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Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte

By Henry Farrell

This house, this plantation,
this whole damned parish
belonged to my family
before your people stepped aboard
the stinking cattle boats
that brought 'em to this country.
Don't you dare talk back to me, boy!
My family's seen this state
crawling with lousy carpetbaggers
that knew more about behaving
like a gentleman than you do!
I can't even look at Charlotte
without ugly thoughts ripping my guts.
I'd sooner it had been
one of my field boys.
I could have killed him.
Do you know
what it's costing me not to kill you?
My daughter and Jewel Mayhew's husband.
You gutless, soft, suckling swine!
My daddy sat out there on that veranda,
and let the whole place slide to dust.
When he died,
there was nothing but debts and dirt.
I touched that dirt and made it blossom.
I fought to keep this house
and to bring it back up.
I don't have a son to give it to.
Only Charlotte.
And she ain't gonna give it to you.
You ain't gonna have my home or my child.
I created both and I'm gonna keep 'em.
I ain't watched over my girl
all these years to have some...
to have some...
to have some creature like you
take her away.
Listen, I'm gonna tell you something.
Your daughter ain't a little girl
anymore.
There'll be other men
in her life besides you.
That's not funny.
Tell me something, boy.

How'd you have this elopement
planned out?

- How were you fixing to go about it?

- Tomorrow night during the dance,
Charlotte and I had planned
to meet out in the summer house.

She was gonna have
her bags packed and
we were gonna go away
together, that's all.

And I had got us a room in Baton Rouge,
and we were gonna stay there.

I don't want to hear about that.

You asked me, so I just told you,
that's all.

Now,

you shut your filthy mouth
and you listen to me.

Charlotte doesn't know about this.

She doesn't know you're here now.

She doesn't even know

Jewel was here last night.

How do you mean,

Jewel was here last night?

You mean to tell me that my wife
come over here to talk to you?

As I recollect,

she was sitting right about there.

Now,

I want you to come to that dance
tomorrow night with your wife.

You're gonna meet Charlotte in
the summer house, just like you planned.

But what you're gonna whisper in her ear
is gonna be something else again.

Come on, lazy.

We haven't even danced once.

Champagne wouldn't be
half the fun without Prohibition.

Sure would like to meet Sam's bootlegger.

Sam Hollis sure knows

how to give a party.

I just love to Charleston.

Ginny Mae! You seen Charlotte anyplace?

I got some killing news to tell her.
I haven't seen her for a long time.
The last time I saw her,
she was dancing with John Mayhew.
Yeah, and it looks like it's gonna be
quite a spell before you see her again.
I've just got to find...
I made a mistake, Charlotte, that's all.
Don't cry.
Look, I know it's no consolation to you,
but I really loved you at one time.
Try and understand that.
I really loved you.
I could kill you!
Jenks! You ought to know you can't open
them cases with a thing like that.
Look here, why do you think
I brought this special?
- Good evening, Mrs. and Mrs. Howard.
- Oh, Geraldine!
Hasn't this been just
the loveliest evening?
We have to go now.
Be a dear and thank Mr. Hollis for us.
I can't find him anywhere.
- I'll do that little old thing.
- Thank you, dear. Good night.
Good night, Mr. and Mrs. Howard.
Charlotte?
Char...
No!
No!
No!
Oh, my God!
- One more.
- One more time.
OK. Now, one more time!
Oh, there's Charlotte.
Charlotte, honey,
you come with me now.
No, Papa.
No, Papa.
I... I don't want to, Papa.
No, Papa.

I don't want to, Papa.
- Come with me, baby.
- No, Papa.
Boy, it sure is spooky round here.
Especially the graveyard.
It's spookier.
- Hurry up. It's getting late.
- You think there really is a ghost?
- Who knows?
- Sure, there's a ghost.
There's the house now.
Gives me the creeps every time I see it.
What if she catches me?
Then you tell her you're Jewel Mayhew
and you're comin' lookin'
for your poor little ol' husband's head.
But if she catches me?
Now look,
you wanna join the Spiders, don't you?
Get on in there.
Don't forget to get something
she touched.
Watch out for that cleaver.
She's just liable to chop off
your little head.
Go on. We haven't got all night.
Go on.
John?
- Get outta here!
- Run!
- She'll catch us.
- She ain't catching me.
Come on, move.
I'm scared.
I'm running. I'm running.
Chop, chop, sweet Charlotte
Chop, chop, till he's dead
Chop, chop, sweet Charlotte
Chop off his hand and head
To meet your lover you ran, chop, chop
Now everyone understands
Just why you ran
to meet your love, chop, chop
To chop off his head and hand

Chop, chop, sweet Charlotte
Chop, chop, till he's dead
Chop, chop...
Damn you!
Damn you!
Get off my property or I'll shoot!
I told you to get off my property!
Stan! Look out!
Look out up there, Stan!
- Man, oh, man.
- That crazy woman. I'm telling you...
I wouldn't go out there if I was you.
What do you think you're doing,
firing on my men?
That's my land
he's ploughing up down there!
Damn it! Ma'am, you coulda killed him.
If I'd been aiming to kill him,
I would have.
Now see here, Miss Hollis,
we done what we could to accommodate you,
but this time you've gone too far.
We've got a bridge to build
and roads to lay,
and we ain't got no more time
to fool with ya.
Where you are, I could spit in your eye
with no strain at all.
Now, I ain't in no mood for jokes.
I'm going straight and see the sheriff.
I don't care where you go straight to,
just so long as you go,
and take that and them with you.
Now, you know as well as I do
the State of Louisiana
requisitioned this whole area,
including your house,
over six months ago.
Just because some old fool
in Baton Rouge
signed a piece of paper
doesn't make it so.
Nobody ever asked me to sign anything.
And nobody's gonna tear down

my house
to build a piddling bridge
or anything else!
So you just clear off my property
once and for all.
I don't know,
some folk seem to think
they've a natural-born right
to get away with murder
Hey, look out!
You sure had yourself a good time today,
didn't you, Missy?
You just cool down now.
What are you gonna do, boss?
I'm going into town.
Keep those boys outta
sight till I get back.
I'll bring that sheriff back out here
in a half hour if I gotta drag him out.
Ah, you've fixed things up for fair.
Come. Come on.
They were gonna dig up
Papa's grave.
They wasn't within 100 feet
of them graves.
They're fixing to tear down
the whole house.
I don't see what difference ploughing up
the grounds is gonna make. Come on.
Come on, now.
They offered to move
your Pappy's remains.
You shoulda let 'em.
They can't do him any harm now.
Go on in there,
and get yourself quietened down.
You've done enough for one day.
Let me tell you something,
it ain't gonna be but a half an hour
before that sheriff comes over here.
So you get yourself dressed up
real pretty,
and you come on downstairs
and get your breakfast.

If Luke Standish ever comes out here,
he'll be real sorry.
You hush. That ain't no way
to talk, Miss Charlotte.
Now you come on,
get yourself dressed.
Velma'll go downstairs
and fix you a nice breakfast.
And don't you worry about that sheriff
when he comes out here.
Velma'll get rid of him.
Yes, sir.
Yes, sir.
It's not very often
we have a homicide
and never able to find the
victim's head and hand.
I'm not much concerned about examining
your credentials, Mr. Wills.
I'm happy to go along
with anything you say.
I just have my doubts
about what you can expect to find.
Now, we've had newsmen
coming down here for 35 years and more,
and none any the wiser.
I don't expect to unearth
anything extraordinary.
After all, there's nothing really unusual
about an unclaimed insurance policy.
It's just that I don't want
to upset anybody.
So if you'll go along with my masquerade
of a reporter from
one of our more esoteric crime magazines,
I'd be most awfully grateful to you.
Well, Mr. Wills, since you've come
all the way from London to see us,
I guess we'll just have to oblige you,
esoteric magazines and all.
I'm sorry, Mr. Standish. You'll have
to come out to the Hollis place.
We got real trouble this time.
What a remarkable coincidence.

By the way, Sheriff,
I wonder if you could arrange
for me to meet Jewel Mayhew.
- I guess we'll just have to oblige you.
- Thank you very much.

Velma!

- What?

- The sheriff's comin'.

Get rid of him! Hear?

She's not really crazy.

She just acts that way because
people seem to expect it of her.

You can wait in the car.

You can't see her.

She's sick.

All that dust and all that racket from
your machines has made her real sick.

She's waiting for Dr. Drew
to come and tend to her right now.

That's too bad. There was
a little matter of an unlicensed gun.

I was hoping Miss Hollis
maybe could help me to find it.

Well, I reckon I'll just have to
look for it myself, Miss Cruther.

Morning, Miss Charlotte.

Get out, Luke Standish,
you smirking Judas!

Comin' round with your lying tricks.

You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Papa gave you the first job
you ever had in this town.

Without him, you wouldn't be sheriff.

I know that,

that's why I'm trying to help you.

Help me?

You had orders to leave this house
long ago.

If I'd been doing my job,
you'd have been long gone by now.

If you are so anxious to help me,
why don't you leave me alone?

And tell everybody

to stop threatening me

with cutting off my water
and electricity.

I can't. What you did today
puts it right out of my hands.
Threatenin' people's one thing,
shootin' at 'em another.
I got orders now to see that
you're gone within ten days.
They can hold up on the blasting and
keep working

on the other side of the river.
But if you aren't out
by the end of next week,
the commissioner'll have you up
for criminal action.

But this is my home!

I haven't any other place to go.
They can build
their damned bridge anywhere.
No, ma'am, they had to build it
to meet up

with the road
on the other side of the river.
There isn't any alternative.

End of next week,
this house is coming down.

When my cousin Miriam comes, she'll know
how to deal with the county commissioner.

- I didn't know you were expecting her.

- Well, I am.

She won't make any difference
as far as the bridge is concerned.

- We'll wait and see.

- I reckon we will.

I ain't gonna take that gun away
from you.

I hope you aren't plannin'
on usin' it again.

Comin' to fetch you out
is the last thing I wanna do.

Then don't!

What do you want to go telling them
stories about Miss Miriam for?

She ain't even answered your letters.

Well, she's comin' anyway.
Be the saddest day of your life,
Missy, if she does come.
Your cousin Miriam
ain't never had but one idea in her head,
and that was lookin' after herself.
She's gotta come.
She's the only kin I got left.
Miriam has just gotta come.
She's the only one who can help me now.
She's just gotta come.
I guess there's been changes to this part
of the country since you was here last.
I imagine there have been.
Things ain't changed much
in this parish,
except from folks gettin'
a lot older than they used to be.
I suppose they are.
There's absolutely no point
in you gettin' so upset,
the way you did this morning.
Anyone who knew you less well than I do
might be forgiven for thinking
you had a persecution complex.
Yes, Dr. Drew.
Charlotte,
they are asking you to leave this house
because they are going to tear it down,
not because of any of the ulterior
motives that you seem to imagine.
- What's that?
- Charlotte, please.
Don't get so jumpy about everything.
It's Miriam!
Miriam isn't expected
till tomorrow evening.
Now, come on, calm down.
Well, ma'am, this is it.
They say places you
knew as a child
always seem smaller
than your memory of them.
It's not true.

Velma.

Velma Cruther.

Shall I take these in, Miss?

Thank you.

Just put them up there.

It's just as I left it.

- How much is that?

- Two dollars and fifty cents, ma'am.

- Keep the change.

- Thank you, ma'am.

- You nearly beat your telegram here.

- I know I'm a day early.

- I hope it won't inconvenience anybody.

- Miriam!

I just can't believe it.

You look marvellous.

What is it that you
can't believe, Drew,
that I'm here

or that I look the way I do?

Come on, Miriam,

don't make fun of an old man.

You know I never was any good
at expressing myself.

That's not so at all, Drew.

You were always very quick
with your compliments.

It was just your intentions...

that were sometimes a little vague.

- You all want this stuff upstairs?

- I'll give you a hand in just a minute.

I suppose you want to see Charlotte?

I think I already have.

- Won't she be coming down?

- I think we'd better go up.

She's a bit upset. There was
a little trouble here this morning...

- Trouble?

- Nothing serious.

You took us by surprise.

We weren't expecting you till tomorrow.

It was a mix-up.

I had to take an earlier plane.

What kind of trouble?

Just plain, blind stubborn.
With her money, she could live anywhere
in the world like a queen.
But as it is I'm afraid
you'll have more
than your hands full getting her
out of this place.
The three of us used
to slide down this banister.
I was always the champion.
We just let you win
because you were the youngest.
An old house is difficult to keep clean.
If you can get anybody out from town
to work in this place,
you're doin' a lot better than I can.
Don't misunderstand me, Velma,
I know how exhausting it must be
having to do all the work out here alone.
There's a lot more bags out there.
Charlotte, it's Miriam.
How good it was getting your letter
asking me to come.
I knew you'd come, I just knew you would.
- And you're gonna help me.
- Of course I'll do whatever I can.
I've thought of you, and the house.
It's like coming home.
Oh, but everything is such a mess.
You see,
I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow.
We're together.
That's the important thing.
Yes, of course it is.
Miss Charlotte's room.
Remember the night you taught me
to smoke my first cigarette and you -
or was it I? - Set the drapes on fire?
I was the one they whopped, I know.
No! That's Velma's job.
Yes, but Velma's... well, Velma.
It's just that we haven't
seen each other in so long,
you'd think we'd have

other things to talk about.
I mean, arguing about
who's going to make up the bed.
If you all want me
to fix supper for you,
you better eat early,
cos I gotta get home.
Well, thank you, Velma.
Is that an invitation?
No.
I just reckoned you'd be sniffing
around here
more than usual now
that Miss Miriam's back.
There's nothing like a family reunion.
I think I'll just get the key
to the cellar.
Just thinks he's gonna get
the key to the cellar.
I didn't know I ever told you
where the keys to the cellar were.
Thank you, sir.
I can't remember
when I last dined in here.
Papa used to say
this was his favourite room.
I guess maybe that's cos
he loved to eat so much.
When this nonsense
about the house is straightened out,
we could give parties here again.
Why not?
What's so impossible about that?
It would be lovely.
Yes, it would be nice.
Aren't you forgetting about the limit
they put on vacating the house?
You got to be out of here a week Monday
and no two ways about it.
Drew, you carry on as
if you were a member
of the Department
of Roads and Bridges.
Miriam will tell them where to get off,

won't you, darling?
I wish I could.
Charlotte,
you have just got to understand
that there's nothing,
absolutely nothing,
that Miriam can do about it now.
They are going to tear down
this house and that is final.
Oh, you're so stuffy.
They took their smelly old equipment
out of here, didn't they?
Miriam isn't frightened
of a bunch of crooked politicians.
It wouldn't surprise me to find out
that Jewel Mayhew was behind all this.
Charlotte, that is ridiculous.
Is it? You notice
they're not laying a finger on her land.
They're destroying my house
but they're not touching hers.
I've rented a car for you, Miriam.
You can go tomorrow.
- Go where?
- To Baton Rouge,
to put that damned
county commissioner straight.
Charlotte, there's nothing
I wouldn't do for you, if I could.
You know that.
But I'm afraid Drew's right.
There isn't anything
we can do about the house.
You have to leave.
What do you think
I asked you here for?
Company?
I thought you were gonna help me!
But I shall. That's why I came:
To help, to be with you.
To be with me?
I've lived alone here
ever since Papa died.
The only people I've ever seen

are Velma and Drew,
who comes out when he feels like it,
just to see if I'm still alive.
And a bunch of sniggering idiots
who come out here to make fun of me.
Do you think I'd ask you back here
just to be with me?
Charlotte, she's only trying
to lend a helping hand.
Oh, yes. I can see that.
She's just breaking her back.
God, do you have gratitude!
When you first came here,
after your Papa died,
you acted as if we weren't
good enough for you.
And your mama
a sorry up-North waitress.
Charlotte, that's enough.
Let her talk, if insulting me
gives her any satisfaction.
When you first came here,
Papa bought you a whole new wardrobe.
Does it insult you to remember that?
Yes, I remember he took
your poor up-North cousin downtown
for a whole new wardrobe
to a sleazy store
he wouldn't let you set foot in.
That wasn't good enough for you?
Papa didn't give you enough?
Maybe that's what you came back here for:
To get the rest of Papa's money.
Charlotte, I have a career, and
I've given up valuable time to come here.
Oh, I know. Now, let me see,
what is it you call your job?
Oh, yes, public relations.
Sounds like something pretty dirty to me.
The dirt is entirely in your own mind.
I wouldn't dwell on it, Charlotte.
She didn't come here to be insulted.
Most likely she came back to help
Jewel Mayhew drive me out of my house.

Charlotte, you don't believe that.
Why wouldn't Miriam
conspire with Jewel against me?
Who was it went sneaking off to Jewel
and told her about her husband and me
in the first place?
Didn't know about that, did you, Drew?
That's something you never told
your precious boyfriend.
Isn't that so, Miriam?
Isn't it, cousin darling?
Yes, I told Jewel.
And I told your father, too.
Why wouldn't I? After all,
I wasn't much more than a child then.
All I ever got in this house
was people telling me how lucky I was.
And your father always favouring you,
and holding you up as an example.
Why wouldn't I tell him
that his pure, darling little girl
was having a dirty little affair
with a married man?
You're a vile, sorry little bitch!
How was I to know it would end in murder?
With John being butchered?
No, you couldn't have known that.
And you couldn't have known
that when Drew found out,
he was so frightened of having
his fine name linked with ours
that he'd walk out on you.
But Drew's still here,
and you're both still alive, and...
and I'm still here.
But John...
John never even...
John?
John?
John.
John.
She is deranged, Drew.
She must be.
Well, no. She's certainly worse

than when I last wrote you,
but not to the extent of being committed.
I'm sorry.
There's just no way to avoid the problem.
There are times when she genuinely
doesn't know what she's saying, but...
On the other hand,
I thought she described
the way you left me
rather accurately.
If it's any comfort,
I've always regretted having let you go.
We don't have time for regrets now, Drew.
And there is a lot to regret.
John.
John?
What a shame.
With all that money, she could have done
such wonderful things with this place.
Made it so beautiful again.
How could she stand
being alone here all these years?
People who are obliged
to live alone have a habit
of creating company for themselves.
Innocent fancies can become
fixed delusions.
I think she never fully accepted
John Mayhew's death.
At least part of her mind hasn't.
Sometimes she speaks of him
as if he were still alive,
here in this house.
As if she could
still feel his personality.
She plays that old harpsichord,
the song he wrote for her.
Often, at night, she sits up dressed,
as if she were still young
and expecting a beau.
I seem to remember expecting
something like that once myself.
You're going to be all right here?
I could stay over.

You've let me get along on my own
all these years.

I don't think
another night is gonna kill me.

I guess you're right.

- Maybe you'd better have this.

- What on earth for?

You never know. You do have people
skulking around here occasionally.

- Anyway, you better take it.

- Thank you.

Good night.

Good night.

Good night.

My dress.

Somebody slashed my dress.

They certainly were
attractive youngsters.

Yes, sir.

That was the biggest story
that ever broke in this town.

Yes, I can see you gave it
what you might call "the full treatment".

We couldn't very well bury it
on the society page.

Anyhow, help yourself.

You'll find everything you need here.

And that's a pretty good picture
of Miss Charlotte.

Yes, it is.

I was working for the press
when she arrived in London.

Not one of us succeeded
in getting an interview with her.

They said Big Sam sent her over there
to prevent her being tried.

But that wasn't so. Sending her
out of the country wouldn't have helped.

I reckon Sam's political connections
had more to do with it.

As I remember, the district attorney
tried hard to make the charge stick,
but the whole thing
was transferred over to Baton Rouge.

I reckon Sam's friends in the capital got busy because nothing ever did come of it.

"Lack of evidence"

was the official explanation.

You wouldn't think so from the headlines.

Hi, Mr. Blake.

Thanks for the use of the hall.

Are you running anything

on the return of Miriam Deering?

Just an insert

in the social column.

The social column?

You gotta be kiddin'.

Mr. Wills, this is a colleague of yours.

Mr. Marchand from New York.

- How do you do?

- Who are you covering that story for?

Don't worry about me, old chap.

My status is that of an amateur.

What journal do you represent?

Crimes of Passion

and Crime Classics.

That Hollis dame

hit the news again over that bridge.

We did a special issue on her.

Here, take a look.

No head. No hand.

Just like the way it was.

Yes, very colourful.

Yeah, we're really

going to town on this one.

Hey, Mr. Blake,

you never showed me this stuff.

One thing they didn't do then was to

play up the sex angle like you can now.

Miriam Deering.

Miss Deering!

My, it's good to see you back!

Jewel. Jewel Mayhew.

- Joseph.

- Here. Let me help you.

You leave me be.

If I ever prayed for anything,

it was that you would never

dare show your face to me again.
After all these years,
what do you mean?
Do you honestly believe that time can
excuse all the things you've done to me?
Please, don't.
Not here on the public...
Oh, I see. Not in public.
We mustn't speak the truth out
in the open, you and I, huh?
It's not about me that I'm worried.
Well, right here, on the public street,
in the light of day,
let me tell you, Miriam Deering,
that murder starts in the heart,
and its first weapon is a vicious tongue.
At the time, would anyone else
have been as kind to you as I?
- Would they?
- Go away from me.
I'm ill. I'm very ill.
I won't give up one more thing to you.
Not even one more minute.
That's all right, Miss Mayhew.
Come along.
A world full of monsters!
Don't you ever show
your white-trash face
in this house again!
Damn! There's some
damned meanness all day long!
There's one filthy mess
to clean up after another!
She's nothing but a child...
Velma.
- Who brought this into the house?
- I did! I brought it in!
It was in the mailbox, just like that.
I reckon somebody put it there.
You know, she broke that teapot up there.
Tea running all down the wall.
Coincidentally, I've found some women
to do the packing.
Let me know when they arrive.

I don't know. I'm gonna get something to fix this filthy stuff.
Coincidentally,
please tell me when they arrive.
I told you to stay out!
Charlotte, you're behaving like a child.
Throwing a tantrum
over a trivial bit of rubbish like this.
How can you touch that piece of filth?
It's only a magazine,
cheap and disgusting.
Only cheap and disgusting people
will read it.
It is Jewel Mayhew devilling me
in my own house!
You think Jewel Mayhew brought it here?
She couldn't have.
- Why couldn't she have brought it here?
- I just saw her. She's seriously ill.
Much too ill to be running around
playing silly games with magazines.
Well, she deserves to be ill.
She deserves to die!
Charlotte!
It's possible that Jewel Mayhew
hasn't given you a thought in years.
You think so, do you?
You think she's never given me a thought?
I've been getting these in the mail
ever since John died.
That idiot, Luke Standish,
told Papa they were crank notes.
Then some reporter got hold of them
and put it in the newspaper.
Then they started coming in
from all over the world.
But the first one
was mailed here in Hollisport.
And that's where the last one came from!
And nobody can ever make me believe
that Jewel Mayhew didn't send them!
- You saved all these?
- All of 'em.
To show how mean

and unforgiving she can be!
Well,
it's time you got rid of them.
- What do you want now?
- I come to tell her something.
She could use some telling.
Them packing women
you've been looking for, they's arrived.
I'll take care of it.
This is my favourite place now.
Here in the shade.
Yes, it's very pleasant here.
Very pleasant indeed.
Tell me, Mr. Wills. Weren't you a little
surprised when I agreed to see you?
After all, you must have been told
that I don't normally receive visitors.
Well, yes, but then I found
the hospitality
of this part
of the country extraordinary.
Besides, I imagine you had your reasons.
Would you have anything else, ma'am?
No, thank you, Lewis.
Thank you, ma'am.
I did have my reasons, Mr. Wills.
I did.
I hope you won't regret it,
but I did warn you I'd have to touch
on some painful subjects.
Which leads me to confess
to my own reasons for this meeting.
I have a particular need
for a stranger now.
Yes, they have their uses, don't they?
Well, in this little town our interests
are all too tightly interlocked.
If you confide in one person,
you confide in the whole community.
You mean you'd like somebody to talk to?
Only in a sense.
I'm not a well woman.
You can see that much for yourself.
Who was it said,

"This long disease, my life"?

Well, it's... it's coming to an end.

Perhaps a month, a few weeks.

Who knows?

- I'm terribly sorry.

- Oh, no, no. Don't be, not for me.

I think I'm even glad.

Never mind that.

I take it you're no stranger to the...

unhappier aspects of people's lives.

In fact, the only way to trust someone is on instinct alone.

I want you to have this.

I only ask that you don't open it until after I'm gone.

Then I want you to use your own judgment and experience.

You'll know what to do

when the time comes.

Or what not to do.

- It seems a dreadful responsibility.

- Oh, it is. A terrible one.

My honest advice is to refuse it.

You know I won't, of course.

I know.

Ruined finery.

That's all I have left.

I'm stony broke - is that the phrase?

It's a relief to admit it.

But your policy with Lloyd's...

Oh, you know how long it would take to process an old claim like that.

By the time I received it,

I'd be past needing it.

Well, now I think you're ready for another cup of tea, aren't you?

Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte

Charlotte, don't you cry

Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte

I'll love you till I die

And every night after I shall die

Yes, every night, when I'm gone

The wind will sing to you

This lullaby

Sweet Charlotte
Was loved by John
Charlotte.
Charlotte?
Come. Come to bed, Charlotte.
Come to bed.
Miriam, he really isn't here, is he?
Just now, I thought I heard...
Sometimes, at night, when I wake up,
it seems as if he really is here.
Don't turn on the light.
It's not real when it's light.
It's only real when it's dark.
Dark and still.
I won't turn on the light.
Come along.
You must go to bed.
He's dead! He's dead!
He's dead! He's dead!
- Charlotte!
- He's dead!
Don't! It's all right.
Don't be frightened.
- Charlotte!
- He's dead!
Stop staring at me.
Man, she sure acts
like she's crazy sometimes.
That's what all the folks in town say.
But I wouldn't bet on it.
I wouldn't bet on it at all.
Well, upon my word.
Charlotte Hollis.
Now I've frightened you.
I'm terribly sorry.
Please don't run away.
I'm quite harmless, I assure you.
Would you like a cigarette?
Well, then, I won't either.
What are you doing on my property?
Yes, by Jove,
it is your property, isn't it?
As a matter of fact, I'm snooping.
There's no other word for it.

- Are you one of the surveyors?
- I've nothing to do with all that.
Then what's that camera for?
This is a sort of conversation piece.
I say, may I introduce myself?
My name is Harry Wills.
I've come all the way from London
in the hope of meeting you.
Why?
Well, we have met before, you know.
A long time ago.
On the first night you arrived in London,
when I was a newspaper reporter,
and stood as close to you as I am now
for two delightful minutes.
- But I didn't talk to any reporters.
- I know you didn't.
And you had every reason not to,
the way they behaved towards you.
That's one of the reasons why
I've always hoped I'd meet you again.
To apologise.
- You really were there?
- Indeed I was.
And I can prove it to you.
Let me see, now.
You were dressed in a...
a sort of grey... No, green.
A green suit with a sort
of tam-o'-shanter to match.
Am I right?
You see, I was there.
Ever since that night,
I've read almost everything
they've ever printed about you.
In fact, I'm quite an authority on you.
- You are?
- Yes, indeed I am.
You're my favourite living mystery.
Have you ever solved me?
No.
But then you wouldn't be a mystery
any more, would you?
No, I wouldn't.

And I'm you're favourite case,
when you've got so many to choose from?
That's only natural.
You have everything.
You're unsolved,
perhaps even insoluble.
And you have passion
and glamour in your past.
I say, I hope I'm not offending you.
It's the oddest thing - you're not.
I don't usually talk to people.
Not about that.
That's why I'm so flattered
that you're talking to me now.
I say, let's go and sit up there
and have a nice little chat, shall we?
Mr. Wills,
since you're an authority on me,
do you think I'm a murderess?
Do I look like one?
Well, now, let's see.
It's rather difficult, isn't it?
But that's as it should be.
They've told you I'm crazy.
Everyone says you are.
Are you?
I used to be positive I wasn't.
But just lately...
at night, it...
it seems as if...
I really don't know any more.
If it comes to that,
how does anyone know?
- Would you like to see inside the house?
- I've been wanting to see it for years.
Come on.
Papa used to give
the most beautiful parties here.
They went on for days and days.
You're very fond of this house,
aren't you?
I'll show you Papa's library.
Papa built this place up again, you know.
He bought back

a lot of the original pieces.
You're Miss Deering. I had the pleasure
of seeing you in Hollisport yesterday.
- My name is Wills, Harry Wills.
- How do you do?
Your cousin's kindly consented
to show me around this lovely old home.
I see.
Excuse me.
Come on.
Papa's library was like a playroom to me
when I was little-bitty.
That's Papa.
He never minded me underfoot.
He never minded a thing I ever did.
He was always so...
Take your hands off that!
You give that to me!
Now you get out!
You get out, all of you!
Get out, do you hear me?
- Get out and stay out!
- Wait for me outside.
What's the matter?
What did they do?
And you, too, snoopin' around.
Don't you think I know
what you're looking for?
What does it matter
if you haven't anything to conceal?
Oh, but I have.
I have things concealed. Vile things.
Where do you suppose I keep 'em?
Haven't you guessed?
In here.
A memento of my sinful romance.
My lover's hand.
Look, just look!
This is all... all I have left of him.
A love song he wrote for me
and gave me in a music box.
My dear Miss Charlotte, please.
- Oh, John.
- You'd better leave now.

I was trying to help her.
If you hadn't come here,
this might never have happened.
I'm sorry.
Who put that box in there?
How in the world would I know?
John?
Charlotte.
Charlotte!
Charlotte, let me in!
The mirrors.
Charlotte, what happened to the mirrors?
Charlotte.
What have you done?
It was Papa.
He was so tall and so angry.
- He still hasn't forgiven me.
- No, Charlotte, he loved you.
- He wouldn't have harmed you.
- It was Papa. It was Papa.
- I know it was.
- No, it just seemed that way.
He was there.
He really was.
- He really was.
- No, come along.
We'll talk about it tomorrow.
- Miriam, what are you doin'?
- I'm taking you away from here today.
- No.
- Drew and I have talked it over.
- We found a place you'll be comfortable.
- No, no. I won't go.
You'll have to go
before next Monday anyway.
No, I won't go. Not while
Jewel Mayhew is still down there.
I won't have her
see me driven off my own place.
Would you rather she sees you
taken off to jail?
- Luke Standish wouldn't do that.
- There'll be reporters everywhere.
Charlotte, after last night

you must leave here. You must.

- Last night?

- The music room.

The mirrors.

Where will you take me?

To a nice place,
where people will be kind to you.

You'll see.

But I won't go in the daytime.

I won't go till it's after dark.

- Cos Jewel will see me.

- What difference does that make?

Jewel will have to know
sooner or later.

Let Charlotte get some sleep.

I'll go downstairs
and see about cleaning up.

- What are you going to do to me?

- I want you to get all the rest you can.

You're going to feel a lot better
if you've had a little sleep.

Drew, I didn't break those mirrors.

Really, I didn't.

Of course you didn't break the mirrors.

Mr. Wills' room.

Yeah. Will you hurry it up?

Mr. Wills?

Velma Cruther.

You told me to call you if...

I'll talk to you later.

- I was just using the phone.

- So I see.

Miss Charlotte will be leaving tonight,
Velma.

You'll be given your wages
till the end of the month.

You tryin' to hand me
my walkin' papers?

No, it's just that
you won't be needed any longer.

Is that so?

What about when she comes back?

Or isn't she coming back?

Since the house won't be here,

I hardly think that's relevant.
Oh, you think so, huh?
You know what I think?
I think if she leaves with you, she ain't
never gonna be seen or heard from again.
Anyways, I take my orders
from Miss Charlotte and not from you.
It should be obvious even to you
that my cousin is in no
condition to run a household.
Oh, is that so? Well, there's a whole lot
of things that's obvious to me.
The childish tricks
you've been playing here
are more than sufficient reason
to dismiss you.
Tricks?
What are you calling tricks?
It wasn't me who ripped
your dadburned old dress.
But you seem to know it was ripped.
And I haven't mentioned it to anyone.
Besides, it isnt just the dress.
I don't even know
what you're talking about.
But I do know one thing, though.
You're just jealous because
Miss Charlotte always favoured me.
And you're trying to do me out
of the money
that she promised me
when she passes away.
Oh, that's charming.
Quite charming.
My cousin just happens
to be a little ill,
and you're already
dividing up the spoils.
I didn't mean it.
I did not mean it that way
and you damn well know it.
Anyways, you don't have no call
to be so high-and-mighty.
I seen all that fancy foreign mail

that you been getting.
Think I don't know a due bill
when I see one?
You had it in for me since the first time
you come to this house. Why?
Cos I can see right through you.
You didn't fool me then,
and you don't fool me now.
My dear Velma,
I wouldn't dream of trying.
But the point is, you're fired.
You're just not needed any longer.
I'm not gonna clear out
just cos you say so.
I've been looking after her
since before you ever come here.
Where do you think you're going?
I'm gonna tell her
what you've been up to.
Don't you dare go up there
and bother her.
What's going on up there
that you don't want me to see?
Now, Velma. Miss Miriam's more than
qualified to look after Miss Charlotte
and to take care of closing up the house.
So you're in on this together, huh?
- You and her.
- You ought to be ashamed of yourself.
Miss Charlotte's sick.
You're not going to help her get well
by kicking up all this ruckus.
All right. All right, I'm going.
But don't think
you're not gonna be sorry,
both of you.
What in the world does she think
we're gonna be sorry about?
She's always been insanely jealous
of anyone who was close to Charlotte.
I guess it's something
she just can't be rational about.
- You haven't got much to go on, really.
- I've got what I know, don't I?

I know the state Miss Charlotte's been in
ever since that fool woman come here.
She wouldn't have smashed them mirrors
if someone didn't have her
good and worked up about something.
She loves that old house.
She really does.
Yes, but even allowing that there may be
some cause for concern, what can I do?
You could do something.
She likes you.
I seen how she was with you.
Now, if you was to...
If you was to go out there, and you were
to tell her not to listen to them,
I think she'd mind what you say.
I must admit the whole thing
seems strangely odd to me.
If they take my Miss Charlotte away
from that house,
I ain't gonna never see her again.
I knows it. I just knows it.
You feeling all right, Charlotte?
Somebody has to finish
your packing for you, don't they?
You don't want to leave
all your things behind, do you?
Do you?
Papa.
Papa, I'm gonna have to leave the house.
I tried to keep the house,
but they're tearing it down.
I can't help it.
Don't be angry.
I've lived alone here
all these years to protect you.
You know that.
Just because I loved John
more than I loved you,
didn't give you the right to murder him
just to punish me!
John never hurt you.
John never even...
Just one more time, baby.

Just one more time.
Once again.
Thanks. Remind me
to send you one for Christmas.
Charlotte?
Charlotte?
Charlotte, what is it?
How is she?
She'll keep.
We'll have to get rid of this.
It's almost too real, isn't it?
Your artist friend in New Orleans
has quite a talent.
And a minimum of curiosity.
- Do you think it's done the job?
- Not quite.
We could probably achieve the rest
with this drug,
but the effect wouldn't be permanent.
Besides, chemically, it's traceable.
Then we'll have to go through
with the rest?
Don't you worry.
After the last phase of the treatment,
there won't be a doctor in Louisiana
who wouldn't commit her.
Then establishing your right
to handle the estate should take...
just a few days.
Good morning, Charlotte.
Where's Velma?
You let her go yesterday.
You fired her.
Fired?
You're not going to need her
any longer.
I had a terrible dream.
- Terrible.
- I know.
You'll stop having them
once you're away from here.
Now, you eat your breakfast.
I'll come back later
and see how you are.

Miss Charlotte.
Miss Charlotte.
Miss Charlotte.
What have they been giving you?
That's some kind of drug, ain't it?
Oh, Miss Charlotte.
I thought you'd gone.
I was gone. They kicked me out.
Miss Miriam and your friend, Dr. Drew.
I told that to Mr. Wills,
but he wouldn't listen.
You can't go that way, Miss Charlotte.
I've got to go and get your coat.
Your shoes.
You can't go there.
Come on, Miss Charlotte.
I've got to get you outta here.
Come on, honey. We gotta go.
Miss Charlotte. Come on.
Don't you say anything.
You hush now, hear?
Don't you say a word.
Miss Charlotte, here.
Miss Charlotte, don't say anything.
Shh, Miss Charlotte.
You'll be able to eat something later.
I'll take this away.
Is there anything you want
before I leave?
I'll look in on you later.
Now get some rest.
- Come on, you got to wake up now.
- No, no, Velma, no!
Shh, you gotta be quiet.
Come on, put your legs over here.
That's right.
You got to put this coat on.
Put your little hand in here now.
Come on. That's right. Come on.
Give me your other hand. That's good.
Get your hand in there. Come on.
Give me your other one.
You just can't keep hogs
away from the trough, can you?

- I've come to get my things.
- Is my cousin one of your things?
I'm taking her outta here, away from you!
The only thing you're taking
out of here is you!
Miss Charlotte! Miss Charlotte!
Oh, so you're finally showing
the right side of your face, ain't ya?
Well, I seen it all the time.
That's some kind of drug
that you've been giving her!
You've been making her
act the way she's been.
Well, I'm going into town, and I'm going
to tell them what you been up to!
Dr. Bayliss, please.
Yes, Bayliss.
And hurry. Please hurry.
Sit down.
You seem awfully nervous.
He was always fighting to keep

two things:

- And now he'll lose both.
- Got to hand it to him, though,
he held on to both of 'em an awful
long time, even after he died.
I suppose, in a way,
he's got Charlotte to thank for that.
If she hadn't deluded herself
into believing
it was dear old Papa
who killed John Mayhew,
she might never have stayed here
guarding that so-called secret.
She might have gone off
and spent the entire fortune.
- Are you sure it's all right?
- Sure what's all right?
Don't make fun of me!
Oh, you mean Velma.
Of course it's all right. Nobody's
ever gonna know it wasn't an accident.
Except me, of course.

Which rather tends to make me
a senior partner
in our little enterprise, doesn't it?
Charlotte's still asleep.
Do you want me to give her anything else?
No, no. She'll do quite nicely as she is.
I'd better put in an appearance in town.
Oh, come on, Miriam.
Don't start weakening now.
This may be our last chance
of acquiring the wealth
to which I'd like to become accustomed.
See you.

- It's all yours, Mr. Wills.

- Thank you, sir.

Hi. I'll bet this is the first time
you've seen the county coroner
operate out of a funeral parlour, eh?
Yes, it's a bit different
where I come from.

It's a bit different most places.

Still, for a town of this size,
it's kind of handy.

I've just heard the news about Velma
Cruther's death at the newspaper office.

It was Miss Cruther
he came to see, wasn't it?

Oh, yes, indeed, sir. She certainly
had a nasty accident, all right.

- Would you like to see the body?

- No, thank you.

Well, step inside anyway.

May I ask how it happened?

Well, it seems she fell off a ladder.
She must have been up there
fixing her roof.

The roof at her place
has always let in the rain.

And... well, it's done it for years.

You mean this happened
at Miss Cruther's home?

Well, I'd hardly call it a home, sir.
But she did fall in her own back yard.
I see.

- Who found her?
- I couldn't tell you that, sir.
But it was Dr. Bayliss
that brought her in.
Charlotte!
Charlotte!
Charlotte!
Charlotte!
Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte
Charlotte, don't you cry
Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte
I'll love you till I die
Oh, hold me, darling,
please hold me close
And brush the tears from your eye
You weep because
you had a dream last night
You dreamed that I said goodbye
Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte
Charlotte, don't you cry
Charlotte!
John?
John, wait. Don't go!
Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte
Charlotte, don't you cry
John?
John?
John.
Don't go away.
John.
Please don't go away.
Papa?
Charlotte?
John.
You idiot. You wretched idiot.
He's dead!
And you killed him.
Miriam! Miriam!
Don't call the sheriff!
People staring at me and hating me!
It would be just like the night
John was murdered.
But you killed Drew.
We can't pretend it never happened.

You don't know what it's like
when hate is everywhere.
Oh, Miriam, don't you hate me too.
Oh, please, Charlotte.
Please, please, don't.
I didn't mean to kill him.
The gun was just there in my hand.
And when I saw him,
he looked so horrible.
It was just like the night
when the mirrors all smashed.
And just like the night
when I saw that head.
Miriam, please, don't call the sheriff.
I couldn't stand it.
I just couldn't stand it!
Oh, Charlotte, don't.
We could get rid of the body.
We could hide it somewhere.
Then people'll think someone else
had done it. That's the only thing to do.
Miriam, I've got lots of money.
I'll give it to you, all of it.
We really could get rid of the body
if you'd help me.
We could get rid of it if you'd help me.
I wish to God I'd never come here.
I'll get the car.
You turn off the lights.
Well, go.
Get in there and stay quiet.
Get in there.
I hope you'll forgive me
for popping in at this time.
I was out driving with a friend
when I noticed the lights.
I've heard the news
about Velma Cruther's death.
What a terrible thing.
She was such a loyal person.
I'm sure Miss Hollis
must be terribly upset about it.
I wonder if there's anything I can do.
It's very kind of you,

but no, there isn't anything.
Charlotte was upset.
I've given her a sedative
and put her to bed.
It was a dreadful shock for her.
I'm terribly sorry.
Please give her my sympathy.
- I'm sorry I can't ask you in.
- It's quite all right.
I shouldn't have come. It's very late.
I just happened to be passing.
- You understand?
- Of course.
Thank you, Mr. Wills.
Good night.
By the way,
I understand you'll be leaving
this house in a matter of days now,
you and your cousin.
Of course,
our plans are indefinite now.
Naturally. They would be.
Mr. Wills, you'll have to excuse me.
I must look in on Charlotte.
Excuse me, please.
- Good night.
- Good night.
I don't think I can help you.
You can't help me?
I'm the one that's helping you.
You want me to call the sheriff?
Is that what you want?
Well, all right, then.
Turn your lights on!
I must be the worst person in the world
to have killed Drew.
Will you please shut up?
Miriam, I can't touch him.
Don't make me do it, Miriam.
Get out.
Do what I say!
Well?
Will you stop that?
Miriam, they'll be finding him soon.

They'll be asking questions.
I don't think I could lie to 'em.
You'll have to tell them
I'm not able to answer questions.
They'll find out, if you don't.
They'll find out.
Damn you.
Now will you shut your mouth?
You do as I tell you,
and if I tell you to lie,
you'll do that too.
I'm never going to suffer for you again.
Not ever.
Do you understand?
Get out.
Get out and go up to your room.
Go ahead!
I'll clean out the back
and I'll be out in a minute.
Well, go on.
Go up to your room.
Well, go on.
Go on.
Go on.
Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte.
I'm sorry to have kept you waiting.
- To your very good health.
- You look absolutely ravishing.
Thank you, sir.
I bet Lazarus never felt
as good as I do.
- To Venice in the spring.
- Venice?
Well, as a matter of fact,
I'm not certain
that I shall want to live in Europe.
I don't see that what you want
has anything to do with where we go.
You forget that Velma's tragic departure
has allowed me to become
the senior partner
of our little enterprise.
Are you sure you have the brains
to be the senior partner?

I don't think I follow you.

Who do you suppose helped to set up
cousin Charlotte for this little comedy
by sending her all those charming notes?

- Naturally, Jewel Mayhew.

- Jewel?

Jewel Mayhew hasn't done
a thing in years and years
except keep me in comfort.
Until her money ran out.

- I sent Charlotte all those notes.

- You...

And Jewel Mayhew?

My notes to Jewel
had a more practical purpose.

The one good thing
that ever happened to me in this house
was seeing Jewel Mayhew
go out to the summer house that night.

She paid me handsomely
for that indiscretion.

She paid you?

Jewel murdered her husband,
and you could bring yourself
to make both her
and Charlotte suffer
for it all these years?

Yes, darling.

That's exactly what I did.

Do you still feel you have
the imagination
to be the senior member
of this partnership?

Evidently not.

I didn't know

you had such a dulcet baritone.

You attended the wrong Sunday school
when I was a choirboy.

So you see, you joined this game
somewhat later than you thought.

Yeah, I did, indeed.

If you'd known earlier,
would you have trusted me
not to put real bullets in that gun?

No, ma'am, Miss Miriam.
I don't believe I would.
Now, we must be careful
not to overcelebrate too soon.
We've still got one more show to put on
first thing in the morning.
- So early?
- Yes.
I've some folks from
the State Institution come over here.
You mean I shall have to wring my hands
in abject misery and humiliation
at the disgrace of having
a member of our fine old family
committed to the local madhouse?
Fine old family indeed. Sam Hollis
was nothing but a thieving, fat fraud.
And furthermore, he and John Mayhew
were the biggest two damned womanisers
in the whole state of Louisiana.
Oh, dear, all that lovely money
that Big Sam sweated to get his hands on.
While we're spending it like water,
Charlotte will be weaving
lots and lots of little baskets.
Don't distress yourself, darling,
there's nothing wrong
with basket weaving.
Of course, it never cured anybody,
but it is most therapeutic.
I can just see Charlotte's face
when those doctors at the institution
call you in to confirm their opinion.
When she sees me walk in there,
she'll let out such a scream
they'll never let her out.
The way I heard it,
that Deering woman didn't have nothing
but a flimsy peekaboo dress on.
Yeah, me too, I heard that.
She and that Dr. Drew.
You didn't have to guess
what was goin' on there.
If you ask me, if you go to live

with a bloodthirsty maniac,
you're just asking for it.
She went on a real rampage.
I'll bet they'll never pin it on her,
just like back before.
Martha! Dora!
Is this a day!
People droppin' like flies
every which way.
What's happened?
- Well, what, Nellie?
- You won't ever believe it, but it's so.
Jewel Mayhew - and I know
because I got it straight from Bessie.
Jewel Mayhew just went
and dropped dead this morning.
Oh, no.
She had a third stroke
and she was gone
before they even got
the doctor on the phone.
No.
- And just guess what brought it on.
- What?
It was when she heard
what happened over here last night.
Isn't that the most
extraordinary thing?
What is?
Oh, it was just a thought.
But suppose it was Jewel Mayhew who
really murdered her husband back in '27?
And supposing there was
a witness to the murder?
So?
That would explain why she didn't try
to collect on her husband's insurance.
She was afraid a routine investigation
might reveal her guilt.
Thus enabling the witness
to take advantage
of her silence and blackmail her,
bleeding her white.
What does that give you?

It would at least give us the timing of Jewel Mayhew's death, and all this, a sort of bizarre irony.

- Wouldn't it?

- Hey, you're not kiddin', are ya?

It would mean that Charlotte Hollis had suffered all her life for a murder she hadn't committed.

- You mean that's true?

- How should I know, old chap?

I'm just guessing.

Merely speculating, that's all.

Here she comes now.

- It's Charlotte Hollis.

- Look, there she goes.

- Here she comes!

- Hey, Miss Hollis, baby!

Over here.

Now give me another one.

Thank you, Miss Hollis.

Can I have one too, Miss Hollis?

She looks rather thin, don't she?

Sometimes they got their sane moments, just like you and me.

Maybe so, but you ain't seen Dr. Drew or that Deering woman lying in there.

Oh, she has to be crazy as a loon.

Poor woman.

I wouldn't wanna be in her shoes.

Miss Hollis, this letter's for you.

I think you've been waiting a long time for it.

Sorry, everybody has to move back.

OK, let's go.

Marisa Castle de Joncaire