

Characters

- Lady Ashmore (F)** - a middle-aged, prim and proper widow.
- William Bartram (M)** - An Irish stranger, late forties.
- Milly (F)** - a servant girl, early twenties.
- Rev. Parrish (M)** - a middle-aged rotund member of the clergy.
- James Burke (M)** - a ghost with a horrible past.

Scene 1 - Prison

(Edinburgh 1829. Shadows of the prison bars darken the stage. James Burke, Hare's old partner in crime, struts in his cell awaiting his execution.)

Burke: **(to audience)** It's bloody cold here. Not even a blanket to keep the damp out. Look at these trousers! I could do with a new waistcoat as well. You want to look your best when you draw your last breath. Ya know, the good Doctor Knox. He still owes me five guinea. For that Dochery woman. I hear they're selling everything we owned: Me hammer, me cane. Why even me old whiskey bottle! There's even talk the hangman's rope will fetch a good price. And over at Libberson's Wynd, they're selling window seats for the gibbet at half a crown. Half a crown, mind ya. Just to see me swing.

Well, I'm ready to pay for what I done. After all, Jimmy Burke's a Christian. And the scriptures are no stranger to the likes of me. The only one that bothers me was that Daft Jamie. The way he looked up at me, like a lost child, with those baleful eyes when I cracked his spine. I'll go to me grave with that on me soul. What about you, William Hare? Me old teacher and me Judas. To save yar own hide, ye gave the Lord Advocate what they call King's evidence. Even though it was nuthin but tatters of the truth. Made me shoulder the blame for what you done.

You devil, I rue the day I met ye. It was you that seduced me plain with drink and promises. And, desperate as I was, no man was ever more tempted. It was you that offed that old lady from Gilmerton. Then let it be known that Doctor Knox would pay eight guinea for a shot. So that's how we got started, "burking", as they say. One by one. Squeezing the life out. Putting bodies in a herring barrel and wheeling them out at dark. Quick and easy, it was.

In no time, we done that English peddler, then old Joe, the miller, Mary Haldane, her daughter. Then there was that old Irishwoman and her grandson. Don't recall the name. And that fellow that gathered the cinder. Of course, Mary Paterson and the lady from the country. Then the girl McDougal, Mrs. Ostler, the washerwoman. Daft Jamie and then that woman Campbell or Docherty. Did I leave anybody out?

Well, one thing I can promise ye, Mr. Hare. After Burke's no more, ye won't breathe so easy on this earth. No better off than Cain, you'll be: a mob howling for yar blood wherever ya go. And men'll spit when yar name comes up. I do hope in the great hereafter, we'll meet again. Know what I'll ask ya then? What do ya have to say for yarself, William Hare!

(Lights darken. SFX. Recording of "Jamaica Farewell" Plays. Harry Belafonte sings, accompanied by a lilting guitar. Played from 'Down the way where the nights are gay' to 'I had to leave a little girl in Kingston Town.' SFX. The drone of church bells which fade into cries of sea gulls and the sounds of ocean waves breaking.)

Scene 2 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlour

(Bournemouth, England, 1841. Spring morning. Tastefully appointed according to the fashion of the day. There is a divan, coffee table, chairs and a glass wine cabinet. A large window overlooks a garden. Lady Ashmore stands in a rather regal posture staring outside as Milly, the servant girl, lays out a tray of tea and biscuits.)

Lady Ashmore: Milly, did you know there’s a strange man in the garden.

Milly: Standing there with Reverend Parrish? Must be the new Groundsman.

Lady Ashmore: Yes, I suppose. I fear the garden’s becoming a blight. Mr. Greenwood would be most displeased. Most displeased indeed.

(Lady Ashmore strolls over and inspects the items on the tray.)

Lady Ashmore: Milly, there’s a chip in this cup.

Milly: There is?

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Lady Ashmore: Did you not notice?

Milly: No, mum. I’ll fetch another.

(As Milly reaches over to retrieve the offending cup. Lady Ashmore grabs her wrist.)

Lady Ashmore: You must sharpen your eyes, young lady. I know, to you, this is but a tiny imperfection. But to me - well, decorum matters in my house.

(Lady Ashmore studies Milly’s hands)

Milly: Yes, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Your hands.

Milly: Mum?

Lady Ashmore: Your hands. Show them to me.

(Milly extends her hands. Lady Ashmore studies them)

Lady Ashmore: Have you taken some sun? Mr. Colton mentioned he saw you on the strand.

Milly: Yes, mum, I was there.

Lady Ashmore: What were you doing?

Milly: Just having a walk. It was me free half-day.

Lady Ashmore: Were you alone?

Milly: Of course, mum.

Lady Ashmore: I pray you remember: scandal breeds like fleas in this town. So don't expose yourself to it. Half-day or not, there's much to do in this house. So don't trifle away your time.

Milly: Yes, mum.

(Lady Ashmore touches Milly's face)

Lady Ashmore: Your skin. It's so delicate. Like mine was. Once. Mind your skin. If men see wrinkles they shall not want you. I tell you this, as one who has been twice widowed. The truth is: men are more fickle than we. The worst of it is, they know how to prey upon our vanity. Then we are quite defenseless. So watch yourself. Your honor is at stake. And wear your bonnet when you go out.

Milly: Yes, mum, I will.

(SFX. A loud knock at the door)

Milly: That must be the Reverend.

Lady Ashmore: Well, show him in. Give me that cup.

(Milly hands her the cup and exits)

Milly: Yes, mum.

(Lady Ashmore carefully returns the cup to the tray as Rev. Parrish enters)

Rev. Parrish: Good day, my Lady.

Lady Ashmore: Ah, Reverend Parrish, just in time for tea. Or would you prefer something with a bit more vigor?

Rev. Parrish: No, no. my gracious lady. I fear the gout has me in its loathesome grip. Tea will do me fine.

(Lady Ashmore instructs Milly to serve the tea while she reclines and invites Parrish to sit beside her)

Lady Ashmore: Why don't we chat a bit. While it seeps. Milly, that will be all.
(Milly curtsies and exits)

Rev. Parrish: Milly seems to be thriving under your care.

Lady Ashmore: I've done my best to breed some sense in her.

Rev. Parrish: Well, I must say that your tea smells rather delectable.

Lady Ashmore: It should. These herbs were tended by no less than our dear Mr. Greenwood.

Rev. Parrish: God rest his soul.

Lady Ashmore: Amen. May I pour?

Rev. Parrish: Most kind. Thank you.
(Lady Ashmore fills his cup. Sets the pot down and then offers him a plate of biscuits which he happily accepts)

Lady Ashmore: I fear Mr. Greenwood shall be hard to replace. I trust you've found me a suitable groundsman.

Rev. Parrish: I have, indeed.

Lady Ashmore: I take it, it is man I spied in the garden.

Rev. Parrish: He goes by the name of Bartram. William Bartram. Hails from Ireland.

Lady Ashmore: This Mr. Bartram. Is he trustworthy? In your opinion?

Rev. Parrish: Seems Christian enough. Made a living from his hands. Where, I can't exactly say. Lived somewhere in the North fore coming down here.

Lady Ashmore: Does he have references?

Rev. Parrish: It is said he gardened for Lady Wingate in Christ Church. Tended her roses and whatnot.

Lady Ashmore: She speaks highly of him then?

Rev. Parrish: As highly as she is inclined to.

Lady Ashmore: I see. Well, normally, I should be hesitant to receive a strange man in my house. However, seeing that we are, at present, short-handed, we are in need of his services.

Rev. Parrish: Shall I bring him in? He awaits outside your door.

Lady Ashmore: Yes. Let me look upon him.

(Rev. Parrish exits and returns in the company of William Bartram whose workman's clothes belie his low status. He carries a knapsack and has a leather pouch slung around his neck. His only earthly possessions. Lady Ashmore rises as Mr. Bartram enters)

Rev. Parrish: My Lady, this is the gentleman of whom I spoke. William Bartram.

(Lady Ashmore extends her hand in a formal manner. Bartram takes it and nods)

Bartram: Mum.

Lady Ashmore: Well, Mr. Bartram. I've heard some encouraging testimonies to your work. I understand that you were employed by Lady Wingate. Were you not?

Bartram: Well, just on occasion, as things come up. I mostly cut turf for Mr. Graham-Tate. I believe he was once in your employ.

Lady Ashmore: **(with a bit of irritation)** Graham-Tate? Yes, so he was! So he was. **(regaining her composure)** Did the Reverend brief you on your duties?

Bartram: Indeed he did, mum.

Lady Ashmore: And are you keen to commence?

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Bartram: I am.

Lady Ashmore: Excellent. Well then, it's settled. If all is to your liking, I'll have Milly show you to your quarters.

Bartram: Thank ya, mum.

Lady Ashmore: **(shouting)** Milly! Milly!

(Milly appears)

Lady Ashmore: Show Mr. Bartram to Mr. Greenwood's quarters.

(Bartram gathers his knapsack and starts to follow Milly)

Lady Ashmore: And, Mr. Bartram?

Bartram: Yes, mum?

Lady Ashmore: Welcome to this house.

(Bartram nods. Then Milly and Bartram exit)

Rev. Parrish: Well, my lady, how does Mr. Bartram strike you?

Lady Ashmore: Seems suitable enough. 'Tis a pity his Lordship isn't here. He was, as you know, a keen student of human character.

Rev. Parrish: A phrenologist was he not?

Lady Ashmore: One of his many passions, yes. The man spent hours pouring over his journals and books. He always affirmed that much could be discerned by studying the manner of man's carriage, his gait, and particularly the shape of his skull.

Rev. Parrish: And what of a man's soul? How are we to detect imperfections there?

Lady Ashmore: Now that's a question suitable for a theologian such as yourself. Still, for what it's worth, Mr. Bartram bears a queer resemblance to someone I've seen before. Exactly where - I don't recall.

Rev. Parrish: Not in Devon, I'd wager.

Lady Ashmore: No, but there is something oddly familiar about him. His face, in particular. And I have a long memory for faces.

Scene 3 – The Servant Quarters

(Milly enters carrying a candle which illuminates a rustic table and a cot. The table is laden with a number of glass jars filled with herbal concoctions floating in water. Bartram follows, glances about then drops his knapsack on the cot)

Milly: This was Mr. Greenwood's shed. It's a bit small but comfy.

Bartram: **(glancing about)** Seen worse. It'll do.

(Bartram picks up one of the jars, studies it. Bartram unscrews the lid and smells its rankness. Puts it down with a grimace)

Bartram: Whew! What the devil is this?

Milly: Those are Mr. Greenwood's potions. He was always making concoctions from the plants outside.

Bartram: A bit of an alchemist, was he?

(Bartram places the jar back)

Milly: You'll take your meals with the staff. We sup at six. Mr. Colton will show you where the tools are. Oh, I wanted to inform you that her Ladyship harbors a fierce eye for detail. Any blemish she'll notice. So mind how you go about your work.

Bartram: Thank ya, Milly for the strout warning. But I can tell ya now: There'll be no bad words said bout William Bartram. Wouldn't want to bring a frown to your pretty face.

(The compliment breaks the ice. She smiles. He starts to unpack his things)

Bartram: How do you find Bournemouth, Miss Milly?

Milly: Tis a splendid place for solitude or rest.

Bartram: But a bit remote. For a young girl.

Milly: Tis true there's few souls between Poole Harbor and Christ Church. But I like keeping the house. They pay a fair wage and then there's the ocean and the fresh air. I like walking among the pines. Well, I'll leave you to settle in.

(Bartram brings out a whiskey canteen. Offers it to her. She's a bit shocked)

Bartram: Have some? Me supplement. Keeps the chill off.

Milly: No thank you, kindly, Mr. Bartram. You'll want to mind your liquor. Her ladyship turned out Graham-Tate for just that. Again, we sup at six.

(Milly exits. Bartram studies his surroundings then takes a long swig)

Bartram: **(to himself)** Pious, are we? Little Bitch.

(Bartram takes out his few personal items from his leather pouch. Unfolds a locket. Opens it. Stares down at the image)

Bartram: Well, Meg, dear. Here we be. In Bournemouth. With night coming on. End of the damn world. But I'll be bound out soon. Free of this. A new man. And no one the wiser.

(He takes a deep drink from his whiskey canteen)

Scene 4 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(Milly enters to check on Lady Ashmore)

Milly: Will there be anything else, mum?

Lady Ashmore: No, you should go to bed. **(Pause)** Milly. Wait!

Milly: Mum?

Lady Ashmore: How is our Mr. Bartram? Is he settling in?

Milly: Seems to be, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Good. Good.

Milly: But he was a bit taken back by the odor of Mr. Greenwood’s jars.

Lady Ashmore: Was he now? Anything else.

Milly: Like what, mum?

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Lady Ashmore: Anything he said. Anything he did.

Milly: Nothing, really. Asked me about myself.

Lady Ashmore: Oh? And what did you tell him?

Milly: Just that I like Bournemouth. The solitude and such. Nothing else.

Lady Ashmore: Hmm.

Milly: He didn’t say much about himself.

Lady Ashmore: I suspect he wouldn’t.

Milly: Mum?

Lady Ashmore: Mark my word, there’s something odd about that man.

Milly: Think so?

Lady Ashmore: Milly, when it comes to the staff, you’re the eyes and ears of this house. So keep me informed. I don’t want another incident like that with Mr. Graham-Tate.

Scene 5 – Servant’s Quarters

(Night. A few hours later. Bartram sits at a rustic makeshift table drinking whiskey from his canteen. He has a weathered nautical map spread out on the table which he studies like an old ritual. He’s a bit drunk tries to stand but then slumps down, lies back upon a cot behind the table. Dream Sequence: Shadows of the prison bars darken the room. James Burke, his old partner in crime, materializes)

Burke: Hare! **(shouting)** William Hare!

Bartram: What? Who is it? Who is it?

(Burke shakes him awake then struts about)

Burke: Up, man. Up! We can’t keep the good doctor waiting! Five guinea a shot!

Bartram: **(recoils)** The doctor? Who calls William Hare?

Burke: Ya don’t know yar old “burkn” buddy?

Bartram: I don’t know who you are talking about. The name’s Bartram. William Bartram!

Burke: Of course it tis. Who am I to say, it isn’t?

(Burke’s figure fades. Exhausted by the haunting, Bartram collapses in a heap on the cot. The Lights change as dawn breaks. SFX. Seagulls cry out)

Milly: **(o.s.)** Mr. Bartram. Mr. Bartram. It’s Milly.

(Bartram shakes himself out of his lethargy)

Bartram: Who?

(Milly appears through the door)

Milly: It’s Milly, Mr. Bartram, her ladyship needs you.

Bartram: What does she want?

Milly: She didn’t say.

Bartram: She didn’t tell you?

Milly: “Fetch the groundsman” is all she said.

Bartram: Tell her I’ll be round - when I’ve had me tea.

Milly:

Mr. Bartram, you're new to this house. So I'll tell you plain. Her Ladyship don't like to be kept waiting. I'd be up to the house, if I was you.

Bartram:

Alright. Alright then. Jesus Christ Almighty! A man can't get his rest.

(He takes a final sip from his canteen and begins to strap on Mr. Greenwood's boots)

Scene 6 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(Morning. Lady Ashmore stands before a large window overlooking the garden. Bartram enters, dressed in his work clothes and wearing Mr. Greenwood’s boots)

Lady Ashmore: Ah, Mr. Bartram. So how are you getting on? Settling in, I hope.

Bartram: Yes mum.

Lady Ashmore: Your duties? They suit you? It’s not too much?

Bartram: No mum.

Lady Ashmore: Those are Mr. Greenwood’s boots, I believe.

Bartram: Aye, they are.

Lady Ashmore: Are they comfortable? Do they fit?

Bartram: They’re a tolerable fit.

Lady Ashmore: Good, I’m so pleased to hear that. Could you join me here - by the window?

(He starts forward but realizes his boots are muddy)

Bartram: Mum, me boots. They’re a fright.

Lady Ashmore: Well, take them off.

Bartram: Yes, mum.

(As he struggles with the boots, Lady turns back to her view of the garden)

Lady Ashmore: I used to watch Mr. Greenwood from this very spot tending the garden. You enjoy tilling the soil, do you not?

(Bartram comes over to join her at the window)

Bartram: Aye, I’ve done enough of it in me days. Back in Ireland. Digging ditches. Clearing roads. So this garden. Tis a wee bit of heaven.

Lady Ashmore: I dare say Mr. Greenwood was something of an artist. I mean, he had such a delicate touch. The way he handled the bulbs, trimmed the stems as if to attend to every exquisite leaf. He took especial care of the tropical plants that his late Lordship brought back from his trips. He seemed to know everything about Nature’s bounty. But now we are blessed to have you in our company. Are we not, Mr. Bartram?

Bartram: Aye, mum, if ya say.

Lady Ashmore: See this tree. Here.

Bartram: She's a fine old oak, mum.

Lady Ashmore: That may be. But the branches obscure my sight. And the pigeons like to roost up here.

Bartram: They take them branches for a bit of shelter.

Lady Ashmore: **(suddenly angry)** They are dirty and insolent pests who foul everything in their wake! I shall not have them despoiling my view! They'll get no respite from me! **(regaining her composure)** Mr. Bartram, it would please me if you would hack off these upper branches.

Bartram: She's a grand old tree. Shame to cut her back.

Lady Ashmore: Mr. Bartram, I believe I have made myself clear.

Bartram: Yes, mum, as you wish. I'll see to it.

(Bartram tiptoes back to retrieve his boots)

Lady Ashmore: Mister Colter can show you where the tools are. You'll need a strong saw. But it shouldn't be much of a task for a man like you.

(He nods and starts to leave)

Lady Ashmore: Mister Bartram, another word. If you please.

Bartram: Mum?

Lady Ashmore: You say you worked under Mr. Graham-Tate?

Bartram: Yes, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Did he say anything about this house?

Bartram: Mr. Tate?

Lady Ashmore: I mean, did he tell you why he was discharged?

Bartram: No mum.

Lady Ashmore: That's odd. When he left, we were not on the best of terms. I thought perhaps he might said something against me. After all, he was not adverse to gossip.

Bartram: He never said nothing. To me.

Lady Ashmore: Shall I tell you why I let him go?

Bartram: Me Lady I -

Lady Ashmore: **(interrupting)** I dismissed him because I found him to be unreliable. I found him derelict, deceitful, and disrespectful. Need I continue? Or do you understand that I will not tolerate such behavior under my roof?

Bartram: Yes, mum.

Lady Ashmore: **(regaining her composure)** Very well then. I'm so glad that's settled. May I ask, what brings you to Bournemouth, It's a long way from Ireland.

Bartram: Aye, it tis. But a man's got to keep himself together. As best he can.

Lady Ashmore: And how do you find Bournemouth? To your liking, I hope?

Bartram: Nice. Nice place to end your days.

Lady Ashmore: Well spoken, Mr. Bartram. I hope you don't mind my prying. It's natural, after all, what with me being newly widowed and alone. I need to know what sort of man I've allowed in my house. I think we should have a nice, little chat sometime. Just you and I. If you don't mind.

Bartram: **(a bit suspicious)** As you wish, mum.

(Bartram exits. Lady Ashmore watches him go, scrutinizing him at length)

Scene 7 – Servants Quarters

(Later that Afternoon. Bartram tosses the metal saw on the table as Milly enters)

Milly: Did you attend to her Ladyship?

Bartram: I did, indeed. And I'll tell ya this: yar mistress, she's a sly one. Has more on her mind than a bit of tree trimming. Askn me this and that. Looking me fore and aft.

Milly: She does that with everyone. She's quick to notice the faults of others.

Bartram: I hear she was twice widowed. Under suspicious circumstances. That true?

Milly: Who told you that?

Bartram: Graham-Tate.

Milly: I shouldn't listen to him. But yes, it is true. She's had her trials. Her first husband had a most unfortunate fall. Then his Lordship, whom I waited on, was taken by a sudden illness summer before last. And now Mr. Greenwood has departed us just this spring. So, you might say, this house has known its share of sorrow. Why do you want to know all this?

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Bartram: Jist to know. That's all. All I get is from her Ladyship is: "How you getting on, Mr. Bartram? Settling in, are ye?" (pause) Milly, His Lordship. Was he well-liked? I mean, did he get on with the staff?

Milly: He was good to the help. Fair minded to a fault. Why do you ask? Did Mr. Tate say different?

Bartram: Not at all.

Milly: It's just like that Graham- Tate to be spreading lies.

(Changing the subject, Milly spies the locket)

Milly: Oh, how pretty! Is it your family?

Bartram: What?

Milly: That locket. Is this a portrait of your wife?

(Bartram opens the locket and gives it to her. She studies it)

Bartram: Yep, that's my Meg. Or a fair likeness of her.

Milly: When was this done?

Bartram: Oh, years back. When we was in Edinburgh.

Milly: What were you doing there?

Bartram: Surviving is all.

Milly: She still there? Your wife?

Bartram: I wouldn't know. Had some trouble so we had to split up. Haven't seen or heard from her. **(pause)** Still, we had a grand time when we was together. Met her after I got out of the army. Had some glorious days, we did.

(Milly hands him back the locket)

Bartram: When you get my age, all you've got is memories and regrets.

Milly: Regrets? About what?

Bartram: **(Changing the subject)** Know where I'd go? If I was to make a new start of it?

(Bartram produces a weathered map from his pouch, spreads it on the table, and beckons her to examine it. He stabs a spot on the map.)

Bartram: Right there.

Milly: Jamaica?

Bartram: Why not? Plenty of sun. Labour's cheap. A man can breathe free down there. Grow sugar cane. Live like a king. Go naked if ye want.

Milly: Mr. Bartram, I didn't know you were such a dreamer.

Bartram: I'm not. A few sovereigns and I'm off. Buy me way on the Prince Regent. Sail down to the colonies. What about you, Milly? Don't you have yar dreams?

Milly: I do. But now I know them for what they are. Just dreams. I've had my chances. I didn't take them. Afraid of where I'd end up.

Bartram: Well, all I can say, is there's more places on God's green earth than Bournemouth. Want some advice from an old dodger? Don't squander your youth.

Scene 8 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(Morning. Two weeks later. Lady Ashmore has taken up her usual watch at the window. Rev. Parrish enters)

Lady Ashmore: Reverend, how nice of you to drop by. Would you care for some sherry?

(Lady Ashmore ushers him to the divan)

Rev. Parrish: Just a drop, my dear. My gout, you know.

Lady Ashmore: Of course.

(Lady Ashmore pours him a generous glass)

Rev. Parrish: So how is Mr. Bartram faring? I’ve seen the garden. It looks quite revived. You must be pleased with his work.

Lady Ashmore: His work? Oh yes, he seems very - what’s the word? - methodically. That’s it. He’s a very, methodical man.

Rev. Parrish: And is that not an admirable trait?

Lady Ashmore: Yes, still- Mr. Bartram has been with us. For what? Two weeks now? Every day, I watch him toil away in the garden. Know what I’ve discovered?

Rev. Parrish: No, my lady.

Lady Ashmore: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. The man’s a sphinx. Never says a word. And when he does, he’s very careful what he says. Don’t you think that’s a bit suspect?

Rev. Parrish: Well, you can’t blame a man for keeping to himself. Many do.

Lady Ashmore: That may be. But I have long felt that there is something fugitive in Mr. Bartram’s manner. As if he was harbouring some great indiscretion from his past.

Rev. Parrish: Fugitive did you say? But I’ve made inquiries in Christ Church. I can insure you, all I’ve received are the best reports.

Lady Ashmore: That may well be. But the longer I’m around Mr. Bartram, the more I sense there is something odd about the man. As I said before, there’s something about his face that is strangely familiar. As if I’d seen it drawn or sketched somewhere. I wish I could remember.

Rev. Parrish: Perhaps you saw the resemblance in his Lordship’s library among all those tomes on phrenology and anatomy and whatnot. They’re quite a few sketchbooks there.

Lady Ashmore: Yes, perhaps you're right. I shall have to investigate further.

Rev. Parrish: I doubt whether you'll solve the riddle of your sphinx.

Lady Ashmore: Perhaps not. But there's no harm in trying. After all, curiosity may have killed the cat but not the well-bred lady.

Scene 9 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(The next morning. The coffee table is laden with a stack of old medical books. Lady Ashmore sits on the divan sorting through them as Milly enters carrying another stack of old bound volumes)

Milly: Here’s the rest you wanted, mum. Where shall I put them?

Lady Ashmore: On the table, Milly. That’s a good girl.

Milly: They’re a bit musty. I’ve never seen so many.

Lady Ashmore: I’m not surprised. His lordship was loathe to throw anything out. Let’s see - **(reading the titles)** “A Sketch of the Natural Laws of Man” by G. Spurzheim, M.D. No! **(Lady Ashmore discards the book and then picks up another)** “Transactions of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society”. Hmm.

Milly: Can I help you find something?

Lady Ashmore: I’m afraid you wouldn’t know what to look for. I scarcely do myself. No, this is something I must do on my own.

(Lady Ashmore sorts through the pile, discarding sheet after sheet. She flips through the pages intently, searching for some piece of news as they converse)

Lady Ashmore: By the way, how is our Mr. Bartram faring? I ask only because it seems he takes great pains to avoid me.

Milly: I wouldn’t know, mum.

Lady Ashmore: I understand you visit him.

Milly: I would hardly call it that, mum.

Lady Ashmore: But he converses with you, does he not?

Milly: A bit.

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Lady Ashmore: What does he talk about?

Milly: Nothing of himself. He asks more about me.

Lady Ashmore: Perhaps he’s trying to win you over.

Milly:

I hardly think that, mum. The only thing I know for certain is he had a wife named Meg whom he met while in the army. And that they had some trouble in Edinburgh.

Lady Ashmore:

(reacting) What sort of trouble?

Scene 10 – Servants Quarters

(Later that afternoon. Bartram is sequestered around his table studying a cherished map as Milly enters)

Milly: Mr. Bartram, are you decent?

Bartram: Decent enough. You look flagged out, Milly.

Milly: My arms are about ready to fall off. Been carrying these old medical books from the master's study. Her Ladyship's in quite a state, I can tell you. I haven't seen her mind so set since she holed up with Mr. Greenwood to talk plants together.

Bartram: Worked up is she? What about?

Milly: Something scientific. It's a fierce and queer passion this science. Lord Ashmore used to go about with these calipers. **(Milly demonstrates in the air)** Measuring the size of our heads and then taking notes.

Bartram: What the devil for?

Milly: I never understood. To study "the extent of moral taint" is all he would say. I fear my mistress has succumbed to the same obsession. She seems driven to find some fact, as she puts it, "in the bowels of those books". But what it is, she will not say.

Scene 11: Lady Ashmore's Parlour

(Late Afternoon. Lady Ashmore sorts through the pile, discarding book after book)

Lady Ashmore: "The Phrenological Journal, Volume Six, Edinburgh. 1830"

(She arbitrarily opens it then suddenly halts, dumbstruck by what she sees)

Lady Ashmore: Ah ha! Here it tis! I knew it! **(shouting)** Eureka!

(She grasps the book holding it like a lost treasure in her hands)

Lady Ashmore: **(shouting)** Milly! Milly!

(Milly enters frightened)

Milly: Mum?

Lady Ashmore: Go fetch Reverend Parrish.

Milly: At this hour, mum?

Lady Ashmore: Of course, this hour!

Milly: Shall I tell him what this is about?

Lady Ashmore: **(with pride)** Tell him I've just solved the riddle of the sphinx.

Scene 12 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(Evening. Rev. Parrish and Lady Ashmore are sitting together on the divan with a large opened book)

Lady Ashmore: Well? Was I right or not?

Rev. Parrish: I’d say it’s possible.

Lady Ashmore: Not possible. Probable. I told you that I have long felt there is something fugitive in Mr. Bartram’s manner. As if he were harboring some indiscretion in his past. Then, going through his Lordship’s papers, I spied this old article. They concern the murders at Tanner’s Close in Edinburgh.

Rev. Parrish: Tanner’s Close?

Lady Ashmore: Burke and Hare, my good man. The two ghouls who murdered for Dr. Knox.

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Rev. Parrish: But weren’t they put to death, that pair?

Lady Ashmore: Burke was. But not Hare. Which brings us back to Mr. Bartram. Consider the parallels, they’re intriguing: Hare had his trial in Edinburgh where Bartram says he spent his days. Hare had a wife named Meg or Margaret. Same as Bartram. Both served in the army.

Rev. Parrish: But, my lady, all of this is very circumstantial. I’d hardly call it convincing evidence that Mr. Bartram and Mr. Hare are one and the same.

Lady Ashmore: I quite agree. However, cast your eyes on this.

(Lady Ashmore shows him a sketch of the culprit from one of the books)

Lady Ashmore: Granted this was drawn a few years back. But the resemblance is well - arresting.

Rev. Parrish: I really couldn’t say, my lady. Artists do take license.

Lady Ashmore: Call it woman’s intuition, but I feel there’s something more to Mr. Bartram’s past than a few failed business dealings.

Rev. Parrish: Come now, Lady Ashmore. You really believe Mr. Bartram to be some fiend in hiding?

Lady Ashmore: And why not? It's certainly in the realm of possibility. Isn't it? Well, isn't it?

Rev. Parrish: But the man has done you no harm.

Lady Ashmore: What would you have me do? Lavish my trust on a cheat? Open my coffers to a thief? Render myself helpless to a murderer under my own roof.

Rev. Parrish: I would advise caution before you condemn him. After all, Mr. Bartram told me he was here to start a new life. And if he hath truly repented of his sins.

Lady Ashmore: Whoever he is, I am to know the truth.

Rev. Parrish: But my Lady, you're working yourself into a state. If Mr. Bartram makes you so uncomfortable, why don't you just dismiss him?

Lady Ashmore: To what end? If he is this culprit, he'd only slink away. Ingratiate himself elsewhere. Pass himself off as some harmless rube looking for work only to endanger the decency of some other household. No! Star it well! I aim to find him out. And I shall!

(SFX. Seagulls cry out)

Scene 13 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(The next morning. All of the books have been cleared away except one which rests on the coffee table. Lady Ashmore gazes out the window as Mr. Bartram enters)

- Lady Ashmore:** Ah, Mr. Bartram, there you are. I wanted to thank you for all your endeavors. You have restored the garden to its former glory. Mr. Greenwood would be delighted with your efforts.
- Bartram:** A bit of weed’n and trim’n is all she took.
- Lady Ashmore:** I didn’t mean to overwhelm you with compliments. You strike me, and please correct me if I am wrong, as a man who shies away from effusive praise and undue attention.
- Bartram:** Just an ordinary bloke, mum.
- Lady Ashmore:** Ordinary, hardly. From what I hear you’ve traveled a great deal and had many experiences. I mean, in your past.
- Bartram:** A man’s past is his own, I reckon.
- Lady Ashmore:** Well said, Mr. Bartram. Would you care to sit and chat?
- Bartram:** You mean now, mum?
- Lady Ashmore:** No time like the present. One of the staff told me that you were late of Edinburgh. I thought you hailed from Ireland. I also have it on good authority that you once served in Her Majesty’s regiment
- Bartram:** Me? Oh no. Never. They must’ve misunderstood. That’s all.
- Lady Ashmore:** So you were never in Edinburgh?
- Bartram:** Well, yes and no. I mean, I’ve been all around, see. Drifting bout.
- Lady Ashmore:** And the military? Did you not do some service?
- Bartram:** A wee bit, nothing to speak of.
- Lady Ashmore:** A pity. My husband, I mean His Late Lordship, had a particular fondness for soldiers. **(to herself)** And for soldier’s wives, if truth be told. **(back to him)** Tell you what. Would you like a drink? I have some marvelous whiskey. Quite aged. From the master’s cellar. He only served it to his best guests. Are you up for a taste?
- Bartram:** Well, I don’t know, mum. It being the middle of the day. And me being a temperate man.

Lady Ashmore: Of course, you are. But I'd really like you to taste it just the same. I'd really value your opinion.

Bartram: Alright then. If ya put it that way.

(Lady Ashmore pours him a sample from an elegant decanter. He takes the glass and stares at it)

Lady Ashmore: Try it.

(Bartram downs it)

Lady Ashmore: Well? How does it taste?

Bartram: Like nectar, mum.

Lady Ashmore: I'm so glad. Have a little more.

(Lady Ashmore pours him some more of the nectar)

Lady Ashmore: I'd like to hear more about you, Mr. Bartram. About your travels. Your time in Scotland, for instance. How long were you in Edinburgh? If you don't mind my asking.

Bartram: Well, not long, mum.

Lady Ashmore: So you were never domiciled there?

Bartram: Domiciled?

Lady Ashmore: You never lived there?

Bartram: I did. But not for long.

Lady Ashmore: There wasn't much work?

Bartram: That, and I didn't get on with the locals.

Lady Ashmore: No?

Bartram: I found them a bit coarse. Truth be told.

Lady Ashmore: Coarse? How so, Mr. Bartram?

Bartram: Well, to give ya example. There was this time I went down to a public house. Just to have me a pint. A little pint was all. Next thing I knew they come crowding round me, them Scots. Calling me names. Wouldn't let up till they threw me in a lime pit.

Lady Ashmore: How barbaric! I've never heard of such a thing!

Bartram: I heard tell later that they'd mixed me up with some other bloke. Simple as that.

Lady Ashmore: So it was all just a misunderstanding. Drink up, Mr. Bartram.

(Bartram nods then again downs the glass)

Bartram: Aye, it was but I'd never treat a stranger like that. I won't stay in a place where the people lay a hand on me! I had nothing but troubles in that place. You could ask me wife.

Lady Ashmore: Oh, that's right. Milly mentioned you had a wife.

Bartram: Aye, I did. But she left me.

Lady Ashmore: Did she now?

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Bartram: Truth be, she was always a hand to do for herself.

Lady Ashmore: Independent, was she?

Bartram: To a fault.

Lady Ashmore: That's what I like about you, Mr. Bartram. You give simple, direct answers. Nothing varnished. You know what else I've observed about you?

(Puzzled, a bit apprehensive, Bartram shakes his head)

Lady Ashmore: I've noticed that you possess a well-practiced system of doing things. One that extends well beyond handling plants and flowers. I said to myself: there is a method in those hands. This is a methodical man, not given to whim, but one who knows when to lunge forward and when to remain deadly still. Am I right?

Bartram: Well, I fancy myself capable as the next.

(Lady Ashmore offers the bottle to Bartram)

Lady Ashmore: Another?

Bartram: Thank ya, mum. Most generous.

(Lady Ashmore pours him another drink which Bartram readily takes)

Lady Ashmore: There. How's that? Tell me, Mr. Bartram, did you ever have any trouble with the law? I mean, when you were up there in Scotland

Bartram: **(taken back)** Me? No, mum.

Lady Ashmore: So you have no criminal past?

Bartram: No, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Well, I can appreciate how certain misunderstandings could arise given that you do have a rather familiar face. In fact, I've been struck by a certain resemblance you bear to someone whose likeness I've seen before.

(Lady Ashmore draws out the old book from a side table and opens it carefully to a well-marked page)

Lady Ashmore: Had I not been privy to these old journals, I might not have been able to puzzle it out. Well, you know how we women are, always probing and prying. You see, my late husband was something of a self-styled phrenologist. He reveled in anatomical studies of criminal brains. Can you read, Mr. Bartram?

Bartram: A bit. Not well, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Well then, let me read this to you. It might be of some interest. It's title is "Phrenological Observations of the Cerebral Development of William Burke executed for Murder at Edinburgh on 28th January 1829 and on the Development of William Hare, his accomplice" by one Thomas Stone, Esquire. Are you familiar with his work?

Bartram: No mum.

Lady Ashmore: Well, this author measured Hare's skull and then compared it with twenty eight other violent offenders. Know what he found?

(Bartram shakes his head with a growing sense of dread)

Lady Ashmore: Here I quote: "Hare's organ of destructiveness", which I take it, refers to his skull, "is in its absolute size, not above the average and, in its relative size, meaning its proportions or dimensions, below the average." What do you make of that, Mr. Bartram?

Bartram: I'm at a loss to say, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Still it's enlightening, isn't it, to know what science can tell us about the moral nature of men? Mr. Stone included an etching of his subject. Would you like to see it?

(Lady Ashmore drops the opened book, in his lap, Hare's portrait is exposed. Bartram stares down glumly at the drawing, realizes that the game is up)

Lady Ashmore: Do you not recognize this face? I fear it is your own.

Bartram: **(shaken, but picking his words carefully)** Its - a grand likeness.

Lady Ashmore: Isn't it, though. Tell me, was there much talk of Burke and Hare when you were in Scotland?

Bartram: Of course, mum. It was all over.

Lady Ashmore: I wonder what would make a person do something like that?

Bartram: Desperation. Being poor. Being hungry. You're driven to it.

Lady Ashmore: Tell me, Mr. Bartram, were you ever known by another name?

Bartram: Me? No. Well, I may have called myself something different. Once or twice. To escape creditors, ya know.

Lady Ashmore: What name did you assume?

(Silence)

Bartram: **(composing himself)** I don't rightly remember, mum. Not exactly. Them were dire times there in Edinburgh. Digging ditches, selling scraps. Just to keep a body together. A man has to live however he can.

Lady Ashmore: Tell me, did you ever reside in Tanner's Close?

(Bartram remains silent, pensive)

Lady Ashmore: Mr. Bartram, set your mind at rest. I am not here to condemn you. I simply bring up these matters as a point- let's call it scientific interest. For as you so elegantly put it: a man's past is his own. The long and short of it is: we are what we are. After all, I can see, Mr. Bartram, that you are a man of rare talents. Let me refresh your glass. **(Lady Ashmore pours him a bit more. Apprehensive, he holds it in his hand. Lady Ashmore studies him for a long moment)** Then do I have it on good account that I am speaking to William Hare, the anatomist's friend, the former business associate of the late James Burke?

Bartram: I don't answer to that name!

(Bartram gets up slightly inebriated from the strong drink. He sets the glass down and starts to leave)

Lady Ashmore: It's too bad, that you don't. For I might have a lucrative proposition for you, if you were indeed William Hare.. But as you exhibit little interest in hearing me out, then I'll leave you to your duties.

(Bartram halts and turns back to face Lady Ashmore)

Bartram: What would be the nature of this proposition? I mean, if I was him?

Lady Ashmore: Something along Hare's former line of work. I believe in Scotland, they refer to it as "burking".

Bartram: And who would be the –

Lady Ashmore: The shot? Who indeed? First of all, I can assure you that the individual of whom I speak justly deserves his fate. Suppose, Mr. Bartram, your life was nothing but a miserable hell, made unbearable by the actions of another. In short, a man who traffics in lies to the everlasting ruination of my family's name. A reprehensible leech who vexes your very breath. Suppose you needed to remove this impediment to your happiness. How best would you do it?

Bartram: Well, mum, there's tried and true methods but it calls for a steady hand.

Lady Ashmore: For all of his appetites, this particular individual is infirm. His heart is weak. I would bear him to you laden with drink. All I require-

Bartram: Are these hands.

Lady Ashmore: You're very perceptive, Mr. Bartram.

Bartram: Who else knows bout this?

Lady Ashmore: Why no one. It's our little secret. Don't you trust me?

Bartram: Trusting's not in me nature.

Lady Ashmore: You trusted Burke, didn't you? And he never betrayed you.

Bartram: I never gave him the chance. I-I don't know, mum. I've done me best to forget those days. It's a lot to ask. I'd have to think on it.

Lady Ashmore: Of course, you would be royally compensated. Tell me, what did Doctor Knox pay for a shot? Four pounds, eight pence, wasn't it? But considering we'd have to muster you out of retirement. This job should fetch a bit more.

(Lady Ashmore takes out her purse and flashes money at him)

Lady Ashmore: Say ten pounds?

Bartram: What about twenty?

Lady Ashmore: Twenty pounds! That's a substantial sum.

Bartram: But there's the risk.

Lady Ashmore: There's hardly a risk. Not if it were made to look natural. Done right, so that a medical man might think it apoplexy or some such thing. You could do that, couldn't you? I mean, if you were William Hare?

Bartram: What if I was to say nay to your proposal?

Lady Ashmore: Let's just say, that it wouldn't be in your best interest. A man with your past. We couldn't afford to keep you employed here. A man with no education, no prospects. Where would you go, Mr. Bartram? Back to Scotland? Back to Edinburgh? Back to that lime pit! No, you decline at your own peril.

(Lady Ashmore takes his glass and pours him another drink)

Lady Ashmore: A bit more, Mr. Bartram?

Scene 14 – Servant’s Quarters

(That night, Bartram enters slightly inebriated and slumps down at the table)

Bartram: “Decline at your own peril” Ha! Well, it’s back to the old business, isn’t it? A shot for her and no one the wiser. So she says. Still- twenty pounds is a soul’s ransom.

(Burke materializes)

Burke: A lively sum, lad. Consider it well. You could board ship. Sail off faraway. Make for Jamaica. Who’d know any different? What’s another shot to the likes of you? Or have ya lost yar touch? Remember at Tanner’s Close we had ourselves a system. Worked like a jewel. Cast an eye for some unfortunate, friend them up. All smiles and caring. Invite em over for a drink. Get em real pissed. Offer em a bed for the night. The soul of charity we was. Lay em out ever so relaxed. Then when they’re good and gone with drink, *you pounce* !

(Burke demonstrates his technique by grabbing Bartram and flinging him to the cot)

Burke: See, it’s all in the grip and the knowing. This hand pinches the nose just so and then the other squeezes the throat. They kick about a bit till their faces swell up. But pretty soon they’re gone. Just like babies asleep in your arms. **(Burke releases him)** Some wrestle. Others don’t. Sometimes you can hear a bit of a gurgle. Remember the one that squeaked like a squirrel when we sent her off to meet her angels.

(Bartram fights off the ghastly vision from his memory)

Bartram: I know! I know! Dear God! Leave me! **(shouting)** Leave me be!

(Bartram slumps to the floor in defeat. The lights darken then brighten as Dawn approaches. SFX. Seagulls cry out)

Scene 15 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(The next morning, Milly is dusting the furniture while Lady Ashmore gazes at the window)

Lady Ashmore: Milly, have you seen our Mr. Bartram?

Milly: No Mum, not since last morning.

Lady Ashmore: I hope he hasn’t taken ill.

Milly: I really couldn’t say.

Lady Ashmore: Why don’t you see if you can rouse him?

Milly: Yes, mum.

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Lady Ashmore: Milly, before you go. Would you set out the Master’s sherry glasses?

Milly: Are we expecting someone?

Lady Ashmore: One never knows.

(As Milly sets out the sherry glasses, Lady Ashmore retrieves a small glass vial from her bosom and stares at it with a mischievous smile)

Scene 16 – Servant's Quarters

(Late Morning, Bartram is busily packing his few belongings into his knapsack. He looks haggard and sick. Milly enters)

Milly: Why, Mr. Bartram. Are you leaving us?

Bartram: I think it best I be travel'n on.

Milly: But why? I thought you were content here. Has someone offended you?

(Struck by the irony, Bartram laughs)

Bartram: Offended? That'd be one way to put it.

Milly: But where will you go?

Bartram: I'm Jamaica bound.

Milly: What shall I tell her Ladyship?

Bartram: Tell her - I've already paid me debts. I'll not be incurring more.

Milly: I don't understand.

Bartram: Nevermind. She will.

Milly: But she's in need of you! Why, she was telling me just the other day how clever you were. How impressed she was with your skills.

Bartram: What she requires is a skill I won't employ.

Milly: I don't follow.

Bartram: Milly say, you'd done a hundred wrongs in the past. But paid for them, mind ya. Yet here ye be, tempted again and without no recourse, so to speak. What would you do?

Milly: Why, I'd follow my conscience.

Bartram: Your conscience?

Milly: What's a conscience for, then?

Bartram: Milly, I'll tell you something 'bout me that you might not want to hear. There's not a drop of good in me. I once let a man go to prison and worst for what I'd done. These hands as guilty as his. And your mistress, the good lady of the house, says she'll turn me out if I don't do her bidding. Well, I guess a man can run only so far.

Milly: Oh, Mr. Bartram! You shouldn't speak of such things. You chill me to the quick.

Bartram: Do I Milly? Do I? Then I'll say no more. But remember this: all these fine, fancy ladies. They all have their pasts. Don't think they don't. Cause they do. It was Mr. Graham-Tate who told me the business bout your mistress.

Milly: And what would that be, pray tell?

Bartram: That she's a vindictive cuss who shouldn't be crossed. Her Ladyship may be twice widowed but many a man she's dealt with has expired 'fore their time. In an unnatural fashion, if you follow me.

Milly: I don't believe it. Not a single word of it. That Graham-Tate! He's such a liar!

Bartram: Is he now?

Milly: I best get back. You'll need to see the Mistress if you want to collect your wages.

(Milly exits)

Bartram: That's right, she owes me that. For me trouble, at least. Tis not twenty pounds. But it'll do.

Scene 17 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(One hour later. Lady Ashmore is primly setting out the sherry glasses as Bartram enters)

Lady Ashmore: Ah, Mr. Bartram.

Bartram: Mum, I’ve come to settle me wages. I’m taking me leave.

Lady Ashmore: Are you? So soon? I’m so sorry, Mr. Bartram. I hope our little chat didn’t disturb you. How insensitive of me! But I get a little overwrought sometimes. However, fear not. Your secret is intact.

Bartram: I’m obliged, mum.

Lady Ashmore: No hard feelings, then?

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Bartram: No, mum.

Lady Ashmore: I say, would you care for a little nip before you go? It’s quite extraordinary this sherry.

Bartram: No. I best be off.

Lady Ashmore: Just a taste?

Bartram: Alright, a taste then.

(Lady Ashmore serves him a glass)

Lady Ashmore: We shall, of course, be saddened to see you go.

Bartram: You’re not drink’n?

Lady Ashmore: I’m afraid it doesn’t agree with me. But to your continued good health. Safe journeys.

(Bartram downs the glass as Lady Ashmore watches)

Lady Ashmore: How do you find your drink? Not too sweet?

Bartram: Tis Nectar. Wine’s been my weakness. Well, one of them.

Lady Ashmore: Well then, allow me to refresh your glass.

(Lady Ashmore pours him another round)

Lady Ashmore: Where are you bound for, if I may ask, Mr. Bartram? Jamaica, perhaps?

Bartram: **(struck by this breach of his privacy)** Who said anything about that? If I could take me wages, mum. Two weeks' worth.

Lady Ashmore: Yes, of course. But before we settle accounts, I must apologize again for my behavior. I really must. Ordinarily, I don't like to deceive people and I certainly don't like them to deceive me. But in your case, I had to engage in a bit of deception. Shall I explain? It was wicked of me, I know. But to lure you out of your self-imposed "retirement" I had to bait the hook, so to speak.

Bartram: I don't follow, mum.

Lady Ashmore: Once my suspicions were confirmed. It was rather simple to construct a hypothetical target. Create a monetary incentive. Then release you to do your worst. For you see, Mr. Bartram, that very malevolent person I spoke of, the one I begged you to "burke" does not, in fact, exist. There is no such person. He is a phantom of my imagination.

Bartram: You was joking? Having a go at me?

Lady Ashmore: If you want to put it that way, why yes. Actually, I would suggest it was more of a ruse.

Bartram: **(trying to digest the news)** A ruse?

Lady Ashmore: I wanted to discover what was behind that false front of yours. That gentle, compliant manner you assume. And know what I found? A spineless maggot who preys on the weakness of others! Do I offend you, Mr. Bartram? Or shall I call you Mr. Hare!

Bartram: I best be leaving. I'll have me pay now, if ya please.

Lady Ashmore: Why are you in such a hurry? I'm sure there's plenty of rat's nests out there where you can nestle.

Bartram: I'll not hear another word! Give me my money!

Lady Ashmore: And if I don't? What then, Mr. Hare? Will you burke me?

Bartram: **(shouting)** Woman, give me the damn money!

(Bartram rises, enraged, to strike her then suddenly falls back in a dizzy faint)

Bartram: **(mumbling)** Give me - me money.

Lady Ashmore: Mr. Bartram, I beg you to be quiet. We wouldn't want to disturb poor Milly. After all, she might think better of you and worst of me. I mean, if she knew all our secrets. I'm sorry that you're not feeling well. I don't

think you can travel very far in that condition. Certainly not to Jamaica. You see, what I've learned in life is that there are many methods to achieve a desired effect. I offered you the opportunity to demonstrate yours. Now I am demonstrating mine.

(Lady Ashmore leisurely strolls over to her favorite window while Bartram struggles to rise but then collapses again)

Lady Ashmore: Mr. Greenwood and I used to have a rather lengthy but lively discussions about the nature of the poisons growing in our garden. Seems that he was rather an authority on the subject. Take arsenic, for example. Useful in our fashions but deadly if ingested. Then let's not forget *Strychnos nux-vomica*, that wonderful transplant from India. It brings forth spasms and asphyxiation without lifting a finger. Or one might consider Belladonna or nightshade, if you prefer, fatal if you swallow but a single leaf or just a handful of berries.

Bartram: **(choking)** Help me! For God's sake! Help me!

Lady Ashmore: **(ignoring his pleas)** Then, of course, there is hemlock. *Conium maculatum* to be more precise. The Greeks used it extensively to punish those who had offended the Gods or their society. Socrates, himself succumbed to its powers. So you see, you really *are* in good company.

(Terrified, Bartram begins to rise up and then falls back and begins to spasm)

Bartram: Ahh, I -I can't feel me legs.

(Lady Ashmore comforts Bartram with a pat on the shoulder)

Lady Ashmore: There, there, Mr. Bartram. There's no reason to panic. There really was no place for you to go. Not when there's justice to be done.

(Lady Ashmore brings a shawl from the divan and places it over Bartram as he convulses in a death throe)

Bartram: **(gagging)** Ahhhh.

Lady Ashmore: My dear Mr. Bartram. I too harbor secrets. Some as dark as yours, perhaps even a shade darker. For I too have "burked" a few souls. Oh, not out of greed or desperation as you did. Your methods were beyond crude. If I may say so, they bear the unmistakable hallmark of a ruffian and a peasant. No, with Mr. Greenwood's sage advice, I too perfected a system, so beautiful in its design, so sleek in its delivery that it has become veritably undetectable to its source. And now, by employing its wonders, I have given you respite at last. Now you can rest from your labors and your fears of discovery. You really should thank me for it, but I don't think you will.

(SFX. Church Bells. Seagulls cry out)

Scene 18 – Lady Ashmore’s Parlor

(The next morning, Rev. Parrish, Milly, and Lady Ashmore are seated together on the divan)

- Rev. Parrish:** Tis a bit of a shock. The way his poor heart gave out.
- Lady Ashmore:** The pity is that there was nothing I could do for him. He went so quickly.
- Rev. Parrish:** Did he have any relatives?
- Lady Ashmore:** I was told he had a wife somewhere. But that’s as far as it goes.
- Milly:** So there is no one to claim him? No one to mourn him? I will. I’ll mourn him.
- Lady Ashmore:** Really Milly! You hardly knew the man!
- Milly:** I knew him well enough. I know he suffered terribly from things he couldn’t talk about. I knew he had dreams. I knew he wanted to get away.
- Lady Ashmore:** Milly! Control yourself! Stop your blubbing!
- Milly:** Mum, he had a map. I’d like to keep his map, at least. May I?
- Lady Ashmore:** His map? Whatever for?
- Rev. Parrish:** Let her keep it, my Lady. I see no harm in it.
- Lady Ashmore:** Alright. Very well. I’ll accede to your wish. But just this one time, mind.
- (Lady Ashmore turns to Rev. Parrish)**
- Lady Ashmore:** So, tell me. Shall we have the church bury him then?
- Rev. Parrish:** I’ll take up a collection for a headstone.
- Milly:** What will it say?
- Lady Ashmore:** The less said, the better: “William Bartram. Late of Ireland.” That’s enough for any man, isn’t it?

Scene 19 – Servant’s Quarters

(The next day, Milly enters with a sad and troubled face. She quietly collects Bartram’s paltry belongings. She takes out the locket and his map of Jamaica and holds it tenderly. We hear a recording of “Jamaica Farewell”, an old folk song from the West Indies made popular by Harry Belafonte, who sings its refrain accompanied by a lilting guitar. Played from “Down the way where the nights are gay” to “I had to leave a little girl in Kingston Town”)

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END