

Crimes at Cartwell
Episode 6

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SCENE 1 – INT. CARTWELL MANOR, DRAWING ROOM

PENNY: Obviously the news that there was an unexpected, and unaccounted for, man in the house at the time of Victoria's murder, and that that man just happened to be the main rival to her haircare business, and that that man would likely benefit financially from her death, and that that man was in fact the husband of the woman who had apparently caused enough commotion to splinter Victoria from the group, meant that that man was suddenly very high on my list of suspects. I pressed Grenville for details.

Daniel Sessler was hiding in the cellar? How does he explain himself?

GRENVILLE: He didn't. He can't actually talk at the moment.

ROSIE: Oh god, has the ghost killed Daniel too?

GRENVILLE: No ma'am he appears to be alive. But has suffered a nasty blow to the back of the head and is unconscious.

PENNY: Did you know he was here Rosie?

ROSIE: No, I swear I had no idea. I'll admit he has assisted me, well The Great Trianta, in the past. But there was no need for him this weekend because Mrs Cartwell assured me the staff would help. Which they did.

PENNY: Where is he now Grenville?

GRENVILLE: I left him in the cellar ma'am, he's out cold.

PENNY: Right, well let's go and see if we can't wake him up.

I was half-way across the room on my way to the door when Perry stood up and tapped Grenville on the shoulder.

PERRY: Um... Grenville, is there any blood down in the cellar from Mr Sessler's bump on the head?

GRENVILLE: No sir.

PERRY: Oh thank goodness, I don't do well with blood.

GRENVILLE: Then I suggest you don't look in a mirror sir, it's streaming out of your nose.

PENNY: Perry looked down the front of his shirt which was slowly becoming more crimson.

PERRY: Oh dear, out of my way, emesis, emesis!

PENNY: Thankfully Perry managed to control himself long enough to sprint from the room and into the water closet.

F/X: PERRY SPRINTS OUT, OPENS DOOR, MUFFLED VOMIT NOISES

PENNY: I knew from experience Perry would recover himself soon enough, so left him in the toilet as I followed Grenville to the cellar.

We're just heading downstairs Perry, we'll see you shortly.

PERRY: Absolutely Penny girl, I'll be right behind you. I'm just tidying myself up with a paper towel. Oh god, I've dislodged something, it's bleeding again.

F/X: PERRY VOMITS

SCENE 2 – INT. CARTWELL MANOR, CELLAR

F/X: CREEPY, DRIPPY, ECHOEY CELLAR NOISES

PENNY: Grenville showed me to an ill-fitting green wooden door with a huge wrought-iron handle and lock.

GRENVILLE: He's just down there ma'am, I won't come with you if you don't mind. I need to attend to the other guests. Will you be alright on your own?

PENNY: I'm a professional detective Grenville.

GRENVILLE: Of course. You'll be needing this.

PENNY: He handed me a tall tallow candle in a brass holder, then produced a matchbook and lit it carefully.

GRENVILLE: There's no electricity down there I'm afraid, too damp they said. He's right at the back, if I'd been collecting anything other than the scotch I would never have found him. Mind your step, I'm fairly sure we've got rats, or something.

F/X: REALLY CREEPY FX TO ACCOMPANY THIS NEXT PART,

PENNY: I opened the door, which groaned ominously, and held my candle in front of me like a protecting beacon as I made sure to find each solid stone step with my feet.

As I stepped down to the floor-level I found out just how damp this cellar was as the flagstone squelched beneath my sandal and freezing water lapped under my bare foot. A soul-chilling experience - if you'll pardon the pun.

I made my way along rows of shelving, disturbing whatever residents were living down here and I heard the scuttling of tiny feet but couldn't see what was making the noise. My candle cast strange and unnerving shadows along the wall. Ah! What was that? The shadow of an arm raised with a dagger in hand! I swung my candle towards it and revealed just an old watering-can which had some dried pondweed dangling from its spout. Calm down Penny.

Eventually, I saw a large dark mound at the end of the cellar and started moving towards it slightly faster. But in my burst of speed, I lost the flame of my candle. Too late I saw it flickering towards me and then guttering out. I froze on the spot. I wasn't sure of my footing and some primal part of me reacted viscerally to being plunged into darkness. I felt a bead of cold sweat form at the base of my neck, then lose its fight with gravity, and run down my back, sending shivers down my spine.

PENNY CONT'D

PENNY: My mind filled with doubt and fear. What was I doing down here? A woman my age, my friend, had been killed just hours ago in this very house and yet I had thought it sensible to plunge myself into danger by venturing alone into a confined space with nothing but a, now extinguished, candle for protection. The scuttling of the creatures seemed to be getting closer, but soon I couldn't hear it over the sound of my ragged breathing and my pulse in my ears.

Then there was a brief flash of light followed by a loud bang and a scramble of noise from behind me.

F/X: THE DOOR BANGS AND PERRY FALLS DOWN THE STAIRS

PENNY: I spun around, but my eyes were still adjusting to the darkness and I couldn't see anything.

Hello?!

I called out and received only groaning in reply.

F/X: PERRY GROANS

PENNY: My mind was furiously cycling through my options; I was unarmed, I couldn't see, and I didn't know my surroundings. I decided all I could do was bluff.

Whose there? I have a gun and I'll use it.

In the gloom in front of me I could just start to make out a figure slowly rising to their feet. It reached out two shadowy limbs in front of it and rasped.

PERRY: Penny?!

PENNY: Who are you?

PERRY: Penny, it's me...

PENNY: Who is me?

PERRY: Well you are you, aren't you? If you're not you, who are you? Whoever you are if you're not you, becomes you when you say it's you don't they? I'm sure I read something along those lines recently.

PENNY: There was only one person in the world who could torture an argument like that.

Perry?

PERRY: Yes.

PENNY: What's wrong with your voice?

PERRY: I think I've hurt my throat when I threw up, it's quite scratchy.

PENNY: You scared me.

PERRY: Sorry Penny girl. Didn't mean to. Why are you stood in the dark?

PENNY: There isn't any electricity down here and my candle went out.

PERRY: Do you mind if I use my torch?

PENNY: You have a torch?! Why didn't you use it when you first came in?

PERRY: I just assumed that if you were stood in the pitch black there must be a good reason Penny.

PENNY: That's very sweet Perry, but I don't think I was being too clever this time. So please turn on your torch.

PENNY: Right-oh. Give me a second.

PENNY: I could hear him fumbling around, and then a beam of light shot out, illuminating the shelves in front of him. Perry held the torch underneath his chin up-lighting his face.

PERRY: Wooo, spooky!

PENNY: Stop it Perry, I really was scared.

PERRY: Yes Penny, sorry.

PENNY: He quickly squelched his way over and handed me the torch. Then he did something most unexpected. He very gently put both his arms around me and pressed me tightly against his chest.

PERRY: Sorry Penny girl, didn't mean to scare you. You're safe now, we've got this. Together.

PENNY: It was only when I felt myself beside Perry that I realised I was shaking. I allowed myself to sink slightly into his body. For all his meandering thoughts and restless mind, Perry was solid. He believed in rational thought, he believed in answers to mysteries, and he believed in me. I felt myself drawing strength from his support and stood up straighter.

PENNY CONT'D

PENNY: Perry?

I asked.

PERRY: Yes, Penny girl?

PENNY: He replied, not letting go of me yet.

We're going to solve this aren't we?

PERRY: Yes Penny girl, of course you will.

PENNY: We will Perry. What do you think that was we saw then? You know, the... ghost, or whatever.

PERRY: I don't honestly know, but I do know what it wasn't, and that is the ghost of Brian Cartwell. There is no such thing. I'm 99.99% sure of it.

PENNY: What about that 0.01%?

PERRY: That's science's get out of jail free card; you can't definitively prove a non-existence. My guess is, and it's only a guess, is the effect was some sort of photosensitive material and a mild electric current. I didn't see any wires and that wouldn't explain the hovering, but between us we'll figure it out.

PENNY: I had fully regained my composure as Perry spoke and found myself in total agreement. We *would* figure this out and I'd enjoy putting whoever stabbed my friend Victoria to death behind bars for the rest of their life.

F/X: A GROAN FROM THE DISTANCE

PENNY: There was a noise from the end of the cellar farthest from the door. I swung the beam of Perry's torch towards it and saw that the mound I had seen in the gloom was beginning to move. It was a man, Daniel Sessler no doubt, slowly getting to his feet.

Stay right where you are!

DANIEL: Gladly, but just where the hell is where I am?

PENNY: He raised a hand to shield his eyes from the light I was pointing at him.

You're at Cartwell Manor, in the cellar.

DANIEL: The cellar? What am I doing down here?

PENNY: I'm quite interested to know what you're doing at Cartwell Manor at all.

F/X: BIT OF SCURRYING

PENNY: Let's get out of here and talk in the kitchen shall we?

DANIEL: Will there be brandy? My head is pounding something rotten.

PENNY: I thought to myself that I wouldn't begrudge a stiff drink actually. I passed the torch over the nearby shelves and saw a bottle of Courvoisier, I grabbed it.

Absolutely, follow me and watch your step.

SCENE 3 – INT. CARTWELL MANOR, KITCHEN

F/X: PENNY OPENS BRANDY AND POURS TWO GLASSES

PENNY: I took a seat at the kitchen table and gestured for Daniel to sit opposite. Perry placed himself next to him and Daniel looked a little intimidated. I suppose with his outfit, blood down his shirt and his swollen nose Perry did look a bit more of a bruiser than normal.

Daniel on the other hand was far more understated in his attire. He had on a black polo neck jumper tucked into a pair of black trousers with a black belt. On his feet were a pair of rubber soled black plimsolls. If he'd been a guest at the party you'd have assumed he was in costume as a cat burglar, but he was no guest.

I think you'd better explain yourself.

DANIEL: I don't know what to tell you.

PENNY: For a start you can tell me what you're doing uninvited here dressed like a cat burglar?

PERRY: Yeah.

PENNY: Growled Perry, managing to put a bit of menace into his normally affable tone. But any threat he carried was hampered as he continued.

PERRY: Why are you dress to steal cats? What? Why would you want to steal cats? What has feline filching got to do with this? Oh wait, cat-burglar sorry, yes of course. Do you know that that actually used to refer to a single criminal, sort of like this Batman your read about in children's comic books. His real name was Arthur Edward Young and his modus operandi was to climb walls and...

PENNY: Perry!

PERRY: Absolutely, stopping.

DANIEL: Look, I appreciate the brandy. But I'm not saying nothing to you two. I'll take my chances with the police. I'm the victim here. I've been assaulted.

PENNY: I don't give an owl's hoot about the lump on your head, I'm much more concerned about the fact that Victoria Cartwell was murdered tonight and you, her biggest rival, just happened to be here!

DANIEL: What? Victoria's been killed? When? That's terrible! And what do you mean a lump? Is it ruining my hair? Is my parting alright? Is. My. Parting. Alright? Oh god, what am I saying, is Rosie alright?!

PENNY: Rosie is fine, she's with the other guests in the Great Hall. Everyone is looking after each other. Now, I think you better start talking.

DANIEL: What about my parting?

PENNY: It's fine, Perry, show him.

Perry lifted up a polished silver tray and Daniel frantically primped and fussed at his hair with his fingertips.

DANIEL: Oh thank god. It's not vanity you understand, but my hair is my trademark.

PENNY: I don't care how important your hair is Mr Sessler, a woman has been murdered. A woman who I have known and considered a friend since school.

DANIEL: Yes, sorry, I'm sorry.

PENNY: I think it's time you answered my original question. What are you doing at Cartwell Manor?

DANIEL: I heard on the grapevine that Victoria was planning something big. I wanted to get in and have a nosey around, see if I could find out what Cartwell Haircare's next move was going to be. I'm hearing rumours about a home permanent, if CH has cracked that it'll be a game changer.

PENNY: So you're here for corporate espionage, using your wife as a distraction?

DANIEL: Yeah, but Rosie wasn't involved in any of this alright?

PENNY: I find that hard to believe, apparently she practically begged Victoria to let 'The Great Trianta' perform a séance at the party.

DANIEL: And that was genuine. Rosie has wanted to have a look around Cartwell Manor for years, she thinks it's haunted and she really believes in all that stuff. Even though most of the time she's the one pulling the strings or roping in a member of staff or the host of the party to help. If she can't find a plant she trusts she even ropes me in to help out. But anyway, what I'm saying is that despite all that she actually thinks if she gets it all right, and there are ghosts to be brought forward, she'll be able to do it.

PENNY: Has she ever done it before?

DANIEL: No. But I reckon she did tonight. Has to be a chance right?

PERRY: About 0.01% of one. Although I might be ticking up to 0.02% Penny, given what we saw.

PENNY: Are you saying you were in the Drawing Room when that thing appeared?

DANIEL: The ghost?

PENNY: Whatever it was that appeared.

DANIEL: Nah, I was out cold already. Snuck in through the Garden Room.

PENNY: The Garden Room? We looked in there!

DANIEL: Well I must have already been gone by the time you snuck in for a cuddle or whatever.

PERRY: We weren't cuddling.

PENNY: Why don't you carry on with your story? Like how did you know about the apparition if you weren't in the Drawing Room, and how did you end up in the cellar?

DANIEL: The ghost attacked me!

PENNY: What?

DANIEL: The ghost attacked me. I had come in through the window and just left the Garden Room. I was about to head upstairs to search the office when I heard a noise behind me and turned and saw the ghost.

PENNY: How do you know it was the ghost?

DANIEL: It was a ruddy great glowing thing.

PENNY: Was it male or female?

DANIEL: Couldn't say for sure, only saw it for a split-second and then it used its powers to whack me hard around the back of the head with something. Next thing I knew I was waking up in the creepy dungeon with you two shining a light in my face.

PENNY: It's a cellar not a dungeon.

DANIEL: When you've been knocked out cold and dragged underground by a poltergeist it's a dungeon love alright? Any other questions or can I go and see my wife? It's been quite a night.

PENNY: I think that's all for now. Perry do you have any questions?

Perry stood up and gripped the table with both hands, he was scowling at Daniel again.

PERRY: Yeah. What's the difference between your For Chaps and Lustrous Lady shampoos? I normally buy For Chaps, but a few weeks ago I accidentally bought a bottle of Lustrous Lady and I feel like it's brought a real shine to my locks. What are they getting that we're not?

PENNY: I meant about the case Perry.

PERRY: Oh, then no.

SCENE 4 – INT. CARTWELL MANOR, GREAT HALL

F/X: MUTED CONVERSATIONS, SOME LIGHT SNORING

PENNY: I was a bit deflated as we escorted Sessler to the Great Hall. His wife was shocked to see him, but ran into his arms and they delicately inspected each other. Him taking great care with her arm from where she'd fallen, and she gently kissing his head and marshalling a few rogue hairs into line on his beloved parting.

The rest of the guests were dotted around on their own or in pairs. Walter Herbertson-Jones had suspended himself between two chairs and was sleeping once more. Grenville was trying and failing to hide the fact he was drinking from his hipflask. Charlotte Blakemore was sat on her own toying with her necklace, she would scrunch up her face, close her eyes and then open them and stare at the inside of the locket before quickly closing it and starting again. Terry & Saffron were sat at the grand central table with a large photo album before them. I told Perry to join them and said I'd be there soon, but first I wanted to check in with Minnie, the maid, who was stood almost to attention by the door.

Hello, it's Minnie isn't it?

MINNIE: Yes ma'am. What can I get you ma'am? Anything, anything at all. I will do anything you need. I'm so sorry ma'am... for your loss. For the... For Mrs Cartwell ma'am.

PENNY: The poor girl's eyes were on stalks and she was gripping her apron so tightly her knuckles showed blue against the bright white of the fabric.

It's OK Minnie, I don't want anything just now thank you. I was hoping I might be able to ask you a few questions though, about what happened tonight. I think you were maybe helping The Great Trianta?

As soon as I spoke it looked like something snapped within her, the tension drained out of her and she looked me directly in the eye.

MINNIE: Oh I'm so glad you asked ma'am, it is killing me holding it in. Sorry, shouldn't say killing me.

PENNY: It's fine Minnie, what are you holding in?

MINNIE: I didn't think she'd actually be able to do it, and I certainly didn't think anyone was going to get hurt.

PENNY: What did she ask you to do?

MINNIE: I was to open the window in the garden room, then I had been supposed to wait for Trianta to say “is anyone there, knock once” and knock once and then alternate one knock or two knocks for the next few questions, and if people started screaming it was very important I got all of the radios on as loud as they would go but not tuned to a station. But I never got to do the knocking because she sent me away after the first try.

PENNY: I see, thank you Minnie. How did Mrs Sessler, sorry The Great Trianta, give you your instructions?

MINNIE: She didn’t ma’am, it were Mr Grenville passed them along. He had his own jobs to do and all. But I swear, nobody said nothing at all about anyone getting hurt. I thought it was just a show, you know like the pantomime.

PENNY: I believe you Minnie, you’ve not done anything wrong. Just one more question...

I didn’t get to ask one more question, because Perry called me over urgently.

PERRY: Penny! I think you need to see this!

PENNY: What is it Perry?

I crossed to the table quickly and looked at what Perry was frantically pointing at. It was a photograph of a young Walter Herbertson-Jones and Brian Cartwell in Army uniform somehow stood next to Brian Cartwell in an RAF uniform.

What am I looking at here Perry?

PERRY: That is Walter in between Cranston and Brian Cartwell. Brian had a twin brother! Has a twin brother!