

## DENNIS 1

*Dennis carries the props over to Annie, who is still holding the candlesticks. Dennis carefully balances the items in between the candlesticks. Dennis is supposed to leave but doesn't. Silence.*

CHRIS. Don't go, Perkins.

*Dennis goes to leave and then stops.*

I'd like to ask you a few questions first. Mr. Haversham, Miss Colley Moore, if you'd be so kind as to give us a moment's privacy.

MAX. Naturally.

Start

*Max and Sandra exit. Dennis sits down on the chaise longue.*

CHRIS. Don't just stand there, Perkins, take a seat.

*Dennis sits down again. He takes out a cigarette case.*

DENNIS. May I?

CHRIS. Go ahead. How are you feeling, Perkins?

DENNIS. A little shaken, sir.

*Dennis takes a cigarette out of the case and then puts the case in Annie's mouth. She protests but is quickly silenced by the case.*

But I'll be fine.

CHRIS. You and Charles Haversham, you were close?

DENNIS. Yes, sir, very close.

*Dennis goes to light his cigarette; he burns his hand and drops the match into the coal scuttle, where it suddenly ignites the scotch. Annie is alarmed by the fire and disappears backstage, dropping all of the props loudly onto the floor. Dennis falls back onto the chaise longue in surprise.*

CHRIS. You don't appear very upse—

*Robert bursts in wearing a fire mask and spraying a fire extinguisher wildly. He gets Dennis more than the coal scuttle. Robert bellows, "Don't worry I've got it under control," etc. Robert realises he's been seen. He looks at the audience in silence. The extinguisher suddenly goes off again in his hand, making Robert jump slightly. Robert lifts the fire mask.*

ROBERT. (Ad libs.) Evening, Inspector. We require the coal in the library. (Or similar vamp.)

*Robert withdraws, taking the coal scuttle with him.*

DENNIS. On the contrary—

ROBERT. (*Off.*) Of course they didn't notice.

DENNIS. —I've barely—

ROBERT. (*Off.*) I improvised!

DENNIS. He was such a kindly, charming man.

CHRIS. It's true.

DENNIS. You met him?

CHRIS. Once at the local police station. He was a consultant on a fraud case I was working on.

DENNIS. I see.

CHRIS. How long have you been working at Haversham Manor?

DENNIS. Eighty years.

CHRIS. Eighty / years?

DENNIS. (*Corrects himself.*) Eight years! Eight / years.

CHRIS. Eight years. And have you enjoyed your time here?

DENNIS. My time with Mr. Haversham has been nothing but a joy. I feel that since I've come here I have been seen not only as a butler but also as a friend and a confidant. If you need me I'll be in my quarters. Exits.

*Chris stares at him furiously.*

Exits!

*Dennis realises and turns to go. He gathers up the props Annie dropped on the floor.*

**Stop**

CHRIS. *Thank you, Perkins!* If you'd be so kind as to send in Florence Colleymoore on your way out.

*Sandra bursts in, followed by Robert. Dennis exits.*

SANDRA. No need, I'm already here. Don't ask too much of me, Inspector, I feel fragile as glass.

*Sandra slams the door. We hear a huge crash as Dennis drops all of the props behind it.*

CHRIS. At last, Colleymoore, you managed to find me a pencil?

ROBERT. Yes...Inspector.

*Robert holds out the keys. Pause. Chris takes them.*