

Crimes at Cartwell
Episode 2

Written by
Feargus Woods Dunlop

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8 Locks Hill
Frome
SOMERSET
BA11 1NA

Telephone: +44 (0)790 5628 756
Email: feargus@newoldfriends.co.uk

PROLOGUE INT. CARTWELL MANOR

CHARLOTTE: Aarrgh, a ghost!

WALTER: My god!

VICTORIA: Brian?!

PERRY: Penny!

PENNY: Perry!

GRENVILLE: Come quickly!

SAFFRON: She's dead!

TERRY: Murder!

SCENE 1 – INT. CARTWELL PARLOUR

F/X: CLINKING GLASSES, THERE ARE FOUR WOMEN PLUS THE MAID
DRINKING & CHATTING

PENNY: When I invited Perry to join me at my friend's Halloween weekend party, he'd made me promise him I wouldn't leave him on his own. Well, we'd only been at Cartwell Manor for a few moments before that promise had been broken for me by Grenville, the butler, who swept Perry away to his room to change into his costume and ushered me into the parlour for drinks with the other ladies of the house. I felt a bit bad, but the feeling only lasted until the pretty maid handed me a pinkish looking cocktail.

Thank you. Phew! That's strong. What is that?

MINNIE: It's called a Bloody Hell Mary; which is just like a normal Bloody Mary except there's more Vodka than tomato juice.

PENNY: As I caught my breath from the cocktail I took in the jollity of the room. The windows had been decorated with fake cobwebs, and crepe-paper spiders hung from the grand ceilings. On the oak sideboard candles burned in carved pumpkins. The all-female inhabitants of the room were gathered around the card table in one corner. My friend, Victoria, looked up when the door opened and shouted over to me. She was dressed like Count Dracula in a long black cloak with a high stiff collar the inside of which was blood red.

VICTORIA: Penny! Oh Penny you made it! Don't you look gorgeous! Quick quick, get that down you and get over here. She's wonderful!

PENNY: I took another lung-tightening swig of my drink and skipped over to the gaggle of gaily dressed women. Alongside Victoria's vampire, there were two others; one wrapped in bandages (an Egyptian mummy I presumed) and the other dressed sort of like a Victorian lady. I introduced myself to her and asked who she'd come as.

SAFFRON: Oh hello, I'm Saffron. Saffron Herbertson-Jones. I'm married to Walter? Walter Herbertson-Jones. I've um... just come as a Victorian lady.

VICTORIA: That's a lie Penny!

PENNY: Interrupted Victoria.

VICTORIA: Saffy, you know that's a lie. She's come as the most terrifying woman she could think of.

PENNY: And who is that?

I asked.

VICTORIA: Her mother-in-law!

SAFFRON: That isn't true Vicky.

VICTORIA: It is, I certainly found her terrifying!

PENNY: Victoria laughed heartily at her own joke and drew from her cocktail. While Saffron didn't seem to find the joke amusing, I think perhaps there might have been a kernel of truth in it as her cheeks delicately coloured pink.

At this point the Mummy seemed to lose patience and snapped.

CHARLOTTE: Look, are you done? The Great Trianta was in the middle of reading my palm, if you don't mind.

PENNY: The miffed Mummy waved a bandaged hand at a jumble of beads and fabrics piled on a chair which, on closer inspection, turned out to contain a small woman with striking amber eyes. From within her swathes of bejewelled batik fabrics the little woman, who I assume was The Great Trianta, raised a delicate hand, the countless bangles on her wrist clinking musically.

TRIANTA: Ah! Do not be so much worry.

CHARLOTTE: But these two have had a go and I've waited my turn!

PENNY: She impatiently stamped her foot. She was less Mummy and more spoilt child. The sort that still calls their mother mummy even when they're thirty. Victoria tried to placate her with a hand on her shoulder and waved for the maid to bring another cocktail.

VICTORIA: Oh calm down Charlotte, there's plenty of time.

PENNY: At the mention of time, The Great Trianta snapped both her hands into the air, her middle fingers pressed to her thumbs.

TRIANTA: Time? What is time? Sand flows both ways through the hourglass does it not?

PENNY: This mystical pronouncement produced such awe-filled coos from Victoria and Saffron, I realised I would need another cocktail to catch up. This Charlotte, wasn't convinced though.

CHARLOTTE: The sand only flows in one direction! To the past, and when it's gone I'll have missed my chance. I will not miss my chance!

TRIANTA: But once it has flowed, do we not flip it over and watch it flow back?

PENNY: Again a chorus of 'oos' from Saffron & Vicky, who had clearly had a fair amount of booze flow down their gullets. They'd want to be careful they didn't over-indulge or it would be flowing right back.

Charlotte's hand had been taken, carefully unwrapped from its bandage casing, and The Great Trianta was poring over her palms spouting nonsense like.

TRIANTA: Yes, yes, yes, a deep love line here, but broken off too soon?

PENNY: I wasn't convinced by The Great Trianta's performance, I've never really been one for the supernatural, the natural is super enough for me. But she had clearly hit a nerve with Charlotte despite her trying to hide it.

CHARLOTTE: Deep love? Me? Broken off? Hardly? I said hardly eh girls? Love? Ha! Very silly. Does it say anything about a reunion? Or retribution?

TRIANTA: The hands tell what is and what was. What will be? Well, that is in your hands.

CHARLOTTE: Are you saying you can't read my future in my palms? Then what's the point? Get your grubby mitts off me!

PENNY: Charlotte snatched her hand back as though from a hot stove.

TRIANTA: Your palms tell me all your possible futures, I cannot tell which path you will take any more than a vine knows which grape will rot, which will be stolen by the birds, or which will be made into wine.

PENNY: Cue an ooh.

SAFFRON: Ooooh.

PENNY: I pulled Victoria to one side.

Vicky, are you buying all this? It's not like you.

VICTORIA: Of course not, it's nonsense Penny. But nonsense can be fun! Besides the Great Trianta over there practically begged me to hire her for the weekend. Actually, hire is the wrong word, she's doing it for free!

PENNY: For free? Did she say why she wanted to be here?

VICTORIA: Oh don't you know?

PENNY: Know what Vicky?

My friend's face had the shine of someone three cocktails in with designs on a fourth. Her mouth was twitching and her eyes glinting playfully.

VICTORIA: Cartwell Manor is haunted Penny! Haunted!

PENNY: Is it?

VICTORIA: Of course it isn't. Or it wasn't. I've not lived here since...

PENNY: She trailed off and the internal illumination of her face dimmed remembering Brian. But she gave her head a little shake and regained some of her previous sparkle.

VICTORIA: But apparently in the last few years there have been all sorts of reports of spooky goings on here. The Great Trianta, along with her many other gifts, is a ghost hunter and solving the mystery of Cartwell Manor would be quite a coup so she tells me.

PENNY: I see.

VICTORIA: All total codswallop of course, but I thought she'd make a delightful addition to the party! Speaking of which what's the time?

PENNY: As Victoria was saying this the gong rung out from the hallway.

F/X: GONG SOUND FROM OUTSIDE THE ROOM

VICTORIA: Ah perfect. Ladies, it's time for the parade!

SCENE 2 – INT. CARTWELL GREAT HALLF/X: SOME SORT OF SPOOKY MUSIC MAYBE?

PENNY: Victoria led us all to the Great Hall which had been decorated in a similar style to the parlour, but on a grander scale. There were flickering candles everywhere, their wax melting into bulbous twisting shapes.

Vicky had clearly put a lot of thought and effort into the weekend, and this costume parade was the official start of the festivities. Everyone had been handed a long cloak to cover their costumes with.

VICTORIA: It'll make the reveal more exciting!

PENNY: I think everyone felt a bit sheepish shuffling into the grand candle lit hall. I glanced over at Perry and his piercing blue eyes were filled with a mixture of embarrassment, fury, and fear. The question burning in his stare was clear; just what had I brought him to? He looked like a fearful initiate of some grand cult who didn't know what to expect from the ceremony. Was he to be expected to ravish some sacrificial offering or was he the sacrifice? I flashed him one of my most calming smiles, but he rolled his eyes at me as he was shown to his seat by Grenville.

PERRY: You owe me one Penny girl.

PENNY: He hissed as we passed one another. I definitely caught a hint of some sort of booze on his breath though, so at least he'd had a drink. If I thought the cloaks and the decorations had shown that Vicky had spared no expense on the theatricality of the event, what happened next was even more remarkable. Once we were all sat in our allocated seats, a great gust of cold wind rushed through the hall and all the candles were extinguished.

F/X: REACTION FROM GUESTS "What/ I say/ Ah!/ Gosh!/ Golly!/ Eek!/ Wow!/ Penny? Etc."

F/X: SPOTLIGHT COMES ON WITH A NOISE

PENNY: Then a spotlight crashed on, illuminating Victoria, who had dropped her cloak to reveal herself in all her vampiric glory.

VICTORIA: Welcome treasured friends, or should that be fiends? To Cartwell Manor's Halloween weekend. Where your blood will be chilled just as much as the crisp French White we're serving with the fish course! Mwahahah! The time has come for you to reveal terrifying alter egos. Over to our master of ceremonies; Grenville!

PENNY: The light swung over to Grenville who was dressed in his usual uniform.

VICTORIA: Oh Grenville you're not in costume!

GRENVILLE: I think you'll find I am ma'am.

PENNY: A voice I recognised as Charlotte the moody mummy cut through the darkness.

CHARLOTTE: What have you come as Grenville? I'm covered in blasted bandages for this thing and you just look like you always do!

GRENVILLE: Like I always do? How very dare you! I've come as a petrifying poorly presented Butler; this shirt isn't ironed and if you'll notice I've clearly got a stain on my waistcoat. Ooooh scary! So, on with the introductions. First, we have a longstanding friend of the Cartwell family, I remember him running around the manor in his short trousers as a lad, but for this weekend he's been transformed into a hideously hairy beast of the night. Allow me to introduce Walter 'the werewolf' Herbertson-Jones.

PENNY: The beam of light swung from Grenville and landed on Perry who managed to compose his features in a perfect reproduction of a rabbit in the headlights. Grenville shouted from the darkness.

GRENVILLE: That isn't Walter is it Minnie! To the left!

MINNIE: Sorry sir!

PENNY: There was a little grunt of effort from somewhere high up towards the end of the hall and the light moved over to show Walter Hebertson-Jones draped in very a convincing wolf-skin costume with a wolf's head perched on top of his own.

WALTER: Good evening all. What do we think of the costume?

PENNY: I could just make out Perry who was sat next to him in the reflected light. He looked both appalled and impressed.

PERRY: That is very realistic.

WALTER: Thank you, it's actually made from a pair of real wolves. Hunted the blighters down myself.

SAFFRON: That's not strictly true.

PENNY: Saffron had muttered to herself under her breath in the darkness, but her husband had clearly heard.

- WALTER: What do you mean it's not true Saffron? I shot them didn't I? Did I imagine that? Did I? Did I?!
- SAFFRON: No Walter, you didn't.
- WALTER: Then what are you bleating on about?
- SAFFRON: You didn't exactly hunt them Walter. They were brought to you in a cage.
- WALTER: Beside the point. Did I or did I not strike the killing blow?
- SAFFRON: You did Walter. But you didn't need to, I'd got you a very nice Jacob Marley costume from A Christmas Carol.
- WALTER: Marley with all those chains or I get to go mano et mano with two wolves? I think the choice was clear. We'll hear no more about it. Grenville, move on. Who is next?
- PENNY: The parade moved on with Grenville introducing each of us in turn and Minnie, the maid, doing an admirable job of keeping up with her spotlight. I'd already met Walter's wife Saffron in her Victorian lady's get up, I learned that Charlotte in the bandages had been at school with Walter & Brian and that her surname was Blakemore. She'd been the Charlie young Terry Warner, Victoria's brother, was besotted with. Rounding out the group, I was thrilled to see that Terry himself was there, his wiry frame swamped in the outfit of a circus ringmaster. When Perry was unveiled in his bare-chested glory there was a wolf-whistle from somewhere in the shadows. I don't know who it was, it could have been wolf-man Walter for all I know, but for some reason I felt a little pride. He did look whistle-worthy in his risqué outfit. Perry of course squirmed at the attention and quickly wrapped himself back in his cloak.
- My first impressions were that Walter & Charlotte might both be a bit abrasive and Saffron was maybe a little bit wet, but all in all it seemed a relatively benign bunch of people to spend the weekend with. Victoria had always been so much fun that if she'd invited them all along, they were probably fun too.
- GRENVILLE: The first activity will begin once Minnie & I have relighted the candles.
- TERRY: Ah, what have you got up your sleeve for us then sis?
- VICTORIA: We're bobbing for apples.
- WALTER: Bobbing for apples? Bit childish. How about a wager chaps? One bob per bob, most apples collected wins the kitty?
- SAFFRON: Walter I don't think we need to gamble.

WALTER: I'm sorry, did I say wife can I make a friendly proposition to liven up the game? Did I?

SAFFRON: No Walter, you didn't.

WALTER: Didn't think so. Now, who is in? Terry?

TERRY: I'm good for it, why not?

WALTER: Excellent. Pink?

PENNY: Grenville and Minnie had made light work of returning the light, and I could see poor Perry was uncomfortable.

PERRY: Oh um...

WALTER: What's the matter Pink? Pink by name pink by nature? It's only a couple of bob.

PERRY: Right yes, fine, of course.

PENNY: With that Walter clapped his hands together gleefully and instructed Grenville to bring out the bucket for bobbing. Perry made his way over to me looking pretty sorry for himself.

PERRY: Penny girl what have you got me into? I'm the only one dressed up like a gigolo and not only am I not getting paid, I'm actually about to have to pay for the privilege of being embarrassingly beaten at bobbing for apples.

PENNY: Oh Perry I don't think anyone other than Walter cares about who gets the most apples, it's just a bit of harmless fun.

At that moment Victoria left Saffron who she'd been whispering with and came over to Perry & I.

VICTORIA: I'm sorry about Walter, he's a bit of a hardhead but he was Brian's closest friend so I feel like I should keep inviting him. Don't worry though, he's about to get his comeuppance.

PERRY: His comeuppance? How?

VICTORIA: Well, Walter likes to brag about everything, and last year he was bragging about his prowess at apple bobbing of all things.

PERRY: Is it the sort of thing you can be good or bad at?

VICTORIA: Oh yeah, it's no wonder Walter's good though. Look at the size of his teeth, he's part horse and from what Saffron has told me not the good part!

PENNY: Perry turned bright red.

PERRY: Oh... um... I...

VICTORIA: Oh calm down Perry, you look like you're about to explode. Women talk about these things, but you've nothing to worry about.

PERRY: What? Why? How?

PENNY: Victoria shot me a look and laughed her head off at Perry's bewilderment.

VICTORIA: I'm just jerking your chain Perry, as far as I know Penny is blissfully ignorant of your situation although your reaction does make me wonder.

PERRY: I... what? No... what?

PENNY: I really felt for Perry, his mouth was working away like a fish out of water but not a sound came out. I placed a reassuring hand on his arm and brought Victoria back to her point.

You were saying something about Walter getting his comeuppance Vic?

VICTORIA: Right, yeah, so just make sure you let him go first Perry OK? He swears by his technique, I mean what kind of jackass has a technique for apple bobbing? Anyway, his technique is to open his mouth real-wide and really get his teeth into the apple. It means he has to swallow a huge amount of water while he does it, and as a little twist the apples today aren't in water they're in Port! He'll get one hell of a surprise when he gets a gullet full of Port. Just a bit of harmless fun really, but should be good.

PENNY: Before Perry or I could protest at this little prank Victoria had laid on, Walter shouted over removing both the opportunity and any desire to protect him.

WALTER: Are you three ladies joining us? Grenville has it ready. Yes Pink I did say three ladies, that means you too come on!

PENNY: Victoria bounced over to the table where Grenville and Minnie had laid down some tea-towels under and around a large, old, galvanised steel bathtub. The lighting in the room made it very easy to take the dark red liquid the apples were floating in as water, I had no doubt Victoria's plan would work. Perry & I exchanged a look and silently agreed to let it play out.

PERRY: You seem to be the expert Walter, why don't you show us how it is done?

WALTER: Gladly. Stand back everyone, things go a-flying when I go a-bobbing.

PENNY: He removed his wolf's head hat to reveal his own mane of flowing blonde locks which he swept back with his hand and tied in a short ponytail with a piece of ribbon. Then he stretched his arms wide to his sides like a photograph of Christ the Redeemer I'd seen in a magazine whilst waiting at the dentists. He took in a deep breath through his nose and, as Victoria had said he would, opened his equine mouth wide. Then he rocked back slightly and threw his face down into the tub with great force.

F/X: BIG SPLASH

CHARLOTTE: My god Walter!

TERRY: Gadzooks man, that's impressive!

PENNY: A huge geyser of, what I knew to be Port, flew up from the tub sending liquid way beyond the tea-towel perimeter set by Grenville. Thanks to Victoria's warning, I'd positioned myself behind a chair to protect my costume which I'd only hired from Hans. Others hadn't been so lucky. I think everyone must have had a least some splashing of the deep red fluid. Walter himself was drenched in it and came up gagging and gasping.

F/X: COUGHING/CHOKING

WALTER: Oh dear god! That's not water. Jesus!

VICTORIA: A Halloween trick or treat Walter! It's Port!

WALTER: Port? I must have just gulped down a full pint of the stuff. Look at me Victoria! Look at me! My costume is ruined.

SAFFRON: It's OK Walter, it will wash out.

WALTER: But I'm soaking!

PENNY: Here Saffron and Victoria exchanged a little glance and Saffron's eyes glittered with an animation I'd not seen in her for the past hour or so.

SAFFRON: Well, isn't it lucky I brought that Jacob Marley costume with me. Just in case. You can go and get chained. I mean changed.

SCENE 3 – INT. CARTWELL PARLOUR

F/X: CLINKING OF GLASSWARE, CHATTERING

PENNY: After Walter huffily squelched off to his & Saffron's room to swap his costumes, we were sent to the parlour for another round of cocktails whilst The Great Trianta put the finishing touches to the drawing room for her séance. To be perfectly honest with you nobody, with the exception of Charlotte, was expecting anything more than a slightly spooky bit of entertainment. Like going to the theatre and seeing a really good production of Macbeth. Little did we know that the séance would be the start of something truly terrifying.