

All Hallows' Eve

Three Tales of Terror and Suspense

Adapted by Burton Bumgarner

*from tales by Catherine Wells,
Guy de Maupassant, and W.W. Jacobs*

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ALL HALLOWS' EVE

Three terrifying tales are set on or around Halloween in a New York brownstone. In "The Actor," a young girl who lives with her eccentric parents in a house rumored to be haunted, asks a famous actor to frighten her by portraying the house ghost at a Halloween party. She gets a lot more than she bargained for when she is truly frightened out of her wits. In "The Hand," an arrogant hunter has his prized trophy mounted on the wall of his library. The trophy is a human hand, and the owner wants it back. Late one night, the Hand takes its revenge. In "The Keys," a husband accidentally kills his wife, then tries to cover up the crime by framing a burglar who had just broken into the house to steal the wife's jewelry. But things are not as they seem. Making use of darkness, flashlight, and supernatural beings, "All Hallows' Eve" is a truly terrifying theatrical experience guaranteed to provide screams, chills and laughter.

Cast

Scene 1: The Actor

Mary..... A teenage girl recovering from an illness.
Hannah The maid.
Mr. Burr Mary's father, a Broadway producer.
Mrs. Burr..... Mary's mother.
John Barrymore..... A famous actor.
Ghost..... A ghoulish creature.

Scene 2: The Hand

Mr. Roswell..... An avid hunter.
Albert Brimmer A business associate.
Theodora Brimmer ... Albert's wife.
Mrs. Roswell..... Mr. Roswell's mother.
Hannah The maid.
Inspector..... A police inspector.
The Hand..... 4 actors, 4 right hands

Scene 3: The Keys

James Burleigh..... A man who married for money.
Taylor Burleigh James' wife.
Hannah The maid.
Frank A burglar.
O'Brien A New York City policeman.
Malloy O'Brien's partner.

Production Notes

All Hallows' Eve tells three stories of terror and suspense unified by the same set and one character, Hannah the maid, who appears in each tale. The play is set in a parlor or library of an upper-class New York brownstone. Each tale is set on or near Halloween (All Hallows Eve.).

"The Actor," set in 1920, is partially based on a 1927 tale called "The Ghost" by Catherine Wells, a British writer of fantasy and ghost stories. When the ghoul makes his appearance, not too much should be revealed, and a single candle should be enough light. He should walk or crawl low and hunched over with a cape or blanket hiding most of his torso. His face and arms should be grotesque without being comical. He is supposed to be a "mouse-like" creature. Any rodent-like makeup would be helpful.

"The Hand," set in 1940, is an adaptation of the famous horror tale by the nineteenth century French writer Guy de Maupassant. A "severed hand" from a store that sells gag gifts or Halloween party accessories could be tied to a board and appear to be a trophy. A chain should appear to hold the hand in place. Four actors in black, long-sleeved turtlenecks should hide in designated places on the set and their right hands should appear as indicated during the struggle, which is lit only by Roswell's flashlight. They should appear and disappear quickly as the light finds them on the set. Some of the bookshelves should be accessible from behind so books can be pushed to the floor giving the impression that the Hand is running along the shelves. Great care should be taken so that the actors attached to the "Hand" should not be seen.

"The Keys," set in 1960, is an adaptation of an early twentieth century short story by British writer W.W. Jacobs called "In the Library." Burleigh's struggle with the burglar takes place in darkness and should sound like a fight, with yelling and objects falling and crashing. The darker the stage can be during the struggles the more effective the scenes will be.

Scene 1: The Actor
October, 1920

(The setting is a parlor or library of a prominent New York brownstone. A sofa, comfortable chairs, end tables are center. Bookshelves and a window are upstage center. Also, a desk and chair are near the window. A doorway to a bedroom is right, a doorway to a hallway and the rest of the house is left. An end table with a candle is near the sofa.)

(AT RISE: MARY, a teenager, is asleep on the sofa. Her head is propped up by bed pillows. She is wearing a nightgown and is covered by a quilt. A bottle of medicine and a glass are on a nearby end table. She stirs, then slowly sits up. She tries to stand, but falls back onto the sofa, weak from illness. HANNAH, the maid, enters carrying a tray with a pitcher of water. She crosses to Mary.)

HANNAH: So you've decided to join the world of the living, have ya?

MARY: *(Startled.)* Oh. Hannah. I didn't hear you.

(HANNAH places the tray on an end table, pours MARY a glass of water and hands it to her. Mary takes the glass and drinks.)

HANNAH: I doubt ya could hear me. You've been sleeping the sleep of the dead for over a week.

MARY: I'm feeling much better now.

HANNAH: *(Feeling MARY'S forehead.)* Fever's gone down. But ya ain't strong enough to move about.

MARY: Yes, I am. I'm quite strong. *(Stands up, then falls back on the sofa.)* Well, I'm a whole lot stronger than I was. And I wish to attend the party this evening. Would you tell my father?

HANNAH: Ya can tell him yourself. He's on his way to check up on you. But I doubt he'll be letting you attend any party.

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MARY: (*Frustrated.*) Why not?

HANNAH: You've had influenza. Lots of folks die from it.

MARY: I'm not going to die from it. I'm fine and I want to attend the party. You know who's going to be here, don't you?

HANNAH: Bunch of them theater people.

MARY: Don't you like theater people, Hannah?

HANNAH: Not really.

MARY: Well, tonight the greatest actor of all times will be in this very house.

HANNAH: Right. What's his name again?

MARY: Really, Hannah. You're teasing me.

HANNAH: Really, Miss, I'm not.

MARY: (*With awe and reverence.*) His name is John Barrymore. And Papa took me to see him in *The Living Corpse* at the Plymouth.

HANNAH: Sounds like a dead body in a car.

MARY: Oh, Hannah, at the Plymouth Theater? The play didn't get very good reviews, but Mr. Barrymore was magnificent. He played a man who ran off to live with gypsies after his wife took up with another man.

HANNAH: I'll have none of that kind of talk, Miss! Theater indeed! Nothing but trash! And expensive trash at that.

MARY: Father would give you tickets. He is a producer, after all.

HANNAH: I like the vaudeville. But don't think much of this new stuff. Running off with gypsies and all.

MARY: New stuff? Hannah, we're talking about theater. It's been here since ancient Greece.

HANNAH: If it don't make me laugh I ain't interested. Now, ya take this medicine and rest up.

(*SHE pours medicine from the bottle into a spoon and makes MARY take it. Mary makes a sour face.*)

MARY: You know what he's going to do tonight?

HANNAH: What who's going to do tonight?

MARY: John Barrymore.

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HANNAH: He's going to attend the party and carry on like the rest of them theater people.

MARY: He's going to play the role of the ghost.

HANNAH: What ghost?

MARY: Our ghost. The one that haunts this house.

HANNAH: Now I know you're delirious.

MARY: Our house IS haunted. I've heard the ghost. And I know you have, too.

HANNAH: I certainly have not! And if I had, I wouldn't admit to it. It's not nice to fool around with things that can't be explained.

MARY: Don't you believe in ghosts?

HANNAH: I most certainly do not! And I don't want to talk anymore about it. Ya can stir up all kinds of evil spirits and haunts talking about such things.

MARY: Mildred saw him. That's why she quit. She came screaming down the hallway one day and we haven't seen her since.

HANNAH: The woman had been partaking in drink.

MARY: She wasn't drinking. She was in this parlor dusting the books and she saw a little figure wearing a dark cape and a red scarf trying to pull the bookshelf away from the wall. Then he saw Mildred and tried to kill her.

HANNAH: What nonsense! Why would he want to pull the bookshelf away from the wall?

MARY: Mildred thought it's because he used to be a mouse, and he wanted to get back to his nest in the walls.

HANNAH: So, how did he go from being mouse to ghoul?

MARY: Mildred thinks he was a very nasty man. So nasty that when he died the devil didn't even want him. So he came back to earth as a mouse. For all of eternity. Only every now and then his human form comes back. That's when he's dangerous.

HANNAH: *(Looks around uncertainly.)* That's the silliest thing I've ever heard. The crazy woman scared herself out of her job.

MARY: You've got to admit, we sure have a lot of mice sometimes.

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