth.*) Yes, dearest. We must have a chaperone at all times, remember? It's the proper way.

ARTHUR: Indeed it is.

VERA: Yes. We were... in the area and overheard someone say that the house was open for visitors, so we thought we'd stop in and have a look.

BARTON: And how did you get in?

VERA: Well we—

BERLIN: We did knock. (*They all look at her.*) But there was no answer. And since the door wasn't locked, we thought we'd just walk in. Just for a quick peek.

BARTON: A quick peek?

ARTHUR: (*Amused.*) Indeed.

BERLIN: We didn't mean any harm by it.

ARTHUR: Of course you didn't, my dear. I tell you what. Why don't we all have some tea and then I'll take you on a tour of the house myself. What do you say to that, Barton?

BARTON: My Lord, I feel I must insist that—

ARTHUR: Barton. These people are our guests. Besides, it'll help me practice for when we really open the house up! Now, since I'm not dressed for company, please excuse me while I change into something more appropriate. Barton, take care of them, will you? Anything they need. (*He begins to leave. See's FANNY'S Chamber pot then stops.*) Oh dear, was there an accident?

PHILLIPS: Yes, sir. A small one. I've taken care of it.

ARTHUR: (*As he exits USR.*) Did you send for the doctor?

PHILLIPS: No need, sir. It swept right up.

ARTHUR: (*Stops.*) ...swept? (*Thinks, shakes head and exits.*)

PHILLIPS: ...Doctor?

FANNY shrugs and places chamber pot on mantelpiece.

BARTON: Fanny, no! Take that offensive object back to where you found it. Then go check to see if they've finished with their tea in the parlor.

FANNY: Tea?

BARTON: You did bring them their tea?

FANNY: (*Devastated.*) Oh no! I forgot.

PHILLIPS: You mean they've been sitting in there for ten minutes without service!?

BARTON: Mrs. Phillips, take care of this at once!

PHILLIPS: (*Re: the tourists.*) But, what about them?

BARTON: I'll look after them, now get a move on! Both of you!

FANNY and PHILLIPS exit hastily. BARTON surveys the visitors. There is an awkward pause.

VERA: Pardon me, but might we be allowed to sit?

BARTON: You might.

VERA: Thank you. *(They all sit on the settee. Another pause.)*

BERLIN: *(Suddenly.)* What a fine settee! I don't believe I've ever sat in one as grand as this.

JOEY: One rump rest is as good as another.

BERLIN: Oh, don't be so cheeky!

JOEY: Ha! Cheeky. *(Rubs his bum.)*

They laugh rudely, VERA elbows JOEY.

VERA: *(Quickly.)* So tell me, Barton. How long have you been employed at Whitehall?

BARTON: Long enough to know the difference between a visitor and an intruder, mum.

VERA: Oh, we're not intruding, surely.

BARTON: Begging your pardon miss, but might I inquire as to the duration of your visit?

VERA: Well—

BERLIN: We're here to attend the ball!

JOEY: The ball?

VERA: Ball?

BARTON: Ball? What ball?

BERLIN: Isn't there to be a ball? I thought they were always having balls. *(JOEY snorts. VERA shoots him a look. To VERA.)* I simply won't leave until I get to attend one! I've been practicing my steps for weeks! Oh, I'll have to find something to wear of course.

JOEY: I didn't sign up for that, Berlie. You know I don't dance.

VERA: Indeed, Bertha. I'm not certain that there will be a ball—

BERLIN: But you said—

VERA: *(Snapping.)* Yes, I know what I said! *(Beat. Calmer.)* I'm sorry to disappoint you my dear but... difficult as it might be for you to believe and as shocking as it might be for you to hear, Vera does NOT KNOW EVERYTHING!

There is a tense moment. We hear a bell tinkling offstage. BARTON eyes them for another moment and then reluctantly says.

BARTON: I'll advise you to wait here for his Lordship to return. *(He exits USR.)*

BERLIN: Well! I don't think he likes us very much. Now what?

VERA: We wait.

They wait. For a count of six.

BERLIN: I'm hungry.

JOEY: I'm bored.

VERA: *(Drily.)* I'm mortified. *(She stands and crossed DSR.)* Might I remind you both that while we are here, you must adhere to the names we agreed upon? *(She reaches into her handbag and pulls out a pocket watch.)*

BERLIN: I don't see why we can't use our real names.

VERA: My dear, Berlin is a lovely name, but it's far too contemporary. Nobody was named Berlin in this time. And no one was called Joey. Bertha and John were very common names during this period and those are the names we all agreed upon. We can't have you standing out and disrupting the timeline now, can we?

BERLIN: But I hate the name Bertha. It sounds like I should be fat!

VERA: That could have been arranged, but you waived the plus-size package, remember?

JOEY: John's fine with me. Easy to remember.

BERLIN: Oh shut up, Joey.

VERA: John!

BERLIN: John! Argh! So, what? Are we just supposed to wait around here? This isn't what I thought it would be.

JOEY: You're telling me!

BERLIN: I thought there would be a fancy ball. I distinctly remember seeing a picture of one in the catalogue!

VERA: *(Looking at her device.)* I don't understand. Did we get sent to the wrong property?

BERLIN: And they certainly aren't as welcoming as we were led to believe either.

VERA: The readings on my Time Catcher indicate that this is the correct time and place. But they were supposed to be at a funeral today. I wonder what's changed.

JOEY: (*Stands, crosses DSR.*) Here, let me have a look.

VERA: (*Pulling away.*) Uh uh uh! Only a certified Timeline Tour Guide can handle a Time Catcher. It takes years of training! Hundreds upon hundreds of hours dedicated to Timeline Studies. Not to mention the yards and yards of red tape it takes to own one. There are licenses, certifications, permits; all signed exclusively by the Prime Time Warden. You think I'm just going to hand it over to a pluck like you?

JOEY: Hey!

VERA: Even if I were, each Time Catcher is programmed to respond only to its assigned owner. If you were to open it, you would swear it was just an ordinary pocket watch. Now, just let me do a quick scan of this place. I can't imagine what could have corrupted the timeline.

JOEY: (*Sits in SR Chair.*) We should have done my tour first.

BERLIN: That's not very gentleman-like of you.

JOEY: Yeah, well I ain't no gentleman.

BERLIN: (*Stands, fidgeting.*) At least you look the part. I'm not sure how much longer I can stand being in this gown. I thought that they, you know, wore corsets back then; I had no idea that they just let it all hang out!

JOEY: I like what it does to your titties, though.

BERLIN: Oh, do you now? Hee hee! (*She jiggles them and jumps on his lap.*)

VERA: Stop it, you two!

JOEY: If you'd have let me go first, we'd be standing on the hull of a Viking ship right now.

BERLIN: (*Stands crosses SL.*) Oh, Joey. You and your Vikings...

JOEY: (*Excitedly.*) They'd be fighting over who gets to lead the raid on the next village and who plunders what, and who gets first dibs on the women-folk!

VERA: Shhh!

BERLIN: Women folk... do you hear yourself? That's YOUR idea of a holiday? Frolicking about with the Vikings?

JOEY: (*Defensively.*) Vikings don't frolic!

BERLIN: Eating nothing but salted fish, wearing animal skins, and getting sick over the side of a primitive boat with no stabilizers? They've got no stabilizers, Joey! And you without your Dramamine! There'll be drums pounding over and over and over again; seawater in your eyes and sand in your pants.

JOEY: See, that's the thing. They don't wear no pants!

VERA: Quiet!

BERLIN: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh! They don't wear no pants, eh? Well, that's another kettle of custard, isn't it! Sign me up Joey! I want to spend my holiday with a boatload of sweaty, brutal men with no pants on! (*Sits on Settee. Beat. Reconsiders.*) Wait a minute...

VERA: Something is wrong here.

BERLIN: Yes, something's wrong alright. My boyfriend would rather play with a bunch of dirty Vikings than spend a weekend in the romantic era with me. I'm beginning to doubt the substance of his manhood.

VERA: No! I mean something's wrong, something is terribly, terribly wrong here. My Time Catcher is indicating a shift has occurred.

BERLIN: A shift?

VERA: (*Crossing USL of Settee.*) I don't know how that's possible. But at least we know that I didn't make a mistake. My coordinates were indeed correct, but the timeline had been corrupted slightly. This is very bad. I'm sorry, you two but I'm afraid we'll have to leave right now.

VERA crosses to DSR exit.

JOEY: (*Jumping up.*) Good!

BERLIN: But we just got here!

VERA: I know, I know. But this is serious. I have to report this to the Prime Time Warden. Come on now—

JOEY is trying to pull BERLIN to DSR exit but OLIVIA enters, followed by JOHN and TAYLOR. TAYLOR is a vicar; he's tall, handsome and... somewhat odd. He lingers USR.

OLIVIA: (*Crossing to Fireplace.*) I don't care what you call it, Mister Taylor. What you describe has all the marks of witchcraft.

JOHN: Mama, he's entitled to his own opinion.

OLIVIA: Of course, he is. And I'm entitled to call it witchcraft. (*Turns, Sees VERA et al.*) Dear me. Who are you?

VERA: Oh! I'm terribly sorry—

ARTHUR enters USR. He has changed into something more suited for guests.

ARTHUR: Ah! There you are, my dear! I thought you were having tea in the parlor.

OLIVIA: (*Crossing to SL Chair.*) That's what we all thought. But Fanny seems to be playing a game of hide and seek with her services, so I thought I'd provide her with a moving target.

OLIVIA sits and JOHN stands behind as FANNY enters hurriedly with the tea service, PHILLIPS following close behind.

ARTHUR: Ah! And I see the vicar has arrived. Wonderful to see you, Mister Taylor! (*Shakes his hand. To OLIVIA.*) My dear, may I present Miss Vera Stapleton and her charge Bertha Atwood and her fiancé Mister John Dixon. This is my wife, Lady Harrison, and our son John.

JOEY: (*At VERA.*) John?

OLIVIA: How do you do?

JOHN: How do you do?

VERA and BERLIN curtsey, JOEY bows.

OLIVIA: And this is Warren Taylor. Our new vicar.

TAYLOR: (*USR Bowing.*) A pleasure to meet you all.

BERLIN: (*Another curtsey.*) A pleasure to meet YOU.

TAYLOR: Are you staying at the Compton Inn as well?

VERA: No, as a matter of fact—

BERLIN: Yes! We are. We're staying at the Compton Inn.

VERA and JOEY stare at her quizzically.

TAYLOR: Oh! Really! I don't believe I've seen you there. Have you just arrived?

JOEY: Berl—

BERLIN: (*Flirty.*) Yes. We've just arrived. Just. So you're the new vicar, Eh? Rather tall for a man in your profession, aren't you?

TAYLOR: Not really. I mean, I suppose I am. Relatively speaking.

BERLIN: Ooh. Golly!

TAYLOR: What?

BERLIN looks at VERA who shakes her head; IE: wrong era.

BERLIN: (*Off VERA'S look.*) Oh. Um, nothing.

JOEY: If you're the new vicar, how come you're staying at the inn? Don't you live at the church or parish or whatever?

BERLIN: (*Stage whisper.*) Joey.

VERA: John!

JOHN: Yes?

JOEY: What?

TAYLOR: (*After a beat.*) Actually, I will be staying at the Parish, but the boiler has taken to leaking so I'm staying at the Inn until it's repaired.

OLIVIA: This is all thoroughly entertaining, but might I ask what your business is here?

ARTHUR: They are here to tour the house. But I thought we'd have some tea first. Uh, Phillips! Could you provide us with the required additions?

PHILLIPS: Yes, my lord. (*Exits SL.*)

VERA: Actually—

OLIVIA: I thought the touring wasn't to start until next week.

VERA: Yes, and I'm terribly sorry about the mix up. So, we shall intrude on your privacy no further. Come now, Bertha! John.

JOHN: Yes?

ARTHUR: Nonsense!

BERLIN: But I don't want to go! I'd like to have some tea!

VERA: Now, now. We shall come back next week. I promise.

JOHN: There's no need for that, is there?

ARTHUR: Of course not. Have some tea with us and then we'll tour the house together. It's not as though we have anything better to do. (*Crossed USL as BERLIN, JOEY, and VERA cross to settee and sit.*)

OLIVIA: Darling, your talent for stating the obvious confirms that you remain oblivious.

ARTHUR: (*Pleased.*) Thank you, my dear.

PHILLIPS enters with additional tea service. BERLIN sits SL on settee and JOEY is about to sit next to her, but VERA stops him with a pointed hiccup. He freezes half-stooped until she sits SR on the settee. He waits, VERA nods and then he sits down in the center. TAYLOR sits in SR chair. ARTHUR serves himself a drink and stands SR of TAYLOR and JOHN stands behind OLIVIA. During the following dialogue, PHILLIPS and FANNY serve the tea. When they have all been served, FANNY and PHILLIPS exit with the tea service USL.

ARTHUR: (*Standing USL.*) Well then! Isn't this nice. Tell me about yourselves. What part of the country are you from?

VERA: The south.

ARTHUR: Oh, the south! I do love the south. Are you as far as Wessex or closer to Kent?

VERA: Winchester, actually.

ARTHUR: Ah. Winchester. Lovely country there.

PHILLIPS: (*To VERA.*) Milk and sugar?

VERA: Yes, one lump please.

OLIVIA: I would have expected you to say you have come from a good deal further south than Winchester; judging by your complexion, miss Bertha. Get a great deal of sun in Winchester, do you?

JOHN: Mama...

BERLIN: (*Flattered.*) Thank you. Yes.

FANNY: (*To BERLIN.*) How do you take your tea, miss?

BERLIN: Two lumps. Lots of milk.

She winks at TAYLOR meaningfully. JOEY clears his throat.

VERA: Uh, yes. She did get a great deal of sun. But that is owing to the fact that we were quite recently visiting Spain.

ARTHUR: Ah. Spain.

OLIVIA: Which part of Spain?

VERA: Cadiz.

OLIVIA: Indeed?

JOHN: (*To BERLIN.*) And did you enjoy your time there?

BERLIN: Where?

JOHN: In Spain.

BERLIN: Oh! Oh yes of course. Especially their food.

JOHN: Really?

VERA: The Spanish cuisine is quite extraordinary.

BERLIN: Oh yes; though a bit too spicy for me sometimes.

JOEY: Turns my stomach.

BERLIN: Have you ever been to Spain, Mister Taylor?

TAYLOR: Me? Oh, no. I live on rather a modest stipend.

ARTHUR: I imagine it would be rather difficult for a clergyman to find time to travel abroad; let alone all the way to Spain.

BERLIN: You should make it a ministry trip! You could go to Spain to preach the Word! The church would pay for the journey, wouldn't they?

VERA: Bertha, dear—

TAYLOR: Oh, no. I don't think I would do very well in Spain.

OLIVIA: The Spanish Inquisition handled their conversion rate rather nicely so I imagine there wouldn't be any sinners left for you to preach to.

TAYLOR: Uh. Yes.

OLIVIA: I, on the other hand have no desire to travel abroad. There are far too many unknowns; far too many distractions... too many variables that cannot be taken into early account. Thusly, it is impossible to completely prepare oneself for when the unexpected occurs. The trouble with tourists is they never really know what they are getting into. Wouldn't you agree, Miss Stapleton?

JOEY slurps his tea loudly. She glares at him.

VERA: (*Glaring at BERLIN.*) I would indeed.

BERLIN: (*Oblivious.*) I like to travel. I like not knowing what to expect. It's much more exciting to live a life full of interesting diversions rather than a life of predictability.

JOEY: Not me. I don't like to be surprised.

ARTHUR: It depends on the nature of the surprise, wouldn't it?

JOHN: Oh, I like a good surprise. (*Beat. Suddenly loud.*) "Surprise! It's your birthday!" (*He laughs.*)

There is an awkward pause as everyone recovers from their astonishment.

OLIVIA: (*A beat.*) Yes, I can imagine how that would sneak up on you.

VERA recites the following as though she has practiced it for months, delivering it swiftly and enthusiastically. Everyone freezes and stares at her in awe.

VERA: I should think that having a life of balance is the most desirable! Having the foresight to anticipate potential danger and preparing for the worst while remaining optimistic as to the possibility for adventure that exploring different cultures can provide. Of course, traveling abroad does have its potential hazards, therefore it is our duty to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

JOEY slurps again.

OLIVIA: (*Oddly irritated.*) And how does one prepare for the worst when the unthinkable happens? How, for example, does one prepare for an encounter with a monster?

BERLIN: A... monster?

VERA: Sorry?

OLIVIA: (*Calmer.*) Do forgive me.

She rises, the men stand—except JOEY. BERLIN also stands, then realizes her folly and sits back down. VERA and BERLIN elbow JOEY who jumps to his feet not really knowing why.

OLIVIA: There's a trifle too much bergamot in my tea, it's not agreeing with my stomach.

VERA: (*Standing. So does BERLIN.*) The fault is mine, Lady Harrison. I shouldn't have—

OLIVIA: Not at all.

ARTHUR: Perhaps we should begin the tour?

VERA: As I said, we really should be leaving. I feel as though we've imposed on your kindness for far too long.

ARTHUR: Nonsense! We are quite enjoying your company. Aren't we dear?

OLIVIA: Stimulating, to be sure.

VERA: Yes, but as I said we really should be going—

BERLIN: Vera!

ARTHUR: Come, come. You've traveled all this way and I assure you it's no trouble at all! Let's begin in the library, shall we?

BERLIN: We should be delighted! Isn't that right, Vera?

VERA: (*Uncertain.*) Oh. Very well.

VERA, JOEY, and BERLIN cross DSR. OLIVIA crosses USC to set her tea down on sideboard.

OLIVIA: Arthur, please keep to the upper portions of the house. I doubt very much that the servants are prepared to have their living quarters on full display. I shall leave your company and retire to the garden. Good day to you all.

VERA: (*A curtsey.*) Thank you, my lady.

BERLIN: (*A curtsey.*) Thank you, my lady.

JOEY: (*A curtsey. Oop! BOW!*) My—lady!

ARTHUR: Mister Taylor? John? Would you care to join us on our excursion?

BERLIN: Yes, please join us, Mister Taylor!

TAYLOR: Perhaps another time.

ARTHUR: Come, come. You might enjoy it! I have an extensive collection of exotic butterflies in the library. Would that not interest you?

TAYLOR: Thank you, but I really should be getting back. Loads to unpack. It was lovely meeting you all.

BERLIN: Lovely meeting you too!

JOEY: Come on Berl—

BERLIN: (*Coy.*) It's Bertha, John! Bertha! For heaven's sake. Can't you even remember my name?

BERLIN smiles and waves at TAYLOR as she exits after VERA DSR followed by ARTHUR and JOEY.

OLIVIA: Aren't you going to accompany them, John?

JOHN: I do believe I will!

TAYLOR: Actually, I could use his help at the Inn. If it's not too much trouble.

OLIVIA: What sort of help?

TAYLOR: I should like to get his perspective on my first sermon. Since I'm still new to the area I could use some advice on what method would be the most effective.

JOHN: I'm afraid I don't know much about sermons. I can't imagine how much help I could provide.

TAYLOR: I would like some insight as to what interests the local people have that I might touch upon.

OLIVIA: Perhaps you could woo them with the heroic tale of how the almighty guided you to the lake to save the life of my son.

TAYLOR: Oh, I wouldn't want to do that. I was just in the right place at the right time.

OLIVIA: Indeed? So, you don't claim that it was divine intervention after all?

TAYLOR: Well, yes, of course I do! It was divine intervention. (*Sign of the cross.*) It must have been. I just... I prefer not to make a spectacle of myself, that's all.

OLIVIA: Ah yes. Modesty is the easiest virtue to impersonate, isn't it?

JOHN: Mama, please.

OLIVIA: Very well. I shall leave you two to discuss the meekness of heroism. I'll be in the garden. Good afternoon, Mister Taylor.

TAYLOR: Good afternoon, Lady Harrison. (*OLIVIA exits.*) I don't think she likes me very much.

JOHN: She finds it difficult to like anybody.

TAYLOR: (*Looking at pocket watch.*) Are you sure you won't come to the Inn with me? I should like to have some company.

JOHN: I think I had better stay here. Father and I are to go fishing this afternoon. You're welcome to join us, of course!

TAYLOR: Fishing? Really? So soon after your accident? I should think you'd wish to avoid the water after what happened.

JOHN: Father thinks it'll be good for me to "get back on the horse" as it were. Although I've no idea what horses have to do with anything.

TAYLOR: He'll be occupied with those tourists for a while though, won't he?

JOHN: Yes, but—

TAYLOR: I do wish you would come with me... To be frank; there was something that I very much wanted to show you. (*Beat. He moves closer.*) Something I think you'd be keenly interested in.

JOHN: Really? What's that?

TAYLOR: Come to the Inn and I'll show you.

JOHN: (*A beat.*) Perhaps tomorrow. (*He glances SR.*) That young woman was very attractive, don't you think? She took quite a fancy to you.

TAYLOR: Yes, a bit too forward for my taste. Besides, didn't your father say that berk she's with is her fiancé?

JOHN: Berk?

TAYLOR: Hm?

JOHN: (*Beat.*) Nothing, I just thought you called him a... berk? Berk. (*Chuckles.*) What does that mean? I'm not familiar with that term. Is it new?

TAYLOR: (*An embarrassed laugh.*) Sorry, I don't know why I said that.

JOHN: Ah.

Suddenly we hear a chime. A very digital chime coming from TAYLOR'S waistcoat.

JOHN: What was that?

TAYLOR: What?

JOHN: Can you not hear it? I do believe it came from your pocket.

TAYLOR: Really? (*Opens pocket.*) Huh. I suppose it did.

He pulls out a pocket watch and looks at it absently.

TAYLOR: Hm. Very odd thing.

Suddenly, he pulls the chain tight and wraps it around JOHN'S neck like a garrote. JOHN gasps and struggles violently but TAYLOR has an excruciating grip. As he's strangling JOHN, his calm voice drops an octave and his timid demeanor changes dramatically to that of an arrogant psychopath.

TAYLOR: Sorry old chap, I wanted to do this at the Inn but nooooo, you had to insist upon staying here. God, you make it so easy don't you! Romantic era indeed! Lambs to the bloody slaughter is what you all are! You rich bastards are all the same; dewy damsels and juicy gentlemen all begging to be popped off one—*(He jerks.)* by one! *(Again.)* By one!

JOHN is fading; his eyes bulging. He sinks to the floor and TAYLOR goes down with him. TAYLOR is grinning madly and whispering feverishly in JOHN'S ear as he pulls tighter.

TAYLOR: I can hear it! Yeah, yeah come on now, go. Come on. Just go. Go!

TAYLOR grunts with one last jerk of the chain. Finally, JOHN goes limp. All we hear is the sound of TAYLOR panting from the strain. Suddenly JOEY enters swiftly from SR. He walks directly to the bar UCR and, with his back to the audience; he pours himself a quick scotch. He throws back a mouthful then turns around and, upon seeing TAYLOR with JOHN dead on the floor, he freezes. TAYLOR removes the watch and chain from JOHN'S throat and stands up straight, facing JOEY.

TAYLOR: *(Timid voice again.)* Do you believe in magic?

JOEY: What?

TAYLOR: Do you believe in magic?

JOEY: I um—

TAYLOR: *(Approaching JOEY.)* Come, come. I understand it's rather an odd question. But I was just showing John here one of my... illusions and, as you can see, something went dreadfully wrong. I think it's because he didn't really believe. So, I'll ask again. Do you. *(Voice gets lower.)* Believe. *(Darkly.)* In magic?

JOEY: Um. *(Heavy pause.)* Yes?

TAYLOR: (*Brightly.*) Excellent! Let me show you something. Now pay close attention. I'm going to wind this watch here...

JOEY: (*Nervously.*) It's – it's got blood on it.

TAYLOR: Ooh that's alright, (*He rubs it on his sleeve.*) it'll still work. See? (*Shows it to him.*) Now I want you to count to three.

JOEY: Hold on. That looks like Miss Vera's watch. (*TAYLOR looks up at him, startled.*) How'd you get one of those? Oh my God. Are you a—(*TAYLOR looks off SR in a sudden panic.*) Are you—?

There is a loud, low single pulse and a sudden swift blackout and a ZAP! When the lights return TAYLOR has disappeared completely.

JOEY: HOLY SHIT!! (*He stands there frozen in complete shock.*) Oh my God. Ohhh my GOD. (*He slowly walks over and stares at JOHN'S body. A pause.*) Sir? Sir? (*Pokes him with his foot. Straightens. Formally.*) Ahem. Are you dead, sir? (*Panicking.*) Oh God he's dead. Oh my God, oh my GOD. What do I do? What do I do? (*He goes back to the bar, pours himself another drink and throws it back.*)

BERLIN: (*Offstage.*) Oh, John! John, dearest? Are you coming?

JOEY: Just a second!!! (*To himself.*) Okay, okay, okay okay... think, think think! (*A beat. He begins to pace.*) What do I do? What do I do? (*Beat.*) Wait a minute. (*Points.*) Dead body. (*Points.*) Murderous time-traveler on the loose. (*Points to himself.*) Nobody saw it but me. (*A smile appears.*) Best vacation EVER!

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING: *The same three hours later.*

AT RISE: *JOHN's dead body is gone. VERA is seated on the chair SR and JOEY is seated on the settee. BERLIN is standing at the fireplace. BARTON is standing guard at the US door wearing a scowl.*

VERA: Barton, might I ask—

BARTON: No.

VERA: But we weren't even—

BARTON: No.

BERLIN: I don't see why we have to stay here. We didn't do anything!

BARTON: You are to wait here until the constable is prepared to question you.

JOEY: But I already told you everything!

VERA: We have a very pressing matter that needs to be attended to!

BARTON: Madam, there cannot possibly be anything more pressing than the determination of what transpired here—

JOEY: But I already TOLD YOU—

BARTON: You CLAIM that our vicar, a man of GOD, murdered the son of Lord and Lady Harrison in cold blood. A week after he saved his life, no less! The sole heir to Whitehall Estates was brutally strangled in his own house moments after your sudden and inexplicable arrival and you expect us to just let you leave?

VERA: How long is this going to take?

BARTON: As long as is necessary!

VERA: This is all very upsetting. (*A beat. An idea.*) I fear that Miss Bertha there might faint!

BERLIN: (*Absently.*) No, I'm fine. (*Off VERA'S urgent look. Dramatically.*) Oh, but wait! (*Hand to forehead.*) Yes. Yes, indeeed! I feel very light in the head and – and—

VERA: Dizzy.

BERLIN: (*Gaining momentum.*) DIZZY! Very, very dizzy! Oh, dear me! I fear... I fear that I may... swoon!

She attempts what she believes to be a "swoon". She falls back in the SL chair and then slides dramatically to the floor.

VERA: Oh dear! Barton! Perhaps you might fetch her some water?

BERLIN: WATER!

BARTON: I'll just ring for the—

VERA: There's no time for that!

BARTON: Just lay her down on the—

VERA: Please! She needs it now!

BARTON: Surely, she could—

JOEY: For God's Sake man, get her some water! (*Beat.*) She's pregnant!

BARTON: What?

BERLIN: What?

BARTON looks at her. She recovers, hand now to her stomach. She reaches towards BARTON.

BERLIN: Oh! The baby! Please save my baby!

JOEY: Water! Now!!

BARTON, in a panic rushes out USL.

BERLIN: (*As he leaves.*) Ohhhh my baby!! Ohhhh!! (*BARTON'S gone. To JOEY.*) Pregnant?? Joey that was bloody brilliant!

She jumps on top of him and they make out on the settee.

VERA: Yes, yes. Good thinking Joey. (*She stands and takes out her pocket watch.*) There's nothing in the world that makes a man want to bolt out the door faster than the word "pregnant". Now, we don't have much time, so you need to tell me exactly— (*Turns. They are still lip-locked.*) Ahem! (*BERLIN is now moaning.*) AHEM! (*They stop. BERLIN is now SL on settee JOEY is C on Settee.*)

JOEY: (*To VERA.*) Sorry.

BERLIN: (*To JOEY.*) I want to have your baby. Right now.

VERA: As romantic as that sounds, it's not currently on the itinerary. Joey, are you quite certain that the watch he was carrying was a Time Catcher?

JOEY: Oh yeah. I could tell it was just like yours. And just before he disappeared, there was that funny sound and the room went black. It was definitely a Time Catcher.

BERLIN: (*Fingers in his hair.*) Smart.

VERA: And do you happen to see where he was going to?

JOEY: Not really. He just went kapoof!

VERA: (*Sits in SL Chair.*) Donkers!

BERLIN: Why does it matter where he was going to? We can just leave now, can't we?

VERA: Uhhh, no. We can't just leave. This has seriously upset the timeline! I have a legal and ethical responsibility to put it right!

BERLIN: Why do we have to do that?

VERA: Not we, my dear. Me.

BERLIN: So what? We're all stuck here until you figure it out? How long will that take? A week? A month?

VERA: Wait a minute. Wait. What did Barton say? "A week after he saved his life?"

JOEY: Yeah, so?

VERA: (*Stands.*) That's it!

BERLIN: That's what?

VERA: (*Crossing SL to Fireplace.*) That's what was wrong with the timeline in the first place. The family was supposed to be away at a funeral, remember? John was supposed to be dead already. A drowning accident I believe.

JOEY: That's odd.

VERA: That explains why my readings were off. John wasn't supposed to be alive. He was supposed to have drowned a week ago.

BERLIN: But why would Mister Taylor save John's life only kill him later? I don't get it.

OLIVIA: (*Entering from USR.*) Neither do I.

VERA: Oh! Um. My Lady. (*A curtsey.*) I—I cannot begin to express how sorry I am—

OLIVIA: Let us dispense with the tiresome formalities that society has infringed upon us. My son is dead. No amount of apology or condolences can change that.

VERA: If there's anything I can do—

OLIVIA: There is.

VERA: Oh!

OLIVIA: (*To JOEY.*) I understand, young man, that you were witness to the entire thing.

JOEY: (*Nervously.*) Um. Yes. Well, not the entire thing. Just the end of the thing-after the thing-the thing that... happened.

OLIVIA: And you are certain that it was Mister Taylor.

JOEY: Positive.

BERLIN: Too bad, too... He seemed so nice.

OLIVIA: You mean he was handsome.

BERLIN: (*Defensive.*) No! I mean yes, he was handsome. But he was nice too. I could tell. He didn't seem like a murderer.

JOEY: Are you calling me a liar now?

BERLIN: No! Of course not! I'm just surprised, that's all. He just didn't seem like a bad person, or a homicidal maniac or anything. He just seemed, you know... nice.

OLIVIA: My dear, being nice does not always equate to being good. And no one is ever what they seem to be. Best you learn that straightaway.

BERLIN: I already know all that. I'm not a simpleton.

VERA: Bertha...

OLIVIA: Then do make an effort to prove it, my dear. Wisdom is rarely found in the mouth that refuses to close. (*Sits in SR Chair.*)

BERLIN: (*Offended.*) Uh!

JOEY: It WAS Mister Taylor, my Lady. I'm positive.

OLIVIA: And how, pray, did he manage to escape without a trace?

VERA: Well, you see—

OLIVIA: I am asking mister—oh forgive me, what was your last name again?

JOEY: Uh... Dawson?

VERA: Dixon!

JOEY: Damn!

OLIVIA: (*A smile.*) I see. Imposters after all.

VERA: My Lady, I can explain.

OLIVIA: I'm sure you can. Explain it to me, then. Explain to me how my son was killed!

JOEY: It wasn't me!

OLIVIA: I know it wasn't you, you dullard! One look at you and I was instantly convinced that you lack the strength, not to mention the stomach to strangle a man to death. No, whoever did this—

VERA: (*A realization.*) Has done it before...

OLIVIA: (*Turning to her.*) Precisely.

BARTON rushes in USL with a glass of water.

BARTON: Here you are miss! Here you are! (*Stops.*) Oh! My Lady.

OLIVIA: What is it, Barton?

He stands frozen, holding the glass of water out in front of OLIVIA.

OLIVIA: Are you going to douse me with that, or did you simply forget to water the plants?

BARTON: *(Handing water to BERLIN.)* Oh, ah... the young lady took ill a moment ago and urgently required some water.

OLIVIA: *(Glancing at BERLIN.)* Took ill, did you?

BERLIN: *(Between gulps.)* I was swooning.

BARTON: Glad to see you've recovered.

JOEY: Not entirely though. *(Beat. BARTON looks at him.)* She's still —*(Pats his tummy.)* you know.

BARTON clears his throat. JOEY winks.

OLIVIA: Thank you, Barton. Do what you can to assist Lord Harrison. I will stay here until the constable has assembled his thoughts and gathered his wits.

BARTON: But... I was instructed to—

OLIVIA: Not to worry. I will keep an eye on these highly suspicious people, I assure you. Off you go.

BARTON: As you wish. *(Bows and exits.)*

VERA: *(After BARTON has left.)* My lady—

OLIVIA: I have already made up my mind about you.

VERA: You have?

OLIVIA: Don't let my appearance fool you, Miss Vera; the only thing I know of that is sharper than my mind is my tongue. *(Beat.)* At times I wish my teeth were a bit sharper, but this is ancient England, after all.

VERA: Yes, well—wait... what did you say?

OLIVIA: You heard me correctly. Ancient. England. It took a while for me to deduce what was happening, but now that I've spent some time with you all I have finally figured it out. None of you are actually from here, are you?

VERA: *(Crosses to SL of settee.)* That is correct, my Lady. We are touring the countryside—

OLIVIA: In fact, you are not even from this century, are you?

VERA: What?

JOEY: Hey, how did you— *(VERA swats him.)*

OLIVIA: (*A smile.*) Excellent. (*She stands and crosses to the fireplace.*) Now, there is little time to explain, but if you do exactly what I ask, I promise I shall repay you tenfold in details and diamonds when you return.

VERA: Details?

BERLIN: Diamonds?

JOEY: Return? Wait. You're going to let us all leave?

OLIVIA: Yes, you must leave right now and come back to exactly the same moment as you did before. Only this time, when you first meet me, show me that watch that you conceal in your pocket. (*VERA'S eyes get very wide.*) Yes. And when that astonishment appears on my face, I want you to say the name: Bretton Wheeler.

VERA: (*Horried.*) Bretton Wheeler? Oh no! Oh, dear God in heaven!

OLIVIA: Yes. We should all hope that he still is. Hurry now. Off you go!

VERA: (*Ushers BERLIN and JOEY DSR.*) Right. Let's go, you two! Quickly now! (*To OLIVIA.*) Oh, thank you! Thank you ever so much! We will be back! That I can promise you!

They all exit DSR.

OLIVIA: (*As they leave.*) Come back and save him! Save my son!

There is a low pulse, a blackout and a zap! When the lights return, OLIVIA sighs turns SL and speaks to the portrait of Lord Sanderson.

OLIVIA: Don't look at me like that, you old bastard. I know... you were right all along weren't you? (*Looks off to where they departed.*) I can only hope that they come back in time. (*Beat. Looks at the picture again. A smile.*) See what I did there?

Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

THE TROUBLE WITH TOURISTS

By Becky Kimsey

For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please
contact us at:

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

WWW.HEUERPUB.COM

DO NOT COPY