

The Canterville Ghost

Characters (by part size):

- Sir Simon (40)
- Mr Otis (39)
- Mrs Otis (33)
- Virginia (28)
- Washington (22)
- Clark (22)
- Lewis (22)
- James (17)
- Lord Canterville (6)

Scene 1: Buying the Chase

Lord Canterville and Mr Otis are involved in a long discussion and have some forms and paper in front of them.

Lord Canterville: I must tell you, Sir, that I think you rather foolish. We haven't wanted to live here since my great grand-aunt the DowagerDuchess of Bolton felt two skeleton hands being placed on her shoulders.

Mr Otis: My Lord, I will take the house, and everything in it—including the ghost and the furniture.

Lord Canterville: I fear the ghost exists—and be warned, he always appears before the death of any member of my family.

Mr Otis: And so does the family doctor, Lord Canterville. I come from a modern country where we have everything money can buy. I reckon that if there were such a thing as a ghost in Europe, we'd have it at home in a very short time in one of our public museums, or as part of a traveling road show.

Lord Canterville: If you don't mind a ghost in your house, it's quite all right with me. But please remember that I warned you.

Mr Otis: I understand Sir. However, there is no such thing as a ghost, and I guess that the laws of Nature are not going to be suspended for the British aristocracy. And, if there *is* such a thing as a ghost, I will be forced to charge him rent.

Scene 2: Calling the Family

Mr Otis is using a payphone on one side. Mrs Otis and the rest are on the other side on the phone.

Mr Otis: Operator, you must connect me at once! [listens] What? No, I can't. [listens] Do you know who I am, madam? I'll have my attorneys get you shut down at once!

In the Otis's house, phone rings and everyone rushes to the phone.

Mrs Otis: Hello?

Mr Otis: It's your husband.

Mrs Otis: What you do want?

Mr Otis: Can you believe you much they're charging me for this call? It's absolutely ridiculous!

Mrs Otis: If everything all right, dear?

Mr Otis: Yes, but at these rates, it leaves no time to explain. Now I really must go.

Mrs Otis: You must have called for a reason?

Mr Otis: Of course. [pause] Oh yes, I almost forgot! Pack your bags, we're moving to England! Your ship leaves on July 4th. They say the house is haunted by a dreadful ghost. Now I really must go. [click]

Mr Otis exits.

Mrs Otis: We're leaving on July 4th to live in a haunted house in England.

Lewis: With a real live ghost?

Clark: Cool! I wonder if he'll like fire crackers?

Washington: I assure you, there are no such things as ghosts. They violate all sorts of natural laws. If father were here, he'd explain it to you right now.

Virginia: Isn't July 4th tomorrow?

Washington: Very nice of father, we get to see one last patriotic fireworks display before we leave.

Virginia: Tomorrow?

Lewis: Mother, isn't July 4th tomorrow?

Mrs Otis: What?!

Washington: Good point Lewis.

Mrs Otis: We're supposed to leave tomorrow? Your father is a lunatic! Washington, get the crates from the attic! Virginia, pack the silverware. Boys, just try not to blow anything up between now and tomorrow! Move, move!

Scene 3: Touring the Chase

The Otis Family is walking up to the chase and the Butler is waiting for them.

James: I bid you welcome to Canterville Chase.

Mr Otis: Good day, James. Let me introduce you to my family. This is my wife, Mrs Lucretia Otis.

Mrs Otis: *Shakes hands.*

Mr Otis: This is my eldest son Washington. Named after the fine intrepid American President...

Mrs Otis: ...George Washington.

Washington: *Shakes hands.*

Mr Otis: This is my daughter, Virginia. Named after the fine intrepid American State, Virginia.

Virginia: *Shakes hands.*

Off-stage: Bang!

Mr Otis: And those are the twins. They are named Lewis and Clark—named after those fine, intrepid,

American explorers.

Lewis and Clark run on stage.

Mrs Otis: Say hi to James.

Lewis: Hi James, where's the fridge? I'm thirsty.

Clark: Hey, funny hat you have there!

James: Let me show you all around.

James: This is the door to the kitchen next to the fire place. This is the beautiful mahogany paneling. This is the antique settee—made of 400 year old teak.

Virginia: Mother! Look at this, it looks like something was spilled on the rug here.

Mrs Otis: Oh dear, it looks like blood.

James: Yes, it's blood from Elanore de Canterville. She was murdered there about 300 years ago. This table here is a 450 year old, made from walnut. And look at this elegant brocade on this chair.

Mrs Otis: That's horrible!

James: No, it's the finest brocade, Madam, brought all the way from France.

Virginia: No, no! The rug! Somebody was killed there?

James: Yes, Sir Simon de Canterville killed his wife there. Look at the fine craftsmanship around the chimney...

Mrs Otis: [interrupting] Pardon me, but who is this Simon guy?

James: Oh, just a relation of my employers. That's him on the wall. He hasn't been seen since he killed Elanore.

Mrs Otis: James, remove that ghastly man from our wall *at once*.

James remove portrait and sets it on table. Virginia sits down and gets her paints out.

Lewis: Probably dead by now.

Clark: Yeah, I bet that's why he haunts the place [calling] Sir Simon! Sir Simon! Where are you hiding, you coward? Come out and show yourself!

Lewis: Yeah, and we've got fire crackers!

Mrs Otis: Do be quiet Lewis and Clark!

James: I wouldn't concern yourself too much. He mostly only likes to play tricks nowadays. Now do come and sit on this sofa. It has some of the best eiderdown...

Washington: Just give me a second to remove this stain.

James: Oh, I wouldn't. It can't be removed, Sir Simon simply won't permit it. It's one of his little tricks.

Washington: Nonsense! There's nothing *Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover* and *Paragon Detergent* can't clean up! [falls to knees and starts cleaning floor]

Lewis: Let's go find the ghost!

Clark: Yeah, let's go grab our pea shooters and scare him!

Lewis and Clark exit.

Mrs Otis: Be careful, boys!

Loud bang offstage. James faints.

Mrs Otis: Oh dear, what can we do with a butler who faints?

Mr Otis: We'll have to dock his wages. He won't faint after that.

James gets up.

James: Sorry about that. Now let me continue my tour. Look at the fine grain in this old chair here. And this fine bookcase here made of 100% genuine English rosewood. And...

Mr Otis: [interrupts] Yes, very nice James. Now, if you excuse us, we're all very tired. Good night.

James: Of course. I'm sorry for keeping you. Good night.

Mrs Otis turns portrait around so it's facing the wall. All exit.

Scene 4: Sir Simon Appears

Sir Simon appears dressed as a simple ghost. He walks into the library and looks around at the junk the Otises have left, and at the lack of a bloodstain.

Sir Simon: Who do these people think they are? They walk in here like they own the place, leave their stuff all about [kicks bags], remove my family's portraits [places portrait back on wall], *and* remove my bloodstain. And that's just on the first day!

Takes some of Virginia's paints and falls to knees.

Sir Simon: I've kept this bloodstain here for 300 years, 11 months, and 15 days now, and I'm not about to let a few Americans ruin my reputation.

Gets up, paces around—throws a stack of paper on the ground and moans a little.

Sir Simon: Yes, I must evict these people. I will send them scurrying to find the next ship back to America.

Lets out a terrifying moan and disappears.

Scene 5: The Bloodstain Reappears

The next morning. Library is empty.

Lewis and Clark enter.

Lewis: Look, the bloodstain is back! That ghost must have been here.

Clark: Let's camp out here tonight and wait for him.

Lewis: We can sleep under the desk.

Clark: No, we need to corner him, otherwise he'll be able to escape. You sleep by the door.

Lewis: He'll step on me!

Clark: [Not hearing Lewis] And I'll sleep on top of desk so I can jump on top of him.

Lewis: No, let's switch. I'm bigger than you.

Clark: No you're not, I'm taller.

Lewis: Are not! Look, [stands on table], I am!

Clark: Let's go get our pillows.

Lewis and Clark exit

Mr and Mrs Otis enter

Mrs Otis: Oh, look at this mess! [motions to papers on ground]. Lewis and Clark must have been here.

Mrs Otis: [calling] Lewis! Clark!

Lewis and Clark enter with pillows.

Mrs Otis: What on Earth are you doing with your pillows?!

Clark: We're gonna catch the ghost tonight!

Lewis: [Motions to bloodstain] See, he was here last night! The bloodstain is back.

Mrs Otis: How horrid! He must have spread the papers on the ground too.

Mr Otis: Dear, I assure you, there is no such thing as a ghost. There's obviously a draft somewhere in this room. I'll have Washington fix it later today.

Mrs Otis: And the bloodstain?

Twins put their pillows on top of table and exit.

Mr Otis: Of course, it's the cat. He caught a mouse last night. Good thing too, I can't stand mice eating the pages of my books.

James enters

Mrs Otis: James! Wake up! Clean this blood up immediately!

James: Sorry, Madam, I can't do that. Sir Simon won't let me.

Mrs Otis: Yes, you can. And grab some coffee on your way to get the cleaner. Please remember not to mixup the detergent with the water.

James exists. Washington enters.

Washington: Good morning, everybody. Sleep well last night? Oh, look, the bloodstain is back. I guess James was right about the ghost. Well, *Pinkerton's* won't let him win! [scrubs floor]

Virginia Enters and sits at desk and takes paints out of box

Virginia: Odd, I wonder where I put my brick red paint. It's not here anymore. [paints]

James enters.

Mrs Otis: Look, the portrait of that horrid murderer is back on my wall! James, did you do that?

James: [screams] Ahhh! What?!

James faints, drops coffee cups.

Washington: Oh dear, James seems to have fainted again. I'll remember to dock his wages. Father, does \$3.50 a minute sound fair? [writes on paper]

James jumps up.

James: Sorry about that, Madam. Did I do what? I haven't done a thing. Well, except get the coffee.

Mrs Otis: Pick up these papers!

James picks up papers, Washington sits down

Washington: I must write a letter to the *Journal of Paranormal Phenomena*.

James: So you admit the ghost exists?

Washington: Well, I suppose that... [interrupted]

Mr Otis: No, no, no, no. Washington is a regular contributor and he writes a letter every month.

Mrs Otis: James, please start preparing breakfast!

James exits

Mr Otis: Washington, why are the twins pillows on the table?

Washington: I don't know, Father. Maybe they want to see the ghost when he comes to replenish the bloodstain.

Mr Otis: Look, Washington. There really is no such thing as a ghost. I wish you would stop spreading rumors.

James: [offstage] Breakfast is ready!

Everybody exits. Washington grabs both pillows on his way out.

Scene 6: The First Haunting

The twins run on stage with pillows.

Lewis: [Checking watch] It's almost 11 o'clock. Hurry up!

Clark: OK, I've got my pea-shooter loaded.

Lewis: All right. I've got the bottle of water to throw at him. I'll jump at him, you fire.

Clark: No, the other way around! I want to tackle him.

Lewis: You're not strong enough, you can't!

Clark: Yes I can...[interrupted]

Lewis: Shhhh! He's coming.

Twins settle down on floor and fall asleep.

Sir Simon is dressed up in chains making lots of noise. He enters library where twins are sleeping on the floor. He takes another of Virginia's paints and replenishes the bloodstain. The twins never wake up.

Sir Simon then edges down the hall making an awful racket and moaning.

Mr Otis enters through bedroom door.

Mr Otis: My dear Sir. I really must insist that you oil those chains. It is quite impossible for us to sleep with such an awful racket going on here. Therefore, I have brought you a bottle of *Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator* for that purpose. [hands bottle] I am happy to supply you with more, should you need it.

Mr Otis exits through door. Sir Simon takes bottle and throws it to floor.

Sir Simon: [Shouting] Who do these barbarians think they are?! It is my right to moan and haunt and make horrible noises! Why, I have haunted these halls for more than...

Twins jump up from library with their pillows.

Lewis and Clark: Ha, got you!

Throw pillows at him. Sir Simon lets out a scream and runs off stage, twins follow him off.

Scene 7: The Ghost Problem

The next morning. Mr and Mrs Otis enter and sit down in library.

Mrs Otis: Hiram, you absolutely must do something about that ghost. Those ghastly noises kept me awake all night long. Put him a cage, or *something*.

Mr Otis: I was actually thinking of making some money off of him. We ought to be charging him rent.

Mrs Otis: Did you see that mess he made in the hall from the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator? Please refrain from offering him anymore liquids.

Washington enters.

Washington: Look, that blasted spot is back again.

Cleans up spot.

Washington: Good morning Father. Good morning Mother. Sleep well last night?

Mrs Otis: Horribly. That dreadful ghost kept me up forever.

Mr Otis: Son, I was thinking of capitalizing on this ghost by charging him rent. What do you think?

Washington: Brilliant, Father.

Mr Otis: Let's get going on it then.

Uses calculator and tears off receipt.

Mr Otis: OK, here's the bill. Washington, can you draw up the terms of rental?

Twins enter.

Lewis: We got the ghost last night!

Clark: Yeah, we scared him right away!

Lewis: You guys should have seen the look on his face when we lobbed our pillows at him.

Clark: He looked like he was gonna cry right there.

Mr Otis: [sternly] Lewis and Clark, as much as I would like to see the ghost driven away, I really don't think it's polite to throw pillows at him. On the other hand, if he doesn't use the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator, we will be forced to take his chains from him.

Lewis: Ohhh, can we help? We could scare him with our fire crackers.

Clark: And then use the hacksaw to remove the chains while he's passed out from the sonic boom.

Lewis: Silly, you can make ghosts pass out. They're already dead.

Clark: I bet we could if you used enough fire crackers.

Lewis: Right. Can we father?

Mr Otis: Not now boys, go get your breakfast. Washington, how's that rental terms document going?

Virginia enters, sits down and opens paint box

Virginia: Washington, what color was the blood this morning?

Washington: Emerald Green. Why?

Virginia: Green Blood? Who's ever heard of green blood?

Washington: Who's ever heard of a ghost?

All exit.

Scene 8: The Haunting Resumes

Receipt and yellow pad of rent terms are pinned on wall of hall.

Twins pin up fake ghost on wall and run around the edge of set to hide.

Sir Simon enters and grabs rent terms off wall.

Sir Simon: [Reading mockingly from paper] Dear Sir, As you know, we have recently purchased this place from Lord Canterville. If you wish to remain here, we will be forced to collect rent. Please remit payment before the end of this week. Thank you!

Sir Simon: What?! Who *are* these people? Charge me rent to live in my own home? It is I who ought to be charging them rent! [rips paper in half and throws it to the floor]

Starts walking to library and then sees ghost scarecrow

Sir Simon: Ahh! A ghost! It's a ghastly ghost!

Runs to his room

Sir Simon: Oh, what a terrible, horrible ghost! I swear, it was going to kill me!

Sir Simon: Wait, I have an idea. Maybe this ghost, this terrifying new phantom, can help me get rid of the Otises. I'll go talk to him.

Sir Simon: [Talking to himself] Talk to him? Are you mad? That thing would soon rip me up as listen to me gab.

Sir Simon: How much damage could it really do? I mean, I'm already dead. I shall go forth and talk business!

Enters stage gingerly.

Sir Simon: Uh, Lord Ghost? Morning, Sir. [pokes with finger] I'm Sir Simon de Canterville, and I've haunted this place for over 300 years, but I don't think I've ever had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. How do you do? [shakes hand, which comes off]

Sir Simon: Ahh! [Staggers backwards]

Sir Simon: Uhh, Sir, I'm sure you know what a danger this Otis family is.

Sir Simon: Hey, wake up, you there! Come on, I don't have all night! [Grabs arm and the whole ghost comes down]

Sir Simon: Sorry Sir, I guess I can be a little rough sometimes. Are all right?

Sir Simon: Gah! What's this!? [Holds up sign and reads] "Ye Otis Ghoste. Ye Onlie True and Originale Spook. Beware of Ye Imitationes. All others are Counterfeite."

Sir Simon: *I have been outwitted? Never! That Otis family will pay for this.*

Twins enter and attack with pea-shooters.

Lewis: Boo!

Clark: Boo!

Lewis and Clark: *Ghost Noises*

Sir Simon: You rascals! [Holds up ghost] Was this your idea!? I'll get you yet!

Twins chase Sir Simon off stage

Scene 9: Ghost Business

Sir Simon enters from other side and walks to library where Mr Otis is waiting

Mr Otis: Hello, Sir.

Sir Simon ignores Mr Otis, walks to Virginia's paintbox, and takes out the last of the paint

Sir Simon: Grrr! This is the last of the paints. I guess it's time to get some real blood next time—but acquiring it is so hard these days. Maybe I'll just give up.

Mr Otis gets up and puts his hands on Sir Simon's shoulders.

Sir Simon: [surprised] Ahh! Don't scare me like that!

Sir Simon: [angry] What do you want with me?

Mr Otis: I've got a proposition for you. I understand that you probably don't want to pay rent to live here. What if instead we put you on tour.

Sir Simon: On...tour? Like a tiger in a traveling circus?

Mr Otis: I'm sure you'd be a huge success in New York. Just think how much money people would pay to see a real live ghost...

Sir Simon finishes replenishing blood stain

Mr Otis: ...I would be more than happy to pay your travel expenses. I think customs might be a little difficult, given the current ridiculously high duties on all kinds of spirits, but I'm sure we could get you through.

Sir Simon: I...will...never!

Mr Otis: Oh, you're not interested? In that case, I've drawn up a contract here for agreements on when you can haunt the house. You can haunt between 11PM and 4 AM during the week, and between 1AM and 3AM on weekends. In exchange, we will supply you with all the *Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator* you need to keep your chains quiet.

Sir Simon rips contract in half, throws it on the floor, and leaves

Mr Otis: Oh how rude, to just leave like that. What manners this aristocracy has. And I thought it was a good proposal too—these English know nothing about how to do business.

Mr Otis leaves in a huff.

Scene 10: Evicting the Ghost

Morning in the Library. Washington enters.

Washington: Look, the bloodstain is back—and it's blue this time.

Virginia enters

Washington: The bloodstain is blue today. I wonder who has blue blood?

Virginia: [crying] Look, all my paints are gone!

Runs off stage in direction of Sir Simon's room. Washington exits. Sir Simon is sitting in a chair looking all forlorn and tired.

Virginia: You poor, poor ghost. I am so sorry for you. My brothers are going back to school tomorrow, and then if you behave yourself, no one will bother you.

Sir Simon: It is absurd asking me to behave myself, quite absurd. I must rattle my chains, replenish my bloodstains, and walk about the night. It's my only reason for existing.

Virginia: It is no reason at all to exist, and you know you've been very wicked. James told us you killed your wife.

Sir Simon: I admit I did it—but it was simply a family matter, and concerned no one else.

Virginia: Doesn't matter, it's still wrong to kill anybody.

Sir Simon: Well I wouldn't have done it if she wasn't such a bad cook. However, even though it's all over, I still don't think it was very nice of her brothers to starve me to death.

Virginia: Oh, Mr Ghost, I mean Sir Simon, are you hungry? I could go down to the kitchen and fix you something to eat.

Sir Simon: No, no thank you. I never eat anything now; but that's very kind of you all the same. You're much nicer than the rest of your horrid, rude, vulgar, and dishonest family.

Virginia: Stop! It is you who are rude, horrid, and vulgar. As for dishonesty, I really don't think it was very nice of you to steal all my paints to keep that ridiculous bloodstain in the library. Really, who's every heard of emerald green blood?

Sir Simon: What was I supposed to do? It's way too expensive to get real blood these days. Especially with your brother removing it everyday.

Virginia: The best thing to do would be to emigrate to America and improve your mind. I'm sure my father would be happy to give you free passage. Once in New York, I know you'll be a huge success. I know many people there who would give up their vast family fortunes to have a family ghost.

Sir Simon: I don't think I would like America very much.

Virginia: I suppose because we have no ruins and no antiques?

Sir Simon: No Ruins? No Antiques? What a dull place to live.

Virginia: Well, good bye then. [gets up and starts to exit] I will go and ask Father to get the twins an extra week's holiday.

Sir Simon: Please don't go, Miss Virginia, don't go. I am so lonely and and tired. I want to sleep and I cannot.

Virginia: That's quite absurd. You simply have to go to bed and blow out the candle. It's sometimes

very difficult to keep awake, but there's never any difficulty going to sleep. Why, even babies know how to do that, and they're not very clever.

Sir Simon: I haven't slept for over 300 years, and I am so tired.

Virginia: Did you inscribe the verse etched in the library windowsill?

Sir Simon: Yes, I did.

Virginia: *When a golden girl can win
Prayer from out the lips of sin
When the barren almond bears*

Sir Simon: I know, I know.

Virginia: *And a little child gives away its tears
Then shall all the house be still
And peace come to Canterville*

Virginia: It doesn't rhyme very well.

Sir Simon: That's because you've got a funny American accent.

Virginia: What does it mean?

Sir Simon: It means that you must weep for my sins, because I have no tears, and pray for my soul, because I have no faith. And then, the Angel of Death will have mercy on me, and I can finally die.

Virginia: [stands up] I am not afraid. I will ask the Angel of Death to have mercy on you.

Sir Simon: You will see fearful shapes in the darkness, and wicked voices will whisper in your ear, but they will not harm you.

Voices: Go back, little Virginia! Go back!

Voices: Beware, little Virginia, beware! We may never see you again.

Sir Simon: Quick, quick, or it will be too late!

Voices: Turn back while you can!

Voices: Leave, now!

Sir Simon: Hurry!

Sir Simon pulls her off stage.

Otis Family (sans Virginia) and James are in the library

Mrs Otis: Has anyone seen Virginia! She's been gone for hours!

Washington: She was here this morning. She saw that she used up all her paints and left crying. I thought she went to her room.

James: I told you something terrible would happen. It's Sir Simon, I know it.

Mr Otis: I've been searching all day and haven't eaten. James bring us something to eat.

Clark: I don't feel like eating.

Mrs Otis: Me neither.

Everybody sits around looking glum.

Bang! Then Virginia enters with box of jewels.

Mrs Otis: Virginia! Where were you? We were so worried!

Virginia: I was with Sir Simon.

Washington: That ghost! Are you all right?

Virginia: I'm fine!

Mr Otis: Sir Simon? Is he alive?

Virginia: He's fine. He's finally free now, he's been forgiven.

Clark: Look, the bloodstain!

Washington: Remarkable!

Mr Otis: Is he...dead?

Washington: The stain, it's gone!

Virginia: And look, before he died, he gave me this box of beautiful jewels to keep.

Mr Otis: It's almost 12, let's go to bed. We can discuss this in detail in the morning. Good night, everyone!

Scene 11: The End

Mr Otis and Lord Canterville in library.

Lord Canterville: I must really thank you for breaking the Canterville curse. My family will be very pleased to hear the news.

Mr Otis: [Holding box of jewels] My lord, it is quite clear to me that these jewels are, or should be, heirlooms in your family. I beg you to take them with you and regard them as a portion of your property which has been restored to you, albeit under somewhat strange circumstances.

Lord Canterville: My dear sir, your daughter has rendered my unlucky ancestor a very important service, and my family and I are very much indebted and grateful to her for her marvelous courage. The jewels are very clearly hers, and I believe if I were heartless enough to take them from her, that wicked old fellow would be out have his grave in a fortnight.

Mr Otis: Thank you, Sir, but I think just the box is sufficient. A memento for Virginia, you see.

Lord Canterville: I must insist that you take the box and its contents as well. You remember, Mr Otis, that when you bought this place, you bought the furniture, the ghost and his possessions. When Sir Simon died, everything he owned passed into his possession.

Mr Otis: [Shakes hands] Thank you, Sir. Virginia will be very happy to have these priceless jewels.