

THE
HAUNTING
OF CAREAWAY HOUSE

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The Haunting of Careaway House.
A play in 2 acts

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CHARACTERS

MARY - mid to late 20s. An ambitious news reporter. She contrasts greatly with the residents of the home, being the figure of youth throughout. Her passion for finding 'the story' results in her losing sight of the bigger picture.

DAVID - Older than Mary, the news editor at the company. He is hiding a dark character beneath a positive façade.

DOCTOR ELI - The resident doctor at the care home in present day.

JEAN - Elderly resident at the care home. Optimistic and friendly.

LIZ - Elderly resident at the care home. Friendly and welcoming to everyone she encounters.

JOHNNY - Elderly resident at the care home. The only male resident seen by the audience, he is an old school charmer.

ELEANOR - Elderly resident at the care home. More cautious than the other residents, but still has a kind heart.

LILY - Elderly resident at the care home. She holds a dark secret, but her lips remain sealed for most of the play as she watches the action. A silent observer of the events that unfold.

DOCTOR VALENTINE - Doctor at the care home who hides a dark secret. His presence causes a chill in the home and he strides the home with a sense of power and importance.

HEADTEACHER - He was Headteacher at the school in the 1940s. He strides with importance but has a friendly atmosphere that follows him.

BUILDERS x 2 - Appear at the end of the play.

SCENES

ACT 1

SCENE 1: Takes place on the boat going to the care home.

SCENE 2: Care home in the present day.

SCENE 3: The next day, now in the other realm.

SCENE 4: Later that day.

ACT 2

SCENE 1: The next morning.

SCENE 2: Action takes place in Mary's room.

SCENE 3: Action takes place in the main care home.

SCENE 4: That night, the main room in the care home set up for a séance.

SCENE 5: That night, the action transfers from Mary's room to the main care home area.

The play is set in the main lounge area of the care home. The furniture is old and well used, the walls appear white and cold. The adjoining bedroom on stage-left contrasts with the main lounge area, with garish wallpaper and a bed pushed against the far-left wall. A door is situated at the rear of the stage, which leads to the main office. The inside of this office is never seen.

Running time approximately 110 minutes.

ACT ONE:**Scene One**

The curtains are closed. Music fades up- suggested music 'Ghost Story' by Coldplay. MARY sits at on a wooden bench before the curtain, with ear plugs in her ears. She has a laptop on her knees and is typing quickly. MARY has a bag packed next to her containing clothes and room for her laptop. She sways to indicate that she is on a boat. DAVID is talking on his phone at one side of the stage- the words are mimed. He looks over at MARY, nods and then closes it. He staggers over to the bench with the same bag as MARY and sits beside her, placing his identical bag next to MARY'S. He is wearing a neat suit and carrying an umbrella under one arm. He mimes something to MARY, but the music is too loud. He moves over and touches her on the arm. MARY removes her earphones and the music fades out.

MARY: *(without stopping her typing)* Did you find the bathroom?

DAVID: Yes, just in time I think. I never have been good on boats. My wife wanted to take a cruise holiday this year around Europe... I said I would think about it, but I can tell you what the answer will be. *(He realises that Mary isn't listening to him)* Aren't you finished with that yet?

MARY: *(Never taking her eyes off the screen)* Just about. I will be with you in two seconds. Just making the final edits. I want this to be perfect.

DAVID: For which piece?

MARY: *(She stops typing and looks at DAVID with excitement in her eyes)* For THE piece. For the piece that I haven't stopped talking about for a whole week! This discovery, this revelation could finish Mr Turn's run for Prime Minister in it's tracks. It could finish his career! He would be disgraced, would probably have to move house even. I feel sorry for his wife and kid really... Unless they were in on it.

DAVID: Don't get too far ahead of yourself Mary. And keep your voice down, this is a public place. You don't want this to get in the wrong hands before the bosses check it.

MARY: You mean you.

DAVID: And my bosses. If this is true, then it will need the head to sign off on it before it is published. And that is a big IF. I'm am still not so sure. There is a lot of grey area-

MARY: Grey area? There is nothing grey about this. Any of it! Surely you can see that?

DAVID: I just don't want to ruin a man's life before we have all the facts.

MARY looks at him with raised eyebrows.

DAVID: (*knowing what that look is implying*) And no, I am not just saying that because my family knows his. That is why I would insist on the piece being passed to the head- so that I cannot be accused of bias.

MARY: Hmm...Anybody would be a fool not to publish it though- surely? A man, so respected and admired, outed to have been using blackmail to defeat his opposition! This is a story that needs to be told, needs to be published. The election is next week! The people need to know!

DAVID: Just be patient. Let's see what happens. You need to focus on the job ahead of you first.

MARY: Are you sure no one else can cover this story? Surely my efforts are better applied in the office, working on this case? No one knows the facts like I do.

DAVID: I know you do... No, as you know due to cutbacks we are stretched too thinly, and you have been requested to report on this. You are basically finished with the report on the PM- you have said so yourself. I am sure it will only take a couple of days and then you will be back in the city before you know it.

MARY: Why can't you cover it David? You are making the boat ride journey with me anyway?

DAVID: I am only here because I have a prior engagement I need to attend to. I am merely there to give him this.

He withdraws an envelope from his pocket and shows MARY.

MARY: I am sure I could have given him that.

MARY goes to take the envelope from DAVID, but he snatches it away and puts it back in his pocket.

DAVID: No, I will give it him myself. I have known the doctor for many years. Many, many years. I have helped him in the past and he currently owes me a favour, I need to give this to him personally.

MARY: What do you need him to do? It sounds ominous.

DAVID: *(smiling)* Always the reporter... you know what they said about curiosity and the cat? *(He laughs)* He is just going to help me with an errand, that is all.

MARY: Fine, be cryptic! *(MARY smiles)* What did you do for him?

DAVID: Pardon?

MARY: You said you helped him, that is why he owes you a favour... You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. Just figured we are both stuck on this boat and it might make you feel better with your seasickness.

DAVID: *(smiles and nods)* I helped him out of a sticky situation. His assistant at the care home was a...a troubled person. He committed some horrible deeds... and I made sure that my friend didn't get caught up in it... If it wasn't for me, his career would have been ruined. Instead, the case was dealt with and he still has his job. Anyway, I will just pass this envelope over to the doc at the care home and then I will be on my way back...

He shifts awkwardly in his seat. MARY looks back down at her laptop and finishes the sentence she is typing. She closes the laptop, putting it safely into her bag. DAVID watches her do this.

DAVID: Have you read all the background information for the care home?

MARY: (*Dismissively*) Yes, it is just a basic review of the place isn't it? Interview the carers, interview the people being cared for, then catch the next boat back. Nothing exactly ground-breaking.

DAVID: Mary, I know you don't want to cover this story, but you have got to take it seriously.

MARY: I will... Is there anything else I need to know about the place? Other than it is an island haven for old people to live out their remaining days?

DAVID: You should have made the slogan for the place! (*He laughs*) I am sure the doctor will give you a tour and tell you all of the history when we get there.

MARY: How many are there in the care home? I read that it was closed and that there were rumours that it will be knocked down soon to build a sort of spa getaway for couples.

DAVID: (*anxiously*) Come on Mary... You are a reporter. You must know never to trust everything you read.

MARY: You can't trust anything nowadays.

DAVID: What do you mean?

MARY: It is all fake news this, fake news that. No wonder people don't know what is true and what is not, when everything can be labelled as one or the other easily.

DAVID: Which is why the integrity of us reporters is paramount.

The boat comes to a halt and a horn is sounded. DAVID picks up MARY'S bag with the laptop in.

DAVID: Looks like this is it. Have you got everything with you?

MARY: (*standing, picking up DAVID'S bag*) Yes, I have got everything.

DAVID: Your laptop?

MARY: Yep, right here.

DAVID'S phone rings.

DAVID: Sorry, I just need to take this. I will catch up with you.

MARY moves offstage. DAVID answers the phone.

DAVID: We have just got there now... Yes, she has just got off the boat... Yes, it will be done. And the money?...Yes, that's right...Good... Of course...

DAVID puts the phone away and follows MARY off stage.

Scene Two

The curtains open to reveal an empty care home setting. The main entrance door is located in the middle of the stage. On one side of the room is a bedroom, shown to be separate from the rest of the set by a protruding flat. On the other side of the room, a lounge area in a care home with an office door at the rear of the stage. This has a glass panel with which you can see through. In the lounge area, there is a brown-looking sofa and arm chair, with a small coffee table in front. An old tv is set up in the far corner with a video recorder attached. At the rear of the stage is a rocking chair with a shawl over the back. The care home needs to look eerie, as if no one has lived there for years. As the curtain opens, there is a man- Dr Valentine- standing behind the panel of glass watching the interactions.

Mary and David knock on the front door.

ELI: *(from offstage)* Come in.

MARY and DAVID enter through the front door and wipe their feet on the mat provided.

MARY: This place looks dead.

DAVID: I am sure the residents are in their rooms asleep. It is half past seven, Pointless would have finished by now.

MARY laughs. DOCTOR ELI enters from the right.

ELI: Sorry, what was that?

DAVID: I was just saying that the residents are probably in their rooms... aren't they?

ELI: *(After a pause, he works out what DAVID is implying)* Oh yes. Yes, things move slower over here than on land. This is the island that time forgot. Let me introduce myself, I am Doctor