

THE CUSTODIAN

A One Act play

by

David L. Barnard

CHARACTERS

MARTIN

JANE - MARTIN'S WIFE

EMMA - JANE'S FRIEND

JOHNSON - THE MYSTERIOUS 'CUSTODIAN' OF THE HOUSE

SCENES

SCENE 1 - THE KITCHEN OF MARTIN & JANE'S HOUSE

SCENE 2 - SOME WOODLAND NEAR TO A DILAPIDATED MANSION

SCENE 3 - THE LIVING ROOM OF THE MANSION

SCENE 4 - ON THE LANDING

SCENE 5 - THE CHAPEL

SCENE 6 - A CAFÉ IN A NEARBY VILLAGE

SCENE 7 - THE KITCHEN (AS SCENE 1)

SCENE 8 - WOODLAND (AS SCENE 2)

SCENE 1. IN THE KITCHEN OF JANE'S HOUSE (STAGE APRON)

JANE IS SITTING ON A CHAIR BY A KITCHEN TABLE. HER HEAD IS SLUMPED ON THE TABLE AS SHE IS SLEEPING. IN THE BACKGROUND IS THE SOUND OF THE WIND WHICH GRADUALLY GROWS IN VOLUME AND INTENSITY. THEN WE HEAR MARTIN'S VOICE.

MARTIN: (O.S.) Wake up Jane! WAKE UP!

AS HE FINISHES SAYING THIS THERE IS THE SOUND OF A DOORBELL. JANE STIRS SLIGHTLY. THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. JANE RUBS HER FACE AND SLUGGISHLY GETS TO HER FEET. SHE WALKS TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE STAGE AND OPENS A DOOR

JANE: Hi! Come in.

EMMA STEPS ON TO THE STAGE

JANE: I'm sorry I was fast asleep. You haven't been ringing for long have you?

EMMA: No, no, just a couple of minutes. Having a siesta?

JANE: Something like that. I don't know, I'm just feeling a bit tired at the moment. I love your hair by the way.

EMMA: Do you? I can't decide whether I like it or not. I just fancied a change.

JANE: It suits you. Anyway let's go and have a cuppa.

THEY WALK BACK ACROSS THE STAGE TO THE
TABLE

JANE: I'll put the kettle on. Are you still into
green tea or would you prefer a coffee?

EMMA: Coffee would be great. Tom is the green tea
fanatic at the moment.

JANE FILLS A KETTLE WITH WATER AND
SWITCHES IT ON. SHE THEN GETS OUT CUPS,
TEASPOONS, ETC.

JANE: And how is Tom?

EMMA: He's fine, although he's still working all
hours. I'm lucky if I see him some days.
Are you sure you're alright?

JANE: I'm Fine. Fine. (PAUSE) Well, to be honest
not great actually.

EMMA: Go on..

JANE: Well, if you must know, Martin's not...well,
we're not together at the moment.

EMMA: (*KNOWINGLY*) Right. I did hear a little
whisper actually.

JANE: You don't say! I won't
ask who! (PAUSE) No I'm fine. It's just
taking a bit of getting used to.

EMMA: Do you know I was really surprised when I heard. I thought that you and Martin were pretty solid together. I mean you've been married what - sixteen, seventeen years?

JANE: Nineteen actually. I suppose appearances can be deceptive. Martin and me had been drifting apart for some time. I mean it's the usual story I suppose - we both wanted different things out of life.

EMMA: In what sense?

JANE: Well I was always the career woman and Martin...well Martin wanted to get out of the rat race and live a more alternative lifestyle.

SHE POURS WATER INTO THE CUPS AND HANDS IT TO EMMA

JANE: There you go. You don't take sugar do you?

EMMA: Not now. I can't risk putting on any more excess weight. 'Alternative lifestyle' That always sounds a bit iffy to me! What was his idea of 'alternative' exactly?

JANE: You know, green living, 'the Good Life' , that sort of thing. I think he saw himself living on goats cheese and mushrooms on some smallholding in the Welsh hills or somewhere.

EMMA: But you didn't see yourself as the
proverbial mother Goddess?

JANE: Heavens no, I was happy with the lifestyle
we had, happy with my job. Or at least I
was. I've been off sick for the past couple
of months.

EMMA: Good grief Jane you should have told me, I'd
have come around sooner.

JANE: I know. But I just couldn't face seeing
anyone. That's the thing with depression -
you don't feel like making the effort to be
sociable, and being on your own makes you
more withdrawn. If it wasn't for the anti-
depressants I don't know how I would have
got through it all.

EMMA: God Jane, it sounds as if you've been
through hell.

JANE PICKS UP A PACKET OF BISCUITS

JANE: Yes you could say that. Custard cream?

EMMA: Oh go on then.

SHE TAKES A BISCUIT FROM JANE

EMMA: Thanks.

SHE STARTS MUNCHING THE BISCUIT

JANE: It's not what you think you know.

EMMA: How do you mean?

JANE: I mean there isn't another woman or anything like that, nothing so common place. No, the circumstances of our break up were slightly more unusual.

EMMA: You mean he started dressing up in kinky gear or something?

JANE: *(CHUCKLING)* No, nothing like that, although that might have been easier to understand. Look I might as well tell you the whole story, but I must warn you it's a bit hard to swallow. I mean I haven't told anyone else, because what happened sounds so unbelievable.

EMMA: Now I'm really intrigued. *(PAUSE)* Sorry, I didn't mean to be flippant. *(PAUSE)* Look Jane you're one of the most honest, down-to-earth people I know *and* you're my best friend so sock it to me. I'm all ears.

JANE: *(TAKES A DEEP BREATH)* O.K. Well it all happened on our Wedding Anniversary last July. I was all for the traditional candlelit dinner that sort of thing, but Martin, being Martin, wanted to do something different and so suggested a long walk in the country.

EMMA: A romantic ramble for two!

JANE: Sounds good when it's put like that! I mean initially I thought here's Martin being tight with his wallet again, but then I thought well at least it will give us some peace and quiet away from the kids and Martin's laptop for a few hours, and maybe it will work up our appetites for a candlelit meal later!

EMMA: Good thinking. But it didn't work out like that?

JANE: No. I mean the first few miles were o.k. Lovely warm day, sunshine, countryside, hardly another rambler in sight. But then we got lost and things became decided skewed...

LIGHTS DIM

SCENE 2. A WOODLAND - DUSK

THE CURTAINS OPEN TO REVEAL FALLEN BRANCHES STREWN ACROSS THE STAGE. AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE IS THE FRONT OF A DILAPIDATED MANSION. THE DOOR OF THE MANSION HAS A KNOCKER ON IT WITH AN IMAGE OF THE GREEN MAN - A FACE GARLANDED WITH LEAVES.

MARTIN WALKS ON STAGE WITH JANE FOLLOWING.

JANE: Are you sure we're going in the right direction. We seem to have lost the path completely.

MARTIN: I think maybe we should have taken that right fork a while back, but you insisted on taking the left.

JANE: That's right blame me. Anything goes wrong, it's my fault!

MARTIN: According to the map, we should have taken the right fork, but you insisted on taking the left, so who am I to blame?

JANE: I don't know why you can't buy yourself one of those GPS thingies like everyone else has.

MARTIN: There's nothing wrong with a good old-fashioned map. I mean it's not going to go blank if a piece of space debris collides with one of the satellites is it?

JANE: Like that happens every day! I just wish you could be a bit more 'normal' sometimes.

MARTIN: Being 'normal' is relative just like everything else. *(he pauses)* Look there's no point in us standing here arguing. It'll be dark in half an hour or so we need to get a

move on. If we retrace our steps we should get back to the main road.

JANE: *If we can retrace our steps....*

MARTIN: We just need to head in a westerly direction.

JANE: And you know which direction is west, do you?

MARTIN: Yes, the direction that the sun sets.

JANE: Well, seeing that the sun is totally hidden by clouds that might prove to be difficult.

MARTIN: We just head towards the light then.

JANE: *(MIMICING BEING A STATE OF TRANCE)* Head towards the light. *(PAUSES)* Maybe you should have brought a compass.

MARTIN: I would have done but I didn't anticipate getting lost. I've done this walk at least three times. I can't understand where we went wrong. Come on we better get moving.

JANE: We seem to have been walking through this wood for ages.

SOUND OF THE WIND BLOWING STRONGLY

MARTIN: The wind's getting up as well. I don't remember them saying anything about strong winds on the forecast.

JANE: Just as long as we don't get any branches falling on us. Actually this area looks as if it has been blasted by a hurricane. Look all the trees are at funny angles and half of them look dead.

MARTIN: I see what you mean. They look as if they've been ripped apart. That one's lost half its branches. Look there's one still hanging off.

HE POINTS OFFSTAGE

JANE: I don't like this place. It gives me the creeps.

AS SOON AS SHE'S FINISHED SAYING THIS SHE TRIPS OVER A FALLEN BRANCH AND CRASHES TO THE GROUND. SHE GRASPS HER FOOT.

JANE: (*IN PAIN*) Aahh! God, it feels like I've pulled a muscle or something.

MARTIN: Take your boot off.

SHE TAKES HER BOOT OFF, GROANING IN PAIN AS SHE DOES SO

MARTIN: Where does it hurt?

JANE: About here.

SHE POINTS TO AN AREA ON HER FOOT. HE
PRODS IT GENTLY WITH HIS FINGER

MARTIN: Here?

JANE: Ow! Yes! That's right, just prod it. That's
going to do it a lot of good.

MARTIN: Sorry, just trying to help. Try rubbing it
for a bit.

JANE: (*SARCASTICALLY*) MMm. Still hurts.

MARTIN: I think you're just have going to have to
grin and bear it. We can't hang around,
it'll be dark soon.

SHE STARTS PUTTING ON HER BOOT

JANE: This isn't turning out to be the best
anniversary we've ever had is it?

MARTIN: No, not exactly. Although you did say that
a romantic autumnal walk in the countryside
was a good idea when I suggested it.

JANE: Oh it was a good idea. It's just that I
didn't imagine that we'd get lost in the
witch's forest and then I'd break my foot.

MARTIN: Stop being so melodramatic. Make sure you're
laces aren't hanging loose or you'll trip up
again.

JANE: I can tell you're a regular walker, or should I say rambler, all that technical expertise must have taken years to learn.

MARTIN: That's enough of the sarcasm thank you. Here take my arm.

JANE BREATHES HEAVILY AS SHE GETS UP

JANE: AAhhh. God, it hurts like hell.

MARTIN: You're just going to have to put your arm around my shoulder and let me take your weight for a bit.

JANE: Right. God, this is so frustrating.

SHE PUTS HER ARM AROUND HIS SHOULDER

MARTIN: Right come on. Just keep an eye on your feet. We don't want any more accidents.

THEY SHUFFLE FORWARD, THE WIND CAN BE HEARD STILL BLOWING HARD THROUGH THE BRANCHES

JANE: God, now it's beginning to rain.

MARTIN: How's your foot feeling?

JANE: Not good. I can hardly put it down. It's so painful.

MARTIN: Have you got your mobile on you?

JANE: Yes why?

MARTIN: We could phone Jamie and ask him to pick us up.

JANE: Yes but he hasn't passed his test yet.

MARTIN: He could get one of his mates to come with him. I think Andrew's passed his test.

JANE: What if he's not around? Anyway where are we going to tell him to pick us up?

MARTIN: On the main road. Listen, just phone him can you!

JANE GETS HER MOBILE OUT OF HER
RUCKSACK

JANE: O.K., o.k. Here we are. Hang on, my battery's dead.

MARTIN: Oh great that's all we need.

JANE: I only charged it up this morning.

MARTIN: You must have left it switched on or something.

JANE: Yes but it wouldn't have run down already. Have you got yours?

MARTIN: No. I didn't bring it.

JANE: (SOFTLY) Great..

MARTIN SUDDENLY STOPS

MARTIN: Hello what's that over there?

JANE: What? *(she turns to see what he's looking at)* It looks remarkably like a derelict house to me

MARTIN: Mansion more like. Come on let's take a look.

JANE: I'd rather not. It looks like the archetypal haunted house to me.

MARTIN: Looks can be deceiving.

HE WALKS OVER TO THE DOOR

MARTIN: Mmm rather ornate doorknocker.

SHE JOINS HIM IN FRONT OF THE DOOR

JANE: Looks like a face with leaves all over it.

MARTIN: Yeah looks like the green man to me.

JANE: The green man?

MARTIN: He was a pagan god. You know God of Nature, fertility, that sort of thing. You can sometimes see carvings of him in churches. Christians appeasing the old religions I suppose.

JANE: You're not thinking of going in there are you. It doesn't look as if it's been lived in for years.

MARTIN: What ever gives you that idea? O.K. the missing roof tiles, cracked windows and rampant ivy growth over the walls do give the impression that it's been allowed to run to seed a little, but it might be more presentable inside.

JANE: I have no intention whatsoever of going inside.

MARTIN: Look, we don't have much choice at the moment. You can hardly walk and we can't contact anyone for help. We've got to get some shelter somewhere.

JANE: No Martin. Please I just want to get away from this place. I've got a funny feeling about it. Please?

MARTIN: Look we may not be able to get in anyway. That door looks pretty solid. Still there's nothing like brute force...

HE WALKS UP TO THE DOOR AND STARTS TO BANG HIS SHOULDER AGAINST IT

JANE: Martin please, it's private property. You'll get prosecuted for criminal damage and you'll hurt your shoulder if you keep on like that.

MARTIN: Just one more go..

BEFORE HE CAN HAVE ANOTHER ATTEMPT, THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN AND JOHNSON APPEARS. MARTIN JUMPS BACK IN SURPRISE.

JOHNSON: Yes, what business do you have here?

MARTIN: (*SOUNDING JITTERY*) I'm sorry we didn't know anyone lived here. We were looking for shelter. My wife has hurt her foot.

JOHNSON: Your wife?

MARTIN: Yes she's here. Come here darling.

JANE HOBBLER UP TO THE DOOR

JANE: Hello. Sorry for making such a racket.

JOHNSON: No harm done. You seem to be rather incapacitated. You better come inside.

MARTIN: Thank you, that's very kind of you. Come on love.

JANE HANGS BACK

JANE: (*under her breath*) Let's make our apologies and go Martin, I don't like this at all.

MARTIN: Don't be silly, come on.

MARTIN: (to Johnson) I'm afraid my wife is a bit nervous..

JOHNSON: I can assure you there's nothing to be afraid of.

MARTIN: Come on love.

SHE GLARES AT HIM. THEY FOLLOW JOHNSON
THROUGH THE DOOR

CURTAINS CLOSE

SCENE 3 - THE LIVING ROOM IN THE HOUSE

FADED WALLPAPER ON THE WALLS. A
BATTERED SETTEE AND ARMCHAIR SURROUND A
COFFEE TABLE. THERE'S A TATTERED
ORIENTAL RUG ON THE FLOOR.

JOHNSON: I'm sorry it's rather dark in here. I'll
light another lamp in a minute. Please take
a seat.

MARTIN: Thank you. Do you live here on your own?

JOHNSON: Oh no, his Lordship is upstairs. Can I get
you some tea?

MARTIN: Yes thank you tea would be great.

JANE: Could I have some coffee please?

JOHNSON: I'm afraid I don't have any coffee. Supplies
are running rather low at the moment I'm
afraid.

JANE: Oh well, tea will be fine.

JOHNSON: Good, well if you care to make yourselves at home. I'll be back in a few minutes.

HE WALKS OFFSTAGE

JANE: (*IN A WHISPER*) For God's sake Martin. Can we get out of here now? I've really got a bad feeling about this place and as for him...

MARTIN: I must admit that he did seem rather odd.

JANE: That's an understatement. I mean there he is all togged out with dress suit complete with black jacket and tails in a dilapidated place like this. It's more that odd. And he looked so pale, there was a sort of green tinge to his complexion. Did you notice?

MARTIN: Probably the effect of the lighting. Gas lighting in this day and age, that's unusual to say the least.

JANE: It's like the house hasn't been touched since Victorian times. I mean look at the décor and the furniture. It doesn't look as if it's been cleaned since then either. I mean how can anyone *live* in a place like this?

MARTIN: There must be other staff. Although if there are they can't be doing their job very well. Actually this sofa feels a bit damp.

JANE: Yes it is and I'm not surprised. It's so cold in here. There doesn't seem to be any heating at all. It's no wonder he looks ill. It's too cold for someone his age.

MARTIN: Mmm. Now that you come to mention it he did look a bit unhealthy. You know they're probably hard up. A lot of the old landed gentry are feeling the pinch nowadays. They're probably living on a shoestring. I mean he did say that they were low on supplies didn't he. I feel a bit sorry for him.

JANE: Yes well he still gives me the creeps. I just want to get out of here as quick as we can. Let's just drink the tea and go.

MARTIN: With you hardly able to walk? And look it's dark now as well. (PAUSE) Look when he comes back we can ask if we can use the phone and get Jamie to pick us up.

JANE: Yes of course. Let's just hope we can get through. The last thing I want to do is spend the night here.

MARTIN: Hopefully it won't come to that.

JOHNSON COMES IN AND PUTS A TRAY ON A COFFEE TABLE

JOHNSON: Here we are. Do you both take milk?

MARTIN: Er yes, just a touch for me.

JOHNSON POURS OUT THE MILK AND TEA AND
HANDS THEM THEIR CUPS.

JOHNSON: There we are sir, madam. If you'd like to
help yourself to sugar.

JANE: Thank you, er...

JOHNSON: Johnson, I'm usually known as Johnson.

JANE: Well I'm Jane and this is my husband Martin.

(BEAT)

Actually today's our wedding anniversary.
We've been married for nineteen years.

MARTIN: We thought we'd go for a nice, long walk in
the countryside to celebrate.

JANE: Most married couples go out for a meal
together, but we have to go for a walk.

MARTIN: Are you married Johnson?

JOHNSON: Oh no sir. All my time has been spent
serving his Lordship. I've never really had
time to court the ladies.

MARTIN: Have you always worked here then?

JOHNSON: Oh yes, all my life. Although of course there've been a lot of changes since I started here.

MARTIN: Yes I suppose there must have been.

HE TAKES A SIP OF HIS TEA

JOHNSON: Well, if you'll excuse me I must go and see to his Lordship.

MARTIN: Yes of course. We don't want to get in your way. Actually we wondered if we could use your phone and get our son to pick us up?

JOHNSON: Phone? I'm afraid we don't have one of those I'm afraid.

MARTIN: Well maybe one of your staff has a mobile we could use?

JOHNSON: I'm afraid that there are no other staff here sir. They've all gone. I'm the only member of staff left now.

MARTIN: Oh I see. Well I suppose we shall have to have a rethink.

JOHNSON: Yes sir. Well if you will excuse me...

MARTIN: Yes of course. Er, thank you Johnson.

JOHNSON WALKS OFFSTAGE

JANE: God, this gets worse by the minute. No phone, what the hell are we going to do now?

MARTIN: I dunno. Look there might be other houses in the area. We'll ask him when he gets back. Look if the worst comes to the worst we'll just have to bite the bullet and bed down here for the night.

JANE: Didn't I say that was the last thing I wanted to do!

MARTIN: Yeah, well we may not have much choice. Look it may not be four star, but it's better than being outside in the wind and the rain.

JANE: That's debateable.

MARTIN: Well at least it's dry, relatively speaking. I mean look on the bright side, when was the last time that you sat on a Victorian sofa, drinking tea out of bone china cups?

JANE: Well now you come to mention it I suppose it does have a certain ambience. The kind of ambience that Miss Havisham's house might have.

MARTIN: A literary reference. That's good for you!

SHE TAKES A SIP OF HER TEA

JANE: (deep in thought) I mean he said all the other

JANE (cont): staff had gone. Gone where exactly?
MARTIN: Got other jobs, left to have children,
 retired. Left for the reasons that people
 usually leave jobs I imagine.

JANE: But why haven't they been replaced?

MARTIN: Lack of money, I suppose. Look why don't you
 ask him when he gets back?

JANE: It all seems very sinister to me.

MARTIN: Sinister? What are you suggesting? That's
 he's knocked them all off one by one and
 walled them up in the cellar!

JANE: Don't say things like that. I'm scared
 enough already.

MARTIN: You're winding yourself up with that vivid
 imagination of yours.

JANE: No I'm not. I told you I've got a bad
 feeling. Listen let's just get out of here,
 before he gets back.

 SHE PUTS DOWN HER CUP AND TRIES TO GET
 UP

 (IN PAIN) AAhhh!

MARTIN: I don't think you're going anywhere at the
 moment.

JOHNSON SUDDENLY APPEARS

JOHNSON: Are you alright madam?

JANE SITS DOWN

JANE: I just thought it might be a bit better, but it's not.

MARTIN: I don't suppose that there any houses that you know of nearby that might have a phone, do you?

JOHNSON: I'm afraid not. The estate is fairly isolated sir.

MARTIN: I see. Well I wonder if you mind if we spent the night here. Obviously we'd pay you for your trouble.

JOHNSON: Pay me? I don't think that will be necessary sir. I suppose that you could spend the night here. But you'd have to stay in here, the bedrooms wouldn't be suitable for you I'm afraid.

MARTIN: That would be alright. Wouldn't it love?

JANE: *(DRYLY)* Fantastic.

MARTIN: Yes thank you Johnson. I'm sorry we've put you to any trouble. Do you have any blankets we could have?

JOHNSON: Blankets? Oh yes of course. I'm sure we have some somewhere. I'll go and find some for you.

MARTIN: Thank you. We're very grateful.

JOHNSON WALKS OFFSTAGE

MARTIN: Well there we are things aren't so bad after all are they?

JANE: We get to spend the night on a damp, mildewy sofa in a dimly lit dilapidated mansion. As I said 'fantastic'.

MARTIN: Yes but at least we get to have blankets!

JANE: I'm really fed up now and to think we were supposed to be celebrating today. Do you know my foot's killing me.

MARTIN: I've got some paracetamol in my pocket.

HE GOES INTO HIS POCKET AND GIVES HER SOME TABLETS

MARTIN: Here we are.

JANE: Thanks.

SHE SWALLOWS THEM WITH A SIP OF TEA.
JOHNSON COMES IN WITH THE BLANKETS

JOHNSON: Here we are sir. I hope these are alright.

MARTIN: Yes thank you Johnson.

HE TAKES THE BLANKETS

MARTIN: It must be difficult having to manage without any other staff.

JOHNSON: I do the best I can sir.

MARTIN: I'm sure you do. Why did they leave exactly?

JOHNSON: Well they left for various reasons. Mrs. Blake the cook left to live with her son abroad; Mr. Wallis, the footman managed to secure himself a highly-paid job in the city; Mr. Lewis the gardener decided to start his own business selling vegetables...

MARTIN: But you've stayed..

JOHNSON: It's been my life sir, looking after his Lordship. To leave would be disloyal..

MARTIN: Disloyal? But surely you wouldn't say that the staff who've left were disloyal?

JOHNSON: It's not for me to say sir. All I can say is that his Lordship feels let down and angry that they've gone and left the estate to become so (*SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT WORD*) neglected.

JANE: But why doesn't he appoint new staff?

JOHNSON: If only he could sir. But there's no interest in working here now. People want to work in the cities and towns; they wish to serve other masters, not his Lordship.

JANE: I suppose this place is a bit off the beaten track for some people..

JOHNSON: I suppose it is now, but in the old days we had no trouble getting staff. People loved to work here on the estate. In those days, the house was bright and clean; the gardens were full of varieties of flowers, shrubs and fruit trees and beyond them ranged the rest of his Lordship's lands - woodland, forests, and in the distance hills topped with purple heather stretching for as far as you could see.

MARTIN: I didn't realise that the Estate was so big.

JOHNSON: Oh yes sir. Vast. Or at least it used to be. Since then it's gradually been eroded as pieces of the land on the periphery of the estate have been used for houses, shops, factories and roads. Oh it's nothing like the size that it was. It's being gradually eaten away by the forces of, of...

JANE: Progress?

JOHNSON: I wouldn't call it that sir. Neither would his Lordship. He hates and detests this gradual encroachment. It saddens him, it weakens him and yet paradoxically at the same time his anger strengthens. He rages against the destruction that is being done to his lands. His dark moods can be terrifying. He is angry tonight. The wind will bring down more trees if it strengthens any more...

MARTIN: Er, yes, well thank you for the blankets Johnson.

JOHNSON: If there's any thing else you need, let me know.

MARTIN: Yes thank you, and thank his Lordship on our behalf for his hospitality.

JOHNSON: Yes sir, I will.

JOHNSON EXITS

MARTIN: Well what did you make of that?

JANE: I told you I had a bad feeling about this place. I mean he's obviously unhinged. All that stuff about his Lordships lands stretching as far as the eye could see to heather topped hills - I mean there aren't any heather-topped hills within miles of here! And as for that stuff about his Lordship being angry, and the wind...

MARTIN: Yes I must admit it all sounds a bit fanciful.

JANE: Fanciful. Listen Martin, the man's deranged, gone senile or something. I don't believe that there even is a Lord. I don't believe he's a butler, or whatever he's pretending to be. He's probably just some old tramp who's using this place to doss for the night.

MARTIN: Now hold on, I think you're being a bit fanciful now. He must live here. What about the suit? And he made the tea and got us blankets. The tramp bit doesn't add up.

JANE: O.K. but what about 'his Lordship'. You don't think that he's simply a figment of his imagination?

MARTIN: Maybe. I don't know.

HE OFFERS HER A BLANKET

MARTIN: Here, have a blanket.

JANE: Oh you may as well have it. I doubt whether I shall sleep anyway.

HE IGNORES THIS AND GIVES HER THE BLANKET

MARTIN: You can sleep anywhere. You remember you slept through that storm on the ferry to Norway whilst everyone else was awake and throwing up.

JANE: Well I was tired. And the rocking of the ship actually made me sleep better. Anyway it was nice and warm on the ferry, not like in here.

MARTIN: Once you've wrapped yourself up in your blanket you'll soon warm up.

JANE: If you say so!

MARTIN: Shall I get Johnson to turn the lights out. I'm not sure I know how to do it.

JANE: Absolutely not! I'd rather have them on thank you. I'd also rather you didn't mention him either. I don't like to think of him skulking around whilst we're asleep.

MARTIN: I didn't think you were going to get to sleep!

JANE: Well you never know.. Actually, I think you should stay awake in case any thing happens.

MARTIN: Like what exactly?

JANE: I don't know. I just know that I don't feel safe here.

MARTIN: O.K. You settle down and I'll stay awake.

JANE: That's very gentlemanly of you!

MARTIN: It's funny how men and women revert to traditional stereotypes in a crisis isn't it.

JANE: (SLEEPILY) Night, night Martin.

SHE APPEARS TO FALL ASLEEP. ENTER JOHNSON.

JOHNSON: Everything alright sir?

MARTIN: Everything's fine thank you Johnson.

JOHNSON LOOKS DOWN AT JANE.

JOHNSON: And your wife?

MARTIN: She was feeling very tired.

JOHNSON: I'm not surprised. (*he pauses*) She's very pretty.

MARTIN: (*slightly surprised*) Yes I suppose she is.

JOHNSON: You're a lucky man.

MARTIN: I suppose I am.

JOHNSON: Have you been married long?

MARTIN: Nineteen years. Nineteen years to the day in fact.

JOHNSON: *(thoughtfully)* It's good that you've stayed together.

MARTIN: Yes I suppose it is.

JOHNSON: I've heard a lot of couples are separating or getting divorced these days.

MARTIN: Yes we know of a few couples ourselves that have split up.

JOHNSON: No sense of duty. Can't wait to get on to the next model.

MARTIN: *(doubtfully)* Well, not quite. They had their reasons.

JOHNSON: Yes, I would imagine they did. But you're made of stronger stuff. We could do with someone of your calibre here you know.

MARTIN: Sorry?

JOHNSON: Well I'm getting on a bit now. We're going to need someone here to take over the reins when I'm gone.

MARTIN: I'm sure you've plenty of years in you yet.

JOHNSON: No. My time here is nearly over and someone will need to look after the estate and his Lordship after I've gone.

MARTIN: I really don't think that I...

JOHNSON: Think about it. You'd fit in well here. You're just the sort of person we need.

MARTIN: Well there's no harm in considering it I suppose.

JOHNSON: Exactly. Especially since I think his Lordship would consider your application very favourably. Good night sir.

MARTIN: Good night Johnson.

JOHNSON EXITS. MARTIN CONTINUES PACING ABOUT THE ROOM. SOUNDS OF WIND GUSTING OUTSIDE. SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD BANG FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE HOUSE. JANE WHO HAS BEEN SLEEPING WAKES WITH A START.

JANE: Uh! God, what was that?

MARTIN: I don't know. It sounded like something falling in one of the rooms upstairs. Like a large plank of wood or something.

JANE: I was in the middle of a dream. Were you asleep?

MARTIN: No I was awake, doing my duty.

JANE: I was in a large room. It was like a church or chapel.

MARTIN: Sorry?

JANE: In my dream. I was in this church. It wasn't like any church I've seen before. I mean there were pews and stained glass and an altar, but all the woodwork was carved into the shapes of leaves, flowers, tendrils and here and there was the face that we saw on the gatepost - the face of leaves. The pictures in the stained glass had his face in them as well. Then I noticed Johnson kneeling before the altar. He had his back to me so I couldn't see his face properly. He was chanting something, but I couldn't make out the words, they were in some language that I've never heard before. Then suddenly I felt like there was a presence in there, watching me and Johnson. It felt powerful and dark, like something there has been around since the dawn of time, something primeval and primitive. It was watching us. I couldn't move, I wanted to, I wanted to run out of there, but I felt paralysed. (PAUSE) You know Martin I feel it's here in this house.

MARTIN: What is?

JANE: The presence. It's watching us now, sizing us up.

MARTIN: You're beginning to make me nervous now. Look you're letting your imagination run away with you again. Just try and get back to sleep.

JANE: I can't. I'm too keyed up now.

MARTIN: Just try and relax, take deep breaths.
(PAUSE) You know I had a bit of a think whilst you were sleeping. I mean it seems such a shame that this place has gone to seed and I thought it would be a really great project to restore it. I mean obviously it would take time and cost a lot of money but it would be really worthwhile and satisfying work.

JANE: Yes, it does seem a shame that it has become so derelict.

MARTIN: I mean we could do with a change of direction now that the kids have left the nest. We could find a house nearby and spend our days here restoring the place.

JANE: (INCREDULOUS) You're talking about us! You want us to give up our jobs to come and work here?

MARTIN: Yes why not? I mean I never anticipated being in I.T for ever and you're always saying you're fed up with commuting into town.

JANE: You are joking aren't you! O.K. I can see us packing it all in a few years time and maybe moving out to France maybe, but not now and certainly not to come here!

MARTIN: Why not? I'm sure Johnson and his Lordship would love us to come and help out. I mean we could set up a charity or get a grant from English Heritage or something.

JANE: You're just being ridiculous. There's no way I'm ever coming back to this place!

MARTIN: O.K. calm down. You'll wake up Johnson and the Lord - If there is such a person that is. I still think it's a wasted opportunity though.

JANE: Well I don't. Anyway I have more urgent things to think about. I'm desperate for the loo.

MARTIN: Great, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Can't you hold on?

JANE: No, not all night anyway.

MARTIN: There must be one upstairs. Maybe we should ask Johnson.

JANE: I'd rather we didn't. Anyway he might be asleep.

MARTIN: Off you go then.

JANE: I'm not going up there on my own!

MARTIN: O.K. Come on then.

THEY GET UP AND WALK OFF STAGE.
CURTAINS CLOSE. MUSIC: HENRYK GORECKI -
EUNTES IBANT ET FLEBANT. MUSIC FADES

SCENE 4 - ON THE LANDING

TWO DOORS LEAD OFF THE LANDING

MARTIN: Right, which door do you think?

JANE: Try that one. Bathrooms are usually near the top of the stairs.

MARTIN: Hmm, in modern houses maybe. Not sure about this one though, still I might as well give it a try...

HE WALKS OVER TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT,
AND GOES IN. THERE'S A LONG PAUSE.

JANE: (VERY PANICKY) Martin? Martin?

THE DOOR OPENS AND MARTIN EMERGES

MARTIN: We hit the jackpot. It *is* the bathroom. Not particularly clean though.

JANE: You do surprise me. You guard the door.

SHE GOES IN. THERE'S A PAUSE, THEN
JOHNSON APPEARS

JOHNSON: Can I help you sir?

MARTIN: (*STARTLED*) Oh Johnson. My wife had to use the bathroom. I just came with her to make sure that she was alright.

JOHNSON: I see Sir. (*PAUSE*) I would advise that you go back to the drawing room as soon as she has finished sir. His Lordship doesn't care for strangers coming upstairs and as I said he's (*PAUSES AS IF TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS*) not feeling particularly sociable tonight.

MARTIN: Yes of course. We'll go straight back down.

JOHNSON WALKS OFFSTAGE. THE BATHROOM
DOOR OPENS AND JANE COMES OUT.

JANE: I couldn't get it to flush. It didn't seem like anyone had used it for years. (*SHE PAUSES*) Are you alright?

MARTIN: Yes. Johnson was here. He said that Lord, whatever his name is, didn't like people up here and we should go back downstairs.

JANE: And you want to come back and work here!

MARTIN: (*thoughtfully*) It was strange, after our little tete-a-tete he sort of disappeared.

JANE: You probably got distracted. Anyway the light's so dim that you can hardly see up here.

MARTIN: But I didn't even hear his footsteps.

THERE IS ANOTHER SUDDEN BANG IN THE DISTANCE

JANE: God, that made me jump!

MARTIN: (*looking offstage*) That's where Johnson appeared from - that door at the end. Maybe Lord what's-his-name is in there.

JANE: Come on Martin, let's go down.

MARTIN: No I want to go and see this Lord. Satisfy my curiosity.

JANE: I don't think that's a good idea. From what Johnson said I don't think he'll be very welcoming.

MARTIN: But if we explain that we want to help him..

JANE: What?!

MARTIN: Come on.

JANE: Martin. No, I *really* don't think that's a good idea. I've got a bad feeling about this.

MARTIN: Well you can wait for me here then!

MARTIN WALKS TOWARDS THE DOOR

JANE: Martin, please don't go in there. Martin!

MARTIN SWINGS OPENS THE DOOR, THERE IS A LOUD MOANING AND RUSHING OF WIND

JANE: (*IN PANIC ABOVE THE NOISE OF THE WIND*)
Martin!

MARTIN STRUGGLES TO CLOSE THE DOOR AGAIN

MARTIN: (*BREATHING HEAVILY WITH EFFORT*) Quick, help me close it.

THEY BOTH PUT ALL THEIR WEIGHT AGAINST THE DOOR. IT SHUTS SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF THE WIND BECOMES MORE DISTANT

MARTIN: Quickly, let's get back downstairs!

JANE: What was in there? What did you see?

A KIND OF MOANING SOUND COMES FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

MARTIN: I'll tell you later. Come on!

THEY SCUTTLE ACROSS AND OFF STAGE. THE CURTAINS CLOSE. THEN THE SOUND OF WOOD CRACKING AND SPLINTERING CAN BE HEARD

JANE (O.S.): Oh my God, the treads are crumbling under our feet!

MARTIN (O.S.): Here take my hand.

THERE IS A RUSHING OF WIND AND CRASHING SOUNDS

JANE (O.S.): God, it feels like the house is falling apart!

WIND AND CRASHING NOISES

MARTIN (O.S.): Quickly let's get to the front door!

THEY RUN ON AND ACROSS THE APRON OF THE STAGE TO THE FRONT DOOR OFFSTAGE. MARTIN PULLS IT, BUT CAN'T OPEN IT

MARTIN: Damn, I can't budge it!

JANE: Let me have a go.

MARTIN: You won't be able to. It feels like it's locked.

JANE TRIES TO OPEN THE DOOR

MARTIN: We'll have to try the back.

THEY RUN BACK ACROSS AND OFFSTAGE

JANE (O.S.): It's like a labyrinth in here. Which way?

MARTIN (O.S): Try the door at the end.

SCENE 5 - THE CHAPEL

A CHAPEL WITH AN ALTAR WITH CANDLES ON
IT AND BEHIND IT A STAINED GLASS WINDOW
WITH THE FACE OF THE GREEN MAN

JANE: Good grief. It's the chapel I dreamt about.
Look there are the carvings and the stained
glass with the face of the Green Man.

MARTIN: It's amazing, it's exactly as you said.
(SOFTLY) And *he's* here as well. I can feel
him. (HE PAUSES) Listen.

JANE: I can't hear anything.

MARTIN: Exactly. No wind, nothing. This is the
heart of the house; the still centre at the
heart of the storm. (CALLING OUT) We want
to help you.

JANE: Stop it Martin, you're scaring me again. Do
you really think there's someone listening?

MARTIN: (IGNORING HER COMMENT) He probably doesn't
trust us because he feels *he's* been betrayed
before.

JANE: All the more reason for us to get out of
here. Come on let's try the door at the over
there.

THEY SCURRY ACROSS THE STAGE TO THE DOOR. MARTIN TURNS THE IRON RING ON THE DOOR

MARTIN: Let's hope this isn't locked.

HE TRIES TO TURN THE IRON RING ON THE DOOR WITHOUT SUCCESS

MARTIN: It's no good I can't turn it.

JANE: So we're stuck in here.

MARTIN: Yes, but at least we're safe here.

JANE: You think being entombed in here is safe?!

MARTIN: (*DEEP IN THOUGHT*) I don't know.. I suppose it's like when you're in any church or chapel. It feels like a place of sanctuary.

JANE: Why do think it was built?

MARTIN: I suppose lots of manor houses were built with places to worship in them. Of course they were normally Christian.

JANE: And this obviously isn't..

MARTIN: No, it looks like the person that this was built for had pagan beliefs.

JANE: A belief in the Green Man...

MARTIN: Yes along with some kind of Nature God or Gods.

JANE: Paganism, witchcraft - it doesn't sound like your average member of the landed gentry...

MARTIN: No, mind you some of them can be pretty eccentric. (PAUSES) I wonder if that's why all the staff left,,

JANE: All except Johnson. How do you mean?

MARTIN: Well ever since the prevalence of Christianity people have become suspicious and afraid of anything Pagan - you know associations of human sacrifice, devil worship that sort of thing.

JANE: So you think once the staff found out that their employer was a Pagan they decided to leave.

MARTIN: Possibly. Or possibly there was even more than that.

JANE: What do you mean?

MARTIN: Well when I opened that door at the top of the stairs, there was something there.

JANE: What?

MARTIN: (HESITANTLY) I can't describe it. It was nothing, and everything.

JANE: Don't be so mysterious. What do you mean?

MARTIN: I mean the door opened out to wind and darkness. A raging wind and the blackest darkness you could imagine. There didn't seem to be a room there at all - no floor, no walls or ceiling. It was like the door opened to the outside, only it wasn't outside, nor inside either. And there was no-one there that I could see, but I could feel him simmering, feel his anger and his power, and I knew that if I had stepped forward, I would have been lost. (PAUSES) Perhaps the staff felt what I felt and were afraid.

JANE: I told you I could feel something watching us.

MARTIN: It's the fear of the primeval force of nature I suppose. I mean in the past people both revered and feared Nature. I don't think things have changed much. In fact I think that we are even more afraid and reverential of it nowadays when we are suddenly brought into contact with it.

JANE: Mmm that's as maybe. I'd love to engage you in a discussion about the relationship between Man and Nature Martin, but at the moment I'm still rather anxious to get out of here.

JOHNSON: (OFF) You want to go already?

JOHNSON WALKS ONSTAGE

JANE: Johnson? We thought that you were...

MARTIN: We didn't know you were here.

JOHNSON: I've been here all the time. You were thinking of leaving?

JANE: My foot's feeling a lot better now and we felt that we'd overstayed our welcome already.

JOHNSON: Oh dear, I was hoping that you'd stay. In fact I'd rather hoped that you might stay permanently.

MARTIN: We did think seriously about that, but we've both got jobs and lives that would be difficult to give up easily.

JOHNSON: Pity. I had such plans for you and now you want to leave just like all the others.

JANE: But you can't compare us to them. They worked here, we just stopped off for the night.

MARTIN: We did give it a lot of thought. It's just that we've got various commitments...

JOHNSON: That's exactly what they said before they went. I'm afraid his Lordship won't be pleased.

JANE: Are you threatening us?

JOHNSON: Good heavens no. I was merely stating a fact. His Lordship is vexed enough already and will be more so if you leave.

MARTIN: Look Johnson, this is quite ridiculous. We only asked if we could take shelter for the night and now you're expecting us to stay for good.

JOHNSON: I was only trying to inform you how his Lordship might feel. And I was just making plans for you...there's no harm in having plans is there.

MARTIN: There's no harm in making plans for yourself, but it's another matter making plans for others.

JOHNSON: Quite so, I take your point. I just thought that you might be interested in the idea that's all.

MARTIN: As I said, we did give the matter a lot of thought...

JANE: ...but at the moment, we'd just like to get back home.

JOHNSON: Of course, but at least stay the rest of the night. It's still very stormy out there. I'm sure that you wouldn't want to have any more accidents.

JANE: We'd like to leave now please. Storm or not!

JOHNSON: Then of course you must go on your way, but I'm not sure his Lordship will let you leave so easily.

JANE: (*BECOMING AGITATED*) Just let him try and stop us! Look Johnson, with due respect, I don't think that your 'Lordship' even exists. In fact I think he's just a figment of your imagination!

JOHNSON: Really?

JANE: Yes, in fact my husband opened the door to his room and there was nothing there.

MARTIN: (*SOUNDING APPREHENSIVE*) Jane...

JANE: Nothing at all. Isn't that true darling?

MARTIN: Well not exactly...

JOHNSON: You went into his room? You went into his
Lordship's room without permission?

MARTIN: Yes, but only to satisfy my curiosity.

JOHNSON: Curiosity killed the cat! Well he definitely
won't allow you to leave now!

JANE: We'll see about that!

 SHE GOES OVER TO THE DOOR THAT THEY
 CAME IN THROUGH AND TRIES TO OPEN IT

JANE: (*BREATHING HARD WITH EFFORT*) *This door's*
 jammed now.

JOHNSON: (*TRIUMPHANTLY*) You see!

JANE: You locked it behind us!

JOHNSON: I did nothing of the sort.

JANE: Let us out!

JOHNSON: I'm afraid the matter is out of my hands
now.

MARTIN: Listen Johnson, be reasonable. You can't keep us here against our will.

JOHNSON: As I said, it's not up to me.

THERE IS A LOW PITCHED RUMBLE,
SOMETHING LIKE THE RUMBLE OF THUNDER

JOHNSON: You see how angry he is!

JANE: It's just thunder outside.

JOHNSON: It's something more than thunder. He has powers beyond your comprehension!

MARTIN: Alright, alright, maybe he does exist. What if I were to promise to come back here, once I'd got things sorted at home?

JOHNSON: That might change things. He'd be pleased about that.

MARTIN: Then I'll go and tell him... or maybe it would be better if you went.

JOHNSON: There's no need. He knows already. As I said, he has powers beyond our understanding. (PAUSE) Go and try that door now, it leads to the outside.

JANE: But we tried it earlier and we couldn't open it.

JOHNSON: Try it again.

JANE GOES OVER AND THE DOOR CREAKS
OPEN. SOUNDS OF WIND AGAIN.

JOHNSON: You see, he is happier now. (*SPEAKING TO
MARTIN*) Goodbye sir. We look forward to
seeing you again very soon.

MARTIN: Yes. Goodbye Johnson. And I'm sorry if we
caused any upset.

JOHNSON: You weren't to know. I'm just sorry that I
couldn't make your stay more comfortable.

MARTIN WALKS OVER TO THE DOOR.

MARTIN: Goodbye.

JOHNSON: We'll see you again soon sir.

JANE: (*SOFTLY*) Quick let's get away from here
before he changes his mind about letting us
go.

MARTIN: No I don't think he will. Not now...

THEY EXIT THE STAGE. THE CURTAINS CLOSE
THE LIGHTS FADE

MARTIN (O.S.): (*SHOUTING THROUGH THE NOISE OF THE WIND*) Try
and keep close to me

JANE (O.S.): (*SHOUTING BACK*) That wind's so strong.

MARTIN (O.S): Just concentrate on keeping your footing we don't want another accident.

 THERE A SUDDEN CREAK AND A CRASH AS A BRANCH IS SNAPPED OFF BY THE WIND

JANE (O.S): God, if we had been under that....

MARTIN (O.S): Come on with any luck we'll be out of these trees soon.

SCENE 6 - INSIDE THE CAFE

MARTIN AND JANE ARE SITTING AT A TABLE. THEY HAVE JUST FINISHED EATING THEIR BREAKFAST

MARTIN: Well, I enjoyed that.

JANE: Yes it's nice to be back in civilisation again. Thank God for Postman Pat!

MARTIN: You can always rely on the Royal Mail. Mind you I'm not sure that they're strictly supposed to give lifts to the public.

JANE: Let's just be grateful we're back in the 21st century again.

MARTIN: Even though this place hasn't got a Debenhams or a Marks?

JANE: I'm not *that* hooked on shopping you know!
(PAUSE) It's a lovely little village. I'd almost like to come and live here if it wasn't for that house being so close.

MARTIN: It's strange that the postman didn't know of it.

JANE: I suppose it's like you said - they probably hardly get any mail.

MARTIN: But postmen normally know an area really well.

JANE: Maybe he hasn't lived in the area that long. I mean what are you suggesting, that we dreamt the whole thing?

MARTIN: No it's just strange. It's also strange that he hadn't realised there'd been a storm last night.

JANE: Well like he said he probably slept through it.

MARTIN: Yes. You know I still feel that I, or rather we, should go back, to help restore the estate.

JANE: No Martin, I, we can't go back there.

MARTIN: No I suppose not. It's just that it feels like we're letting him down like all the others did.

JANE: How can you say that? We were only there for a short time, not like the others. We have no obligation to do anything.

JANE'S MOBILE SUDDENLY STARTS RINGING

MARTIN: Is that your phone?

JANE: Yes.

MARTIN: I thought you said that the battery was dead.

JANE: It was.

SHE GETS THE MOBILE OUT OF HER BAG AND ANSWERS IT.

JANE: Hello.

(BEAT)

MARTIN: What is it?

JANE: Here, you listen.

SHE HANDS HIM THE PHONE.

MARTIN: All I can hear is the sound of wind...

JANE: Yes.

MARTIN: Probably just a wrong number.

JANE: Probably.

SHE SWITCHES HER PHONE OFF

(*BEAT*)

MARTIN: It's no good, I've got to go back.

JANE: Why? What for?

MARTIN: To help, to help his Lordship run the estate. I made a promise remember?

JANE: His Lordship. Listen Martin this isn't funny...

MARTIN: It isn't supposed to be funny. It is a duty that I have to fulfil.

JANE: You're beginning to scare me now Martin. Why are you talking like this?

MARTIN: It's something I have to do. I'm sorry Jane I'm needed there.

HE GETS UP AND WALKS OFFSTAGE

JANE: (*SHOUTING AFTER HIM*) Martin! Martin, come back!

CURTAINS CLOSE

SCENE 7 - JANE'S KITCHEN (STAGE APRON)

JANE: But he didn't come back. He just strode purposely out of that café and I haven't seen or heard from him since.

EMMA: You didn't go after him then?

JANE: I got to the doorway of the café and then my ankle gave way again. I banged my head against the door frame as it went. Everything's a bit vague after that. I supposed I must have been a bit concussed.

EMMA: But he didn't.

JANE: No. I mean I when I went to bed that night there were all these thoughts running around my head, primarily along the lines of - oh my God he's in terrible danger. I mean what happened in that house wasn't normal and I was desperately worried about him. I didn't sleep much that night I can tell you.

EMMA: And then?

JANE: And then the next day I decided to call the police. I told them broadly what had happened and initially they said that they couldn't do anything since he'd left under his own free will, but after I told them I thought he could be in danger, they said they'd investigate. So I waited to hear from them. A couple of days later they called round and said that they couldn't find a house in the woods, that maybe I'd made a mistake. Made a mistake indeed, you don't make mistakes about things like that!

EMMA: No of course you don't. Perhaps they got the location wrong. Maybe you should have offered to go with them. Show them where the house was.

JANE: No I couldn't have faced going there again. Not then anyway. In any case I explained exactly whereabouts it was. They couldn't have got it wrong.

EMMA: Right. Have you spoken to them since?

JANE: No, they started asking me lots of questions. It seemed like they were inferring that I was making the whole thing up, that I was wasting their time. They didn't actually say that as such, but that's the feeling I had.

EMMA: And what about Jamie and Anna? What have you told them?

JANE: Not a lot really. I just told them that he'd be working away for a few months. They seem to accept that. I realised that they'd be worried stiff if I told them the truth.

EMMA: Yes, I suppose they would be. (PAUSE) Jane, please don't be offended if I ask you this, but are you sure that you know what exactly is the truth?

JANE: What do you mean?

EMMA: (*HESITANTLY*) Well are you sure that it all really happened?

JANE: Yeah I know what you're thinking. Here she is drugged up to the eyeballs, telling me some story that sounds like it's come straight out of a Hammer Horror film. I suppose I don't sound like the most reliable of witnesses do I?

EMMA: And you did say that you banged your head so hard that you were probably concussed.

JANE: I know. And do you know sometimes I manage to convince myself that maybe I did dream a lot of it up; that maybe only parts of it were real, like us getting lost and the house, and that the whole Johnson and the Lord bit is just some fantasy that came into my head. I don't know, I've gone over it so many times in my head that it's starting to feel unreal. Sometimes I feel I'm going mad!

EMMA: You sound perfectly sane to me!

JANE: Mad people generally do though, don't they!

EMMA: (*LAUGHING*) I suppose they do!

JANE: Another biscuit?

EMMA: No I'm fine. Actually I'll have to shoot off in a minute. I've got an appointment with my dentist unfortunately.

JANE: Nothing unpleasant I hope.

EMMA: No it's just for a check-up. Although he usually manages to find something that needs seeing to.

JANE: I should really go myself. But again it's having to make the effort. It's enough just to nip to the shops, let alone go to the dentist. I've become a bit of a hermit I'm afraid.

EMMA: Poor Jane. This isn't like you to be out of the social whirl.

JANE: I know. But at least I've had time to think. You know it's ironic but I'm beginning to think that Martin had his priorities right. Life shouldn't be all about working your socks off to make money so that you can buy a better dishwasher or go on a second or third holiday abroad each year, it should be about doing things for others, for the greater good.

:

EMMA: You still need to bring in a reasonable amount to live on though don't you? And anyway doesn't charity begin at home? I'm not sure that Martin going off to do his own thing was doing much good for your family was it?

JANE: Maybe not. But he was still doing what he thought was right.

EMMA: If you say so! Anyway I'll have to go.

PUTS DOWN HER CUP SHE AND GETS TO HER FEET

EMMA: Maybe we could meet up again next week. I'll have more time then.

JANE: O.K. I'll give you a call. Thanks for coming Emma. It's been good to get things off my chest.

EMMA: That's what friends are for.

THE PHONE STARTS RINGING

EMMA: I'll let myself out whilst you answer that. Bye Jane.

EMMA WALKS OFFSTAGE

JANE: (*CALLING OUT TO HER*) Bye.

THE DOOR SLAMS. JANE PICKS UP THE PHONE. ALL SHE HEARS IS THE SOUND OF WIND

JANE: Hello

MORE SOUND OF WIND

JANE: Martin is that you?

MORE SOUND OF WIND

JANE: Martin please speak to me.

SHE PUTS DOWN THE PHONE IN DESPAIR,
PUTS HER HEAD IN HER ARMS ON THE TABLE
AND APPEARS TO FALL ASLEEP. THE
CURTAINS THEN OPEN TO REVEAL THE
WOODLAND SCENE WITH THE HOUSE FAÇADE.
MARTIN IS ON STAGE DRESSED IN THE
CARETAKERS CLOTHES AND IS BUSILY
PICKING UP BRANCHES AND PUTTING THEM
NEATLY INTO A PILE. THE CURTAINS CLOSE
AGAIN AND THE LIGHTS DIM WHILST THE
WIND STARTS BLOWING AND A SECTION FROM
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS ANTARCTICA SYMPHONY,
EPILOGUE (FINAL SECTION) IS PLAYED:

THE END