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# Crippen

*by*

# Dan Weatherer

*Based on the true story of accused murderer  
Hawley Harvey Crippen*

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# Crippen

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

5W/ 6M  
+ Extras & Voice Overs

**HAWLEY CRIPPEN:** Early Forties. Intelligent, Mild mannered and hard working. Poor with pressure and conflict.

**BELLE ELMORE/CORA TURNER:** Late Thirties. Ambitious, talented and dominant. Convinced that she is destined to be a star. Has had numerous extramarital affairs.

**ETHEL LE NEVE:** Early twenties. Naive, honest and of a motherly nature. Ethel loathes to see Hawley suffer unhappiness and is drawn to him because of his intellect, kindness and desire for helping the needy.

**SIMON HARPER:** Early Twenties. Handsome and charming. Simon is an actor who will attach himself to anyone he feels can help further his ailing stage career.

**MARCIE WHITTINGHAM:** Late Thirties. Well mannered, polite. Member of the Ladies Guild. A devoted admirer of Belle.

**FLORIE SHAW:** Early Forties. Well mannered, polite. Member of the Ladies Guild. A devoted admirer of Belle.

**CHIEF INSPECTOR WALTER DEW:** Early thirties. Intelligent and meticulous. Sees this case as his chance to make a name for himself.

MAID

OFFICERS 1 & 2

GUARDS 1 & 2

PRIEST

JUDGE  
(VOICE-OVER)

PROSECUTION  
(VOICE-OVER)

HAWLEY  
(STAND-IN)

## **SETTING**

*Early Twentieth Century England*

## **SYNOPSIS**

*Run Time: Approx. 100 minutes*

The true story of the infamous Dr. Crippen, his crimes, his capture and his execution. Was the body in the cellar really that of Cora Crippen? *Crippen* brings to life the events that led to the hanging of Hawley Crippen and his place in history as one of England's most notorious murderers.

With his marriage hanging by a thread and the theatrical career of his wife Cora in tatters, Dr. Crippen seeks counsel in the young and beautiful Ethel. A proud Protestant, he vows never to act upon his feelings, but after returning home and finding his wife in the arms of another, Hawley and Ethel spend the night together.

Cora learns of Hawley's affair and confronts Ethel, knocking her to the floor causing her to lose the unborn child that Ethel had previously kept from Hawley. With his hopes of fatherhood dashed and Cora's threat of making his affairs public, thus ruining his reputation as a respected homeopathic physician, Hawley decides to take matters into his own hands.

Whilst Dr. Hawley Crippen was tried and found guilty for the murder of Cora Crippen, DNA tests carried out a century later reveal that the body found under the flagstones of his cellar was not that of Cora's. Nor was it female. Who then fell victim to Dr. Crippen's murder plot and what happened to Cora?

(CONTINUED)

**Crippen**  
by Dan Weatherer

ACT 1

Act 1-1

*AT RISE: STAGE - CORA TURNER (Aka BELLE ELMORE, late thirties, dark haired, pretty) and SIMON HARPER (Early twenties, dark hair, handsome) are on stage.*

*SFX: Audio cue – Lacrimosa (Mozart's Requiem in D minor)*

*2-3 minutes of performance is set to musical score.*

*BELLE and SIMON are acting out the final scenes of an unnamed dance in which Belle's character is dying. She drops to the floor. It is an experimental performance.*

*LIGHTS OUT.*

*SFX: Sound cue - polite applause*

*LIGHTS UP.*

*SIMON has left the stage.*

*BELLE rises to her feet and revels in the applause. SIMON enters stage right to give BELLE a bouquet of flowers. He disappears off stage to allow her to savor the moment.*

*Exit SIMON.*

*BELLE continues to milk the applause.*

*BELLE responds angrily to an unseen prompt to leave the stage.*

**LIGHTS OUT**

Act 1-2

*AT RISE: BACKSTAGE – BELLE enters a sparsely furnished dressing room. She throws the flowers to the ground and takes a seat at her dressing table. She begins to brush her hair. HAWLEY CRIPPEN (Early forties, slim, mustachioed) is standing in the corner of the room.*

BELLE (*Excited*)

Did you see me? I was magnificent!

(CONTINUED)

*HAWLEY fidgets but does not answer.*

BELLE  
How many were there tonight? Two, three hundred?

HAWLEY (*Uneasy*)  
I don't know.

*Pause*  
Perhaps thirty?

*BELLE slams her hairbrush onto the dressing table.*

BELLE  
Nonsense! Absolute nonsense! It was deafening in there! Did you not hear their applause?

HAWLEY  
I was stood amongst them for Act 1, perhaps there were nearer forty but no more.

*BELLE stands and turns towards HAWLEY.*

BELLE  
Why do you insist on darkening my mood? Tonight was a triumph! I was majestic! They shall sing praise of this evening for months to come!

HAWLEY  
I can check the registers if you insist... but the truth is that we lost money tonight.

*BELLE returns to her dressing table and resumes brushing her hair.*

BELLE  
Then you shall have to step up your efforts. How can I be expected to fill seats if people do not even know that I am performing? No - it is you who has failed tonight, not I and not the dance. You and your lack of vision are to blame. By rights the theatre should be packed to the rafters night upon night!

HAWLEY  
It is not simply a matter of throwing money at the situation. I have my research to fund -

*BELLE stops brushing her hair and glares at HAWLEY via her mirror.*

BELLE

I am tired of hearing about your research! Forever do you promise me that your formula is nearing completion—that you shall revolutionize homeopathic medicine and be paid a fortune for it! Am I ever going to see the fruits of your labour?

HAWLEY

Yes.

BELLE

*(Laughing)*

Doubtful! How many years is it now?

HAWLEY

Four.

BELLE

The very reason we came to this country was so that you could set up a practice based upon your own cures, yet here we are - four years later and no closer to that goal. Need I remind you of what I gave up for you. I was a star in New York – yet I believed in your ideas... Now look at us. I should be climbing the ladder – I should be performing at The Alhambra! Not performing to a handful of philistines!

HAWLEY

And you shall. It just appears that London is slow to warm to your charms. But we need to invest in my remedies before committing financially to your theatrical adventures. I have already invested a larger sum than we agreed—

BELLE

*(Interrupting)*

Piffle! Explain to me why it must be my career that stagnates? One cannot simply put the arts on hold! One has to live them whilst within the grip of her fervor!

*Pause*

*BELLE resumes brushing her hair.*

HAWLEY *(Tentative)*

I'm sorry to say that tonight was to be our last performance. The owner of the theatre insists that he has given you enough time to -

*BELLE slams her hairbrush down for a second time. She remains seated and turns towards HAWLEY.*

(CONTINUED)

BELLE

*(Angry)*

How dare he! This is outrageous! Does he not know who he is about to cast out? Tell him that I am above this paltry theatre! Tell him that I shall forever tarnish his name amongst the artistic community...I shall say that he made advances towards me. He shall struggle to book all but the most desperate of acts!

HAWLEY

He has rent to meet and your act is not bringing in enough customers. Can we not accept that this particular piece is not to London's taste and bow out with our dignity intact?

BELLE

I shall say that he propositioned me and because I spurned his advances he withdrew his services. Yes, that shall set this matter right!

HAWLEY

Cora, I hardly think that this is the correct way in which to carry oneself -

BELLE

*(Angry)*

How many times have I told you not to call me that? I am Belle Elmore... and I hardly think that you are in a position to speak on this matter! Had you backed me as a husband ought I would not be in this predicament!

HAWLEY

There was a time when I admired your passion, but this issue of money is an overshadowing our happiness. We both have paths we are required to tread -

BELLE

It is not simply about the money Hawley! We came here together! We shared a dream! We were to take London by storm... with I a roaring hit on stage and you with your revolutionary treatments making waves throughout the medical community. Our success was never in doubt...yet look at us now. Somewhere along the way we lost ourselves. The stage became all I have...and I trust that your vials and test tubes became just as meaningful to you. We can longer relate to one another. Could we ever?

HAWLEY

I have tried to understand your Cora but life has a habit of making demands which require my attentions and

-

(CONTINUED)

*There is a knock upon the dressing room door.*

BELLE  
Enter!

*SIMON enters the dressing room.*

SIMON  
Forgive me, Belle, have you heard?

BELLE  
Yes-yes, Hawley just informed me. Fear not, I shall find us another stage upon which to perform.

HAWLEY  
But Belle it will not be quite so –

BELLE  
I have not the time to entertain your negativity now. Simon and I are to discuss our next move.

*SIMON looks at HAWLEY.*

BELLE  
Oh don't worry about him, he was just leaving.

*HAWLEY looks at his feet.*

HAWLEY  
Yes. Quite.

*HAWLEY passes SIMON and heads towards the exit.*

HAWLEY (To SIMON)  
Good evening.

*Exit HAWLEY.*

*SIMON approaches BELLE and wraps his arms around her.*

SIMON  
I cannot for the life of me understand what you see in that pitiful excuse of a man!

BELLE  
He devotion is unquestionable and his pockets deep. You would struggle to believe it but there once beat the heart of a vibrant man, determined to change the world. Sadly the fog of this cursed city seems to have swallowed his desire. You provide what he lacks. How I wish that you and he were one and the same.

(CONTINUED)

*BELLE turns towards SIMON and they kiss.*

BELLE

We shall perform again my love, London has yet to see the last of Belle Elmore!

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-3

*AT RISE: OFFICE – HAWLEY is sat at his desk. The office is sparsely furnished. He is reviewing notes. There is a knock upon his door.*

*(Without looking up)*

HAWLEY

Enter.

*Enter ETHEL LE NEVE (Late teens, pretty) with a stack of papers.*

ETHEL

Good morning Doctor.

*HAWLEY places his work aside and rises to greet ETHEL.*

HAWLEY

Please, there is no need for such formalities when it is only you and I.

*ETHEL places the papers onto Hawley's desk.*

ETHEL

Sorry. I get so used to keeping up appearances.

*HAWLEY touches ETHEL on the cheek*

HAWLEY

I know that it is hard for you, I too feel the burden of our love, yet we must maintain a proper distance.

*ETHEL nods and HAWLEY takes his seat.*

ETHEL

These are the interview transcripts that you requested. All are new to the clinic so I'm afraid they are a little lengthy.

HAWLEY

Understood. Thank you, Ethel.

*HAWLEY flicks through the pile of papers. He seems tired and agitated.*

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL  
How does your research progress?

HAWLEY (*Gruffly*)  
It does not.

ETHEL  
Forgive my concern but are you well?

*HAWLEY stops what he was doing.*

HAWLEY  
CORA is without a stage again.

ETHEL  
Oh.

HAWLEY  
She is not the draw that she has me proclaim her to be and it is only a short matter of time before audiences realize her shortcomings. Alas, she is oblivious.

ETHEL  
I understand why it is that you remain with her, I-I just...

HAWLEY (*Frustrated*)  
If only it were so simple Ethel, I would leave it all behind and start afresh with you yet my faith...my morals forbid me. Unhappy though I am, I must remain true to my vows.

ETHEL (*Resigned*)  
I know.

*HAWLEY stands and crosses to his window.*

HAWLEY  
Without a platform to call her own she will become unbearably tiresome. It falls upon me to finance her next venture yet I am at a loss as to how to proceed!

ETHEL  
You work so hard Hawley; surely she must see that?

HAWLEY  
I'm afraid she sees little beyond the spotlight.

*Pause.*

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL  
I should let you be in peace.

*HAWLEY returns to his desk.*

HAWLEY  
Thank you.

*Taps papers.*

I have much to occupy myself with.

*ETHEL nods and exits. HAWLEY returns to his work.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-4

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM – HAWLEY and BELLE are sat at opposite ends of a large dining table. They are eating dinner in silence.*

*Long pause.*

BELLE  
Have you given thought as to how you shall fund my next performance?

HAWLEY  
Do you have a theatre in mind?

BELLE  
All of them. None of them. What does it matter? You did not answer my question.

*Pause*

HAWLEY  
As of yet I have not.

BELLE  
Your income will no longer suffice. I shall require more in the way of finance if I am to return to the stage.

HAWLEY  
I suspected as much. I cannot devote any more money to finance your endeavors. My research must come—

BELLE  
*(Interrupting)*  
You shall need to work longer hours.

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

There are no more hours in which to work.

*Pause*

BELLE

Then we shall have to take in lodgers. We have space. I know of several actors in the city in desperate need of accommodation.

*HAWLEY places his cutlery aside.*

HAWLEY

Do you really wish to open our house to others? Are you not afraid that they will learn of our unfortunate situation?

BELLE To what are you referring?

HAWLEY

This house is bitter. No love resides within these walls. Would that it be any lodger wished to remain here.

BELLE

And? Do you really think that I shall let that stand between me and my dreams? Hawley, you know of my desire.

HAWLEY

Yes and that is the very crux of the matter!

*BELLE stands.*

BELLE (*Angry*)

How dare you! You shall retract those words immediately!

HAWLEY (*Bitter*)

I retract nothing.

BELLE

If this is about the us having children again –

HAWLEY

A wish of mine that you cruelly deny!

BELLE

There is no place for children in my plans. They demand attention and patience, neither of which I have an ounce of to spare!

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

You wish only for your own success – your own happiness.

BELLE

*(Assertive)*

No, but I must endeavor to work towards it. If you refuse to provide extra funding for my career, choosing to selfishly pursue the hopeless idea of your miracle cure, then this must be done. We shall have lodgers and you will work towards making each of them welcome. Our relationship is of no concern in this. If I am to return to the stage, then lodgers are a must. Unless you are prepared to backtrack on your reluctance to finance my plans?

HAWLEY

I am not reluctant...I am unable. A line must be drawn. I remain dedicated to my work. As for longer hours—there are only so many patients in the city at any given time.

BELLE

Oh piffle! I am on to you Hawley Crippen; you wish to see me back in the gutter... you wish to see me broken and hopeless!

HAWLEY

And why would that be? Do tell. After all, I have supported you thus far?

BELLE

Because you live in my shadow. I have everything that you ever desired. I have talent, I have admirers and devotees. I touch people with my performances – I am a star.

HAWLEY *(Dismissive)*

I never wished for anything such.

BELLE

Liar! I've seen the way you look at me when I am surrounded by my adoring public. You turn positively green! I shall never capitulate; I shall never run back to my father and admit that I failed. I was born for better.

*HAWLEY stands up.*

HAWLEY

Do as you must. Take in your lodgers. I shall not stop you, nor could I if I tried.

*HAWLEY exits into the room. BELLE pours herself a glass of wine and takes a sip.*

BELLE

Indeed. For mine is the only way.

FADE TO BLACK.

(CONTINUED)

Act 1-5

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM; NIGHT – BELLE is entertaining MARCIE WHITTINGHAM and FLORIE SHAW (Both late thirties/early forties, well dressed).*

*(Laughter)*

MARCIE

You must enlighten Belle regarding the latest exploits of Cherie Mon' Letta!

BELLE

That little harlot? Where has she been flaunting it now?

FLORIE

Well, you know the owner of the Old Mo?

BELLE

A gentleman by the name of Leonard Fitzroy or so I am led to believe?

FLORIE

Indeed, well it seems that Cherie gave herself over to him several times under the pretense of a Saturday night performance this coming weekend.

BELLE

Harlot.

FLORIE

Only having never met Mr. Fitzroy and desperate as she was, she ended up sleeping with the theater pianist thinking it was Leonard!

*(Laughter)*

MARCIE

Serves her right! She has little in the way of talent. I've heard she spends more time on her back than she does in front of an audience. Why ever do those devoid of talent choose to flaunt the few blessings that the Lord gifted to them?

(CONTINUED)

FLORIE

It is beyond me! I have no time nor respect for any woman who chooses to open her legs rather than have the conviction of one's expertise in the arts!

BELLE

Unless of course one's expertise is on one's back!

*(Laughter) Pause*

FLORIE

We simply must have you back where you belong Belle, London is positively crying out for a talent such as yours!

MARCIE

I agree! Everything has gotten awfully stale without your presence though the Music Hall Ladies Guild is delighted to name you amongst our number...it is the stage upon which you truly belong.

BELLE

Your kindness knows no end. It seems that my latest vision is not to taste - I am pondering a change of act.

FLORIE

Nonsense! The London audience prides itself upon breaking new art! The Guild, Marcie and I are beside you all of the way!

MARCIE

Absolutely. Now when do you propose to return to the stage?

BELLE

*(Sullen)*  
I cannot say...I have the means in place, at least some of them, yet Hawley is reluctant to help.

FLORIE

Why would he not? Can he not see the greatness in your performance?

BELLE

Lately I think not. His mind is occupied by his failing efforts. He understands my struggles less each day.

MARCIE

That is unfortunate - Florie and I shall speak to the guild, perhaps we can—

(CONTINUED)

*SIMON enters the room.*

SIMON  
Oh! Pardon me, forgive my intrusion, I knew not that you were entertaining.

BELLE  
*(Brightening)*  
Not at all! Please, join us.

*BELLE motions for SIMON to join her. He is reluctant.*

SIMON  
*(Flirtatious)*  
Dare I trust myself amidst as fine a collection of ladies as I have ever set eyes upon? I think not!

BELLE  
*(Flirtatious)*  
Oh, you had better if you wish to remain as lodger!

SIMON  
*(To BELLE)*  
If I may, I had matters to discuss with you, but they can keep.

MARCIE  
*(Playful to FLORIE)*  
I imagine that Belle is only too keen to bid us farewell so that she can direct her full attention to whatever the matter is.

BELLE  
*(To MARCIE and FLORIE)* And who could blame me!

FLORIE  
*(Laughing)*  
Oh come now Marcie, let us away and leave these two in peace. I'm quite sure that the fine gentleman has better things to do than listen to our frivolous talk.

MARCIE  
*(To BELLE)*  
My – isn't he a handsome fellow.

*BELLE smiles at MARCIE.*

BELLE  
He is the most perfect lodger that one could wish and nothing more. Isn't that right Mr. Harper?

(CONTINUED)

*SIMON gives a wry smile.*

FLORIE

Come now, let us be away. Good evening to you both.

*MARCIE and FLORIE exit.*

*SIMON maintains his position by the door.*

BELLE

It is safe to approach. They shall not return. Nor shall they speak of you. We three have a bond that I trust implicitly.

SIMON

I had hoped to catch you alone my darling. Have we time to be together this night?

*BELLE stands and approaches SIMON. She places her arms around his neck and looks into his eyes.*

BELLE

He shall be away for another hour.

*SIMON smiles and the pair kiss. Passions begin to overflow.*

*Enter HAWLEY.*

*HAWLEY sees BELLE and SIMON. He remains by the door.*

*SIMON sees HAWLEY and pushes BELLE away.*

SIMON

*(Shocked)*  
Hawley! I-we- forgive me.

*HAWLEY does not answer.*

*BELLE composes herself.*

BELLE

I understood that you were to be back later this evening.

HAWLEY

*(Dejected)*  
My – My plans have changed.

*Pause.*

(CONTINUED)

SIMON  
Forgive me, sir, I—

BELLE  
Ask forgiveness for nothing! He suspected long ago... he was merely too weak to confront the matter. Were you not?

*HAWLEY looks at the couple for a moment before turning towards the door.*

*Exit HAWLEY.*

SIMON  
He didn't say an awful lot.

BELLE  
He never does. Likely that he will find a tavern in which to brood before returning here, drunk and apologetic.

SIMON  
But why should he be the one to be sorry?

BELLE  
Men such as Hawley always are. No matter the situation they are always the source of the misfortune that surrounds them.

SIMON  
But—

*BELLE places her finger over Simon's lips.*

BELLE  
We still have the evening to ourselves. Would that we waste it?

*SIMON pauses for a moment before giving in to temptation. They resume their embrace.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-6

*AT RISE: ETHEL'S LIVING ROOM – Small living room complete with table and two chairs.*

*Enter ETHEL and HAWLEY, who is clearly agitated.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

Forgive my calling upon you at such an hour. I had no other place to visit. I shall be damned if I am to return home just yet!

ETHEL

Hawley dear, whatever has happened? You are a dreadful shade!

*HAWLEY takes a seat. ETHEL sits opposite.*

HAWLEY

My damndest fears were presented before me this night. I returned home to find Cora with another.

*Pause*

ETHEL

If I may, you always suspected as much. We have spoken of this many times.

*HAWLEY rises from his chair and begins to pace.*

HAWLEY

Indeed, that much is true. Yet far from my sight it bothered me not. Setting eyes upon her as she cavorted with another, it was too much for me to stomach. A suspicion or an idea can be pushed to the farthest reaches of the mind. Once one is witness to something firsthand, it becomes all the more tangible and much harder to ignore.

ETHEL

Do you still love her?

*HAWLEY takes a seat.*

HAWLEY

This is not a question of love, you know that my heart belongs to you.

ETHEL

As mine does to you but—

HAWLEY (*Angry*)

It is the sheer audacity of the woman! In my home, under my nose...whilst I toil for her so that she may return to the stage! Her lack of respect for me is beyond compare!

*Pause*

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL

All the while we long for one another whilst she cavorts behind your back. Tis most unjust. You deserve a woman who believes in you. A woman who would take care of you. Belle - she takes from you Hawley...your money and your spirit. Can you not see?

*HAWLEY looks into Ethel's eyes.*

HAWLEY

I am a conflicted man. I burn for you, but my faith permits me from acting upon my desires.

ETHEL

*(Reluctantly)*  
I understand.

HAWLEY

Yet...

ETHEL

Yes?

HAWLEY

Yet seeing how little I am respected by her, despite how hard I labor...why do I continue to attempt to please her when it is you that I wish to be with?

ETHEL

Why did you come here?

HAWLEY

I had to. Whether I admit it to myself or not, tonight I have awoken from a terrible nightmare.

*HAWLEY stands and takes Ethel by the hand. She stands.*

HAWLEY

Ethel, I adore you. We have shared many hours in the company of one another yet all I ever wanted to do was this.

*HAWLEY kisses ETHEL.*

*ETHEL pulls away. She is shy and unsure.*

ETHEL

Could I be who you really want?

HAWLEY

Yes, my dear. Of that, I am certain.

*ETHEL moves to kiss HAWLEY.*

FADE TO BLACK.  
(CONTINUED)

Act 1-7

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM - BELLE, FLORIE and MARCIE are enjoying a glass of wine.*

*Laughter*

BELLE  
We really should arrange to meet more often. It has been several weeks since you last blessed this house with your company. I might almost venture that I missed you both!

MARCIE  
You know how it is, the Guild needs to keep up appearances.

FLORIE  
Our diary is positively brimming with engagements!

BELLE  
One can imagine.

*Pause*

FLORIE  
Tell me, where is that delightful young fellow that interrupted us the last time that we met here?

MARCIE  
Oh yes! Will he be joining us again?

BELLE  
*(Dismissive)*  
Simon? Oh, I sincerely doubt it. I'll wager that he is enjoying the evening somewhere tasteful and expensive with another of his co-stars. He has a taste for those that walk the stage...a taste that soon sours once one is no longer a draw.

FLORIE  
Oh, a shame for sure.

*Awkward silence. FLORIE and MARCIE exchange glances.*

BELLE  
Is there something that you wish to say?

(CONTINUED)

*FLORIE and MARCIE exchange awkward glances.*

BELLE

Oh for heaven's sake, out with it?

MARCIE

I don't really know how to—

FLORIE

This is about your husband.

BELLE

Hawley? Must we include him in our conversation?

FLORIE

I'm afraid we must. One of the ladies of—

BELLE

Who?

MARCIE

She wishes to remain anonymous.

BELLE

Whatever for?

*Pause*

My patience wears thin, out with it at once!

FLORIE

Your husband has been seen dining with another.

MARCIE

On several occasions.

BELLE

Oh.

FLORIE

Whilst we are sure that you were unaware of his actions—

MARCIE

—and it upsets us a great deal that we are to be the ones bearing such bad tidings—

FLORIE

You understand that as Guild Treasurer there are certain standards which need to be met in order to protect our reputation.

(CONTINUED)

BELLE  
*(Distant)*  
...of course.

MARCIE  
It would be wise to resolve this issue in as polite and dignified a manner as possible.

FLORIE  
In the interests of all concerned of course.

BELLE  
*(Distant)*  
Of course.

MARCIE  
Please endeavor to keep us informed of any developments. It goes without saying that your position is as secure as ever...

FLORIE  
Oh of course it is...but the Guild needs to be seen in only the purest of light.

*BELLE rises from her seat.*

BELLE  
*(Assertive)*  
I understand. If you will forgive me, ladies, I need to clear my head in order to decide how best to tackle this most unfortunate of matters.

*Gestures towards the door.*

*BELLE*  
If you please.

*MARCIE and FLORIE rise. They are visibly put out.*

MARCIE  
Of course.

FLORIE  
We shall be in touch soon. My deepest apologies.

MARCIE  
Yes – our deepest apologies.

BELLE  
Thank you, I am touched. Now if you will excuse me.

*BELLE motions MARCIE and FLORIE out of the door.*

(CONTINUED)

*Exit MARCIE and FLORIE.*

*BELLE returns to her seat and pours herself a glass of wine.*

BELLE

Who would have thought that the miserable weasel could catch the eye of another?

*BELLE takes a gulp of wine.*

BELLE

I'll wager she is the desperate sort...large and plain. Either way this will not do.

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-8

*AT RISE: OUTER OFFICE – ETHEL is typing whilst sitting at a small table.*

*Enter BELLE.*

*ETHEL looks up from her work.*

ETHEL

Good afternoon, how may I help you?

*BELLE looks at ETHEL for a moment. ETHEL begins to wilt and looks away.*

BELLE

I'm here to see Hawley.

ETHEL

Dr. Crippen is currently out of the office. May I take a message?

BELLE

*(Assertive)* Do you know where he is?

ETHEL

He is taking note of an order, he should be back later this afternoon. I will ensure any message left is passed to him upon his return.

*BELLE turns towards the exit.*

BELLE

No, I shall speak to him when he returns home.

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL

*(Taken aback)*

Oh. Yes. I shall tell him that his wife called in.

*BELLE pauses.*

BELLE

Are you not going to ask for my name? It is extremely rude to pass on a message without a name attached.

ETHEL

Oh yes...of course. Do you prefer Belle or Cora?

*BELLE turns towards ETHEL.*

BELLE

You are the one, aren't you?

ETHEL

*(Scared)*

I-I don't know what you mean!

BELLE

You are the little whore that my Hawley has been seen out with! Who else could it be? He never was much of a socialite...and you are oh so his fancy!

ETHEL

*(Flustered)*

Mrs. Crippen I—

BELLE

Don't refer to me using that name, I'm Belle Elmore and you are having relations with my husband, are you not?

ETHEL

Mrs. Elmore I—

BELLE *(Angry)*

Are you not?

*Pause*

*ETHEL stands.*

ETHEL

*(Assertive)*

Hawley is a lovely man and he deserves to be treated in a proper manner. He works hard, his ideas could change the world yet you insist on breaking his spirit and holding him back!

(CONTINUED)

BELLE  
I will not take counsel regarding my marriage from the likes of you and I'll tell you to—

ETHEL (*Interrupting*)  
I am the woman that Hawley should be with! I would care for him, support him, encourage him to be all that he could be! You do not deserve him! He has stood by you, sacrificed so much for you, yet you are blinded by selfish desire! You have lost his heart—

BELLE  
(*Fuming*)  
Don't you ever tell me what my husband needs from me. Do you hear?

*BELLE pushes ETHEL to the ground.*

*ETHEL is sat on the ground. She is shaken and afraid.*

ETHEL  
I-I'm sorry but Hawley and I—

BELLE  
I don't want to hear of it. If you ever go near my husband again, I shall have you beaten to within an inch of your life. Do you hear?

ETHEL (*Sobbing*)  
Yes... Yes, I understand.

*BELLE takes a long look at ETHEL, who is sat upon the floor.*

BELLE  
Pathetic. You cannot hope to hold a candle to me.

*Exit BELLE.*

*ETHEL continues to cry and begins to suffer stomach pains. She climbs to her feet in an obvious amount of pain. With her back to the audience, she checks her abdomen. Her hand comes back bloody. ETHEL collapses to the floor and begins to wail.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-9

*AT RISE: SAME; LATER – HAWLEY enters the office. ETHEL is sitting on the floor. She has a distant look in her eyes and her abdomen is covered in blood.*

HAWLEY

I'm sorry that I am later than expected. Did you close the surgery early— My god! What has happened here? Are you alright?

*HAWLEY rushes to Ethel's side.*

HAWLEY

Whose blood is this?

*ETHEL does not respond.*

HAWLEY

Ethel are you hurt? Talk to me!

ETHEL

*(Distant)*  
It did hurt at first, but now I just feel...numb.

HAWLEY

*(Panicked)*  
Whatever has happened here?

ETHEL

*(Breaking down)*  
I'm sorry my dear, I'm so sorry!

HAWLEY

Are you hurt? Come, we must get you to a physician at once!

ETHEL

It's our baby...it's gone. I'm so sorry...I know how much you wished to be a father...I couldn't even give you that. Our baby...my baby.

HAWLEY *(Shocked)*

Our baby?

ETHEL

*(Anguished)*  
I was going to tell...I was! When I knew for sure...I mean a mother knows, but I needed to be sure for you... but with the stress you were under...it could keep, I could manage.

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

My God! You were pregnant? I...I was to be a father?

ETHEL

Cora came to see you...she lost her temper... she threw me to the ground...

*(Breaks down)*

I'm sorry Hawley, I could no longer hold my tongue! She is a vile creature! She has taken everything from me...from us!

HAWLEY

*(Shocked)*

She did this to you?

*ETHEL nods.*

ETHEL

Yes...but I said such awful things to her...this is my fault. I'm so sorry Hawley. I wanted to give you a child...I'm so sorry.

HAWLEY

*(Tearful)*

Come, you need medical attention. Do not dwell upon the events of the day. Perhaps all can be saved.

*HAWLEY helps ETHEL to her feet.*

ETHEL

Our baby is gone Hawley...she took it from us. I'm so sorry, I should have held my tongue.

*HAWLEY helps ETHEL towards the door*

HAWLEY

Nonsense. Do not apologize. Let us see you well, you are my concern now. Do not worry about anything else.

*Exit HAWLEY and ETHEL.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-10

*AT RISE: NIGHT; OFFICE – HAWLEY is drinking at his desk.*

HAWLEY

*(Upset)*

I was to be a father. A blessing I had sought for so long.

(CONTINUED)

*HAWLEY takes a gulp from his glass.*

HAWLEY (*Angry*)

Yet that woman denied me. Again and again...she delights in my torment! I shall never be truly happy until I am rid of her. She has to go. I can no longer stand to live this way. She has to go.

*HAWLEY takes a small envelope from his pocket and places it upon his desk.*

HAWLEY

This shall be the answer to my woes.

*He opens the envelope and studies the contents for a moment.*

My hand is forced, anger holds me within its toxic grasp. No longer can I live this way. My child...my child is dead.

*HAWLEY finishes his drink, picks up the envelope and returns it to his pocket. He takes a pistol from his desk stands, removes his coat from the coat stand and exits the office.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-11

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM; MORNING – HAWLEY is standing by the dining room window. His attention is fixed on the outside.*

*Enter BELLE.*

BELLE

Oh...Good morning.

*HAWLEY remains still.*

I did not hear you return.

HAWLEY

Time ran away with me. I wished not to disturb you.

BELLE

Strangely courteous of you, though I must say it is rare of you to work so late.

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

I wished not to return to a similar scene as witnessed before.

BELLE

I was trying to be courteous, there is no need for such uncouth a tongue as yours at this early hour.

HAWLEY

Of course. How rude of me.

BELLE

Besides, Simon is gone. He shall likely not return. No doubt he is with another much younger and prettier than I.

HAWLEY

Forgive me if I feel little in the way of compassion.

*Pause.*

HAWLEY

You visited my surgery yesterday, correct?

BELLE

I did, you were not there.

HAWLEY

No, I was not. You spoke to my secretary.

BELLE

*(Laughing)*  
Pah! Your secretary – is that what she is?

HAWLEY

You struck her.

BELLE

I did no such thing! The woman is a liar, as are you!

HAWLEY

Meaning?

BELLE

She is no more your secretary than I am your darling wife.

HAWLEY

Yet you are my wife, at least according to the court.

BELLE

You shall do well to remember that. I will not stand for you gallivanting around the city with that whore of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BELLE (*Cont'd*)

a woman. Should you continue to see her, I shall make it public knowledge of your extra-marital affair! Your reputation as a respected Homeopathic Physician shall be ruined and I shall take all that remains of your estate.

HAWLEY

You have already taken enough.

BELLE

Oh, I haven't even started yet!

*Pause*

BELLE

Hadn't you to work?

HAWLEY

Yes.

BELLE

Be sure to end matters with that girl. I want her out of a job by midday. Do you hear?

*HAWLEY does not respond.*

*Exit BELLE.*

*After a moments further contemplation HAWLEY turns towards the dining table. He takes the pistol from his pocket before returning it and removes the small envelope. He empties the contents into a bottle of red wine which is resting upon the dining table.*

*Exit HAWLEY.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 1-12

*AT RISE: BATHROOM; NIGHT – Stage lights rise and fall in synchronicity to a loud, audible heartbeat which quickens as the scene continues.*

*HAWLEY is seen standing next to a bathtub filled with blood. He is disheveled and his clothes are blood stained. He is sobbing and upset. There is a reluctance and a tiredness in his movement. There is a metal bucket by the bath and a solitary sink in the corner of the room. HAWLEY is holding a saw and is looking into the bath tub.*

(CONTINUED)

*In between lights up/out HAWLEY is heard cutting with his saw. He is seen carrying an arm and placing it into the sink, first one, then another.*

*Two legs are then stacked neatly by the bath tub.*

*The fifth and final cut is accompanied by the clanging of the metal bucket as something unseen is dropped into it.*

*HAWLEY is seen holding the bucket at eye level before him. A wisp of dark hair is visible above the lip of the bucket.*

LIGHTS OUT. CURTAIN FALLS. END OF ACT ONE.

ACT 2

Act 2-1

*AT RISE: OFFICE; MORNING –*

*Enter HAWLEY carrying a bag. He is disheveled and edgy. He hangs his coat upon the coat hook, takes a seat and places the bag upon his desk. He begins to rummage through the contents of the bag.*

*Enter ETHEL.*

*HAWLEY closes the bag.*

ETHEL

Good morning.

*HAWLEY mumbles a greeting.*

ETHEL

Darling, you look terrible! Is anything the matter?

HAWLEY

*(Agitated)*

Close the door. Please. Are you well?

*ETHEL closes the door.*

ETHEL

I am. I missed you. Though I rested, it was you that I needed more. I'm sorry.

*Pause*

HAWLEY

She left me.

*Pause*

ETHEL

She did? I didn't ever think that she would but-

HAWLEY

She went last night. It's for the best. You and I know that it is.

ETHEL

Of course. Are you alright?

*HAWLEY stands and faces the office window.*

HAWLEY

I shall be...in time. It is what I wanted after all...it just came as somewhat of a shock.

ETHEL

Yes. I suppose it must.

*HAWLEY turns his attention to ETHEL.*

HAWLEY

How are you feeling? I know that I have been of little help of late. The loss hit me hard and I should have been there for you...it's just with Cora and everything I –

ETHEL

I am well, at least I try to be. It is a difficult time for me – for us, and the loss will always remain...but at least now we can face it together?

*Pause*

Forgive me.

*HAWLEY approaches ETHEL and places his hands upon her shoulders.*

HAWLEY

My sweet girl, of course we can. Belle is no longer a part of my life, she shall not return, of that I am certain. You and I, we shall overcome all of our hardships together.

ETHEL

And those plans that we made? Your elixir? Your clinics?

HAWLEY

We are free to pursue them. All of them.

*They embrace.*

HAWLEY

As for the moment, I have a favor to ask of you.

ETHEL

Anything.

*HAWLEY returns to his desk and opens the bag.*

HAWLEY

Come...see what I have for you.

*ETHEL approaches the desk. HAWLEY takes out a handful of jewelry.*

HAWLEY

These are for you. A gift.

*ETHEL takes the jewelry.*

ETHEL

These were Cora's...I cannot possibly –

HAWLEY

Paid for by me. She no longer wants them. I shall only pawn them should you decline to accept them...however these pieces would look positively exquisite upon you.

*ETHEL smiles first at the jewelry and then at HAWLEY.*

ETHEL

If you insist.

*HAWLEY smiles and nods.*

HAWLEY

It would make me very happy if you were to accept them.

ETHEL

Thank you.

*ETHEL places the jewelry into her pocket.*

*HAWLEY returns his attention to the bag.*

HAWLEY

As for the rest of the pieces, would you please sell them? I am not so interested in price, I just wish to be rid of them.

ETHEL

Of course. I know of a few places.

*ETHEL picks up the bag and turns to leave.*

HAWLEY

One more thing.

*HAWLEY removes a letter from the desk drawer.*

HAWLEY

Deliver this to the Ladies Guild. They shall be wary of Cora's absence. This letter explains that she has left the country in order to aid a sick relative.

ETHEL

Oh. But—

HAWLEY

I know that is not the truth of the matter, but I cannot bear to have my personal affairs discussed among their number.

ETHEL

I understand. I shall deliver this right away.

HAWLEY

Thank you.

*ETHEL smiles.*

ETHEL

There is no need to thank me.

*Exit ETHEL.*

*HAWLEY takes a moment to compose himself before beginning his work.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-2

*AT RISE: STREET; NIGHT – HAWLEY and ETHEL are walking arm in arm.*

ETHEL

I have thoroughly enjoyed this evening. I do not believe I have ever dined in such splendor! You really are good to me.

HAWLEY

Now that we are free to enjoy the company of one another I want you to experience the best that the city has to offer.

ETHEL

Do you think it wise that we attended the Guild ball?

HAWLEY

I think our presence was expected.

ETHEL

Perhaps yours but not so much mine.

HAWLEY

Cora is gone. It is time that the guild realized that. Perhaps tonight we put a stop to a large amount of tongue wagging.

*They pause.*

ETHEL

It is so good to see you smile.

HAWLEY

It feels good to do so. You must take credit for my current happiness.

*ETHEL and HAWLEY kiss. They resume their slow walk.*

*HAWLEY observes something unseen and begins to feel uneasy.*

HAWLEY

Come, let us cross...quickly!

ETHEL

*(Surprised)*  
Why? Whatever is the matter?

HAWLEY

*(Agitated)*  
Come now, do as I say!

*Enter FLORIE and MARCIE.*

MARCIE

Why, good evening Dr. Crippen.

FLORIE

I see you have wasted little time in acquiring yourself a partner?

*HAWLEY and ETHEL pause.*

HAWLEY

Good evening ladies. I trust that all is well?

MARCIE

We have had no word from Belle despite repeated attempts to contact her.

FLORIE

We wondered if she had established contact with you?

HAWLEY

Why on earth would she? She left me with not a moment's notice. As far as I am concerned she is gone for good. I would advise you to recruit for her post, she shall not return – not if I know Cora.

*MARCIE notices the brooch that ethel is wearing. She approaches her and reaches out to touch it.*

MARCIE

Is that not Belle's brooch?

*HAWLEY pulls ETHEL from the reach of MARCIE and ETHEL turns away from her.*

ETHEL

The brooch is mine. It was a gift.

FLORIE

I would have imagined Belle would have taken her jewelry with her –

MARCIE

A lady never travels without her jewelry!

HAWLEY

Belle left in a hurry. She took all the pieces of value and left those she favored least. Anything left behind falls into my ownership.

MARCIE

*(To FLORIE)*

She often wore that piece. It was one of her favorites.

FLORIE

Indeed. It became so often a talking point due to its extravagant design.

HAWLEY

*(Flustered)*

What can I say? A woman changes her mind as often as the wind changes direction. Now...if you will excuse us. The hour grows late.

MARCIE

She never did speak of an ailing relative –

FLORIE

And she trusted us with her most personal affairs.

MARCIE  
The truth Hawley – out with it.

HAWLEY  
*(Flustered)*  
This is hardly the time –

FLORIE  
We shall not rest until we know that she is well.

HAWLEY  
Then I regret to inform you of her recent passing.

*ETHEL, MARCIE and FLORIE are shocked*

MARCIE  
What?

FLORIE  
You mean to say that Belle is deceased?

ETHEL  
Hawley I –

HAWLEY  
Alas, she passed away last month.

MARCIE  
  
This is – this is terrible!

HAWLEY  
Indeed, now if you shall excuse us.

FLORIE  
What of her body?

HAWLEY  
She was cremated. It was her final wish.

FLORIE  
I see. How awful.

HAWLEY  
Quite. Now we must be off, I dislike speaking of such tragedy in such a hasty manner.

*MARCIE and FLORIE regard the couple.*

MARCIE  
Of course. Good evening.

ETHEL

*(Timid)*

Good evening.

*Exit ETHEL and HAWLEY.*

FLORIE

Well...what do you make of that?

MARCIE

Dead? It cannot be!

FLORIE

More so, as a Catholic she would be fiercely against cremation.

MARCIE

And that was Belle's brooch of that I am certain.

FLORIE

Why admit now that she had passed, why not at the dinner or before now...why only when pushed?

MARCIE

I do not know but this whole affair sits uneasy with me. I suggest that we take our fears to the constabulary.

FLORIE

For peace of mind – I agree. Come, the night grows cold and there is still wine to be drunk. Let us toast the passing of a great actress.

MARCIE

The potential passing.

FLORIE

Yes, of course...let us not be so hasty to accept his story.

*MARCIE grabs her friend by the arm.*

MARCIE

Then lead on dear friend! A drink shall calm my nerves!

*Exit FLORIE and MARCIE.*

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT 2-3

*AT RISE: INSPECTOR DEW'S OFFICE – Enter INSPECTOR DEW, (Early thirties) MARCIE and FLORIE.*

INSPECTOR DEW

If you would care to take a seat?

*FLORIE and MARCIE take their seat. INSPECTOR DEW takes his seat behind his desk.*

FLORIE

Thank you for agreeing to see us Officer.

*INSPECTOR DEW takes a notepad from his desk and begins to write.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Inspector actually – and not at all. So, let me get to it – my colleague informs me that you have concerns regarding a friend of yours?

MARCIE

She is more of an associate really. Belle Elmore – sorry, Cora Crippen.

INSPECTOR DEW

*(Impatient)*  
Well – which is it?

FLORIE

Belle is her stage name, she hated any other.

INSPECTOR DEW

Cora Crippen. Age?

MARCIE

Well...I wouldn't like to say...

INSPECTOR DEW

I shall need this information in order to compile an accurate profile. Age?

*MARCIE and FLORIE look at one another.*

MARCIE

Possible late forties, early fifties?

*FLORIE nods.*

*INSPECTOR DEW sighs and makes a note.*

INSPECTOR DEW

And what are your concerns?

FLORIE

Her husband told us that she had left the country in order to aid a sick relative, yet she left in an awful hurry—

MARCIE

She never even said her farewells or took any of her jewelry!

FLORIE

That's right! We saw his latest lady friend wearing one of her brooches at the Guild ball!

*INSPECTOR DEW stops taking notes.*

INSPECTOR DEW

In grave times people often up and leave without the thought of others.

FLORIE

There's more...we received her resignation from her husband —

MARCIE

It was not penned in her handwriting.

INSPECTOR DEW

I see. What position did she hold within your organization?

MARCIE

She was the head of the fundraising committee for the Ladies Music Hall Guild.

FLORIE

A position that she took most seriously.

MARCIE

She was a remarkable aid to our cause — an actress such as she is a—

INSPECTOR DEW

An actress you say? Could she have taken leave in order to find work?

*MARCIE and FLORIE look at one another.*

FLORIE

I suppose so — she was adamant that she needed to return to the stage.

MARCIE

It seemed that theatres in London were no longer in need of her services but—

*INSPECTOR DEW places his pen onto the desk.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Ladies, I understand your concern but you must agree that it is entirely plausible that your acquaintance has left London for either of those reasons. I see no cause to investigate further.

MARCIE

Please inspector, there is still more to tell. Her husband was having an affair.

FLORIE

We saw him entertaining a young lady on several occasions.

MARCIE

And when last we asked after Belle he informed us of her death!

*INSPECTOR DEW resumes his note taking.*

INSPECTOR DEW

You suspect foul play?

MARCIE

To be honest we are not sure what to think! He changed his story in a matter of seconds. Hearing him say that she had passed away...it didn't sound convincing.

FLORIE

His lover was there when he made this admission. She seemed as shocked as Marcie and I!

INSPECTOR DEW

Hmmmmmm. Was Mrs. Crippen aware of this affair?

FLORIE

Yes – we informed her.

INSPECTOR DEW

I see. And how did she take this news?

*FLORIE and MARCIE regard one another again.*

MARCIE

I would say...not well.

INSPECTOR DEW  
Her husband's name, please.

FLORIE  
Hawley Crippen. He is a Doctor of some sort.

INSPECTOR DEW  
And his address?

MARCIE  
39 Hilldrop Crescent, Holloway.

INSPECTOR DEW  
Thank you. That should be enough for now.

*INSPECTOR DEW places his pen down and stands. MARCIE and FLORIE stand.*

FLORIE  
Shall you speak to Hawley?

INSPECTOR DEW  
Though I suspect that there is nothing untoward regarding the disappearance of Mrs. Crippen, I shall at least pay him a short visit. The fact that he has changed his story seemingly on a whim suggests that there may be more to this tale.

MARCIE  
Thank you. That is all we ask. Something feels amiss in all of this. For instance, Belle would not stand for cremation. She was a devout Catholic.

FLORIE  
That would not be her wish at all.

*INSPECTOR DEW shows MARCIE and FLORIE to the door.*

INSPECTOR DEW  
I am sure that we shall resolve the matter quickly. Leave your details with my colleague and I shall be in touch.

FLORIE  
Thank you, inspector.

*Exit FLORIE and MARCIE.*

*INSPECTOR DEW returns to his desk and examines his notes.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-4

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM – Enter ETHEL and INSPECTOR DEW.  
HAWLEY is sat at the dining table reading over a collection of notes.*

ETHEL

*(Nervous)*

Inspector Dew to see you.

*HAWLEY stands. INSPECTOR DEW approaches to shake hands.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Dr. Crippen?

HAWLEY

Indeed. Ethel, that will be all. Thank you.

*Exit ETHEL. INSPECTOR DEW and HAWLEY shake hands.*

HAWLEY

Pleasure. Please sit.

*INSPECTOR DEW takes a seat.*

HAWLEY

How may I be of assistance?

*INSPECTOR DEW takes out his notebook.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Forgive my line of questioning, the matter is somewhat delicate yet I have received a visit from friends of your wife...

*INSPECTOR DEW checks his notebook.*

HAWLEY

Cora.

INSPECTOR DEW

Yes! That's it. They were concerned about her sudden disappearance and came to me with all sorts of theories.

HAWLEY

They told you that I said she was dead. Correct?

INSPECTOR DEW

In a manner of speaking yes. Though they insisted that at first you had told them that Cora had returned home to tend to a sick relative. Home being in this instance?

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

The United States. New York. It is true. I told them both of those things.

*Pause*

INSPECTOR DEW

So which is correct? Did your wife pass away?

HAWLEY

No. She is alive...at least as far as I am aware.

INSPECTOR DEW

I see. Did she return home?

HAWLEY

Yes.

INSPECTOR DEW

To tend to a sick relative? Though I must advise that the ladies in question are adamant that they would have heard of such a relative. They were quite open in their business by all accounts.

*Pause*

HAWLEY

No. Though she did likely flee there...with him.

INSPECTOR DEW

I see. Would you care to explain what really happened?

HAWLEY

I concocted the stories about her tending to a sick relative and later dying in order to save face. My wife left me for another. He lodged here...I caught them together.

INSPECTOR DEW

She was having an affair?

HAWLEY

Yes.

INSPECTOR DEW

As were you?

HAWLEY

Yes—no, not at that time. I had never acted upon my feelings. Cora was a difficult woman to love, but we had made a promise before God. However, she realized her future lay elsewhere and the pair of them left last month.

(CONTINUED)

INSPECTOR DEW

Why did you not just tell the truth?

HAWLEY

I was ashamed. I could not admit that she had chosen another after all that I had done for her. My practice is all that I have left – the fear of my patients hearing of my failed marriage...it was too much to comprehend. I knew that Cora would not return so in order to safeguard my reputation I invented those stories. I apologize, it was foolish of me.

INSPECTOR DEW

And the lady who let me in? Is she your lover?

HAWLEY

Her name is Ethel. It is true that she and I are in love yet our relationship blossomed after Cora had left me. Without her I sincerely doubt I would have continued to live...as was my grief.

*INSPECTOR DEW returns his notebook to his pocket.*

INSPECTOR DEW

I understand. My apologies for wasting your time.

HAWLEY

Not at all. It is your duty and nothing more.

*HAWLEY and INSPECTOR DEW stand.*

HAWLEY

I shall show you out.

*HAWLEY and INSPECTOR DEW move towards the door.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Thank you. Oh! One last thing. Why did your wife elect to leave her jewelry behind?

HAWLEY

I'm sorry?

INSPECTOR DEW

One of the ladies that came to see me insisted that...Ethel was it?

HAWLEY

Yes.

INSPECTOR DEW

That Ethel was wearing one of your wife's brooches.

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

*(Abrupt)*

Then they are mistaken.

INSPECTOR DEW

They seemed quite adamant.

HAWLEY

My wife took everything of worth – hence my determination to keep my reputation intact and my practice profitable.

INSPECTOR DEW

I understand. Could it be possible that she forgot a piece?

HAWLEY

No. Those that came to see you are mistaken. Now, if we are done here?

*Pause*

*INSPECTOR DEW regards HAWLEY for a moment.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Yes, that concludes my business for now. I shall return if I have any further questions. Good day, Dr.

HAWLEY

And to you.

*Exit INSPECTOR DEW.*

HAWLEY

*(Flustered)*

Ethel! Come here this instance!

*Enter ETHEL. She is pale and flustered.*

ETHEL

Is everything alright?

*HAWLEY looks through the window before turning to answer.*

HAWLEY

*(Panicked)*

Pack your things, we need to go!

ETHEL

Go? Go where?

(CONTINUED)

HAWLEY

I—I don't know...Canada...Quebec, how does Quebec sound?

ETHEL

It sounds far away – whatever has brought about this sudden change?

HAWLEY

There shall be time for answers later, please trust me.

ETHEL

What of your practice? This makes no sense at all?

HAWLEY

We shall only be away for a while – a year perhaps...just until the attention has passed. Besides – I can start a Practice there. They have sickness in Canada too.

ETHEL

I don't understand? What about our plans?

*HAWLEY crossed the room and places his hands upon Ethel's shoulders.*

HAWLEY

My dear, people, are talking...and talking leads to scandal. I have seen it happen many times, tongues can be vicious. They can break careers and shatter relationships such as ours. It is better that we are far removed from their sight.

ETHEL

But I...are you sure?

HAWLEY

I am sure. Were we to remain our lives would fall under constant scrutiny and you and I would find little time to enjoy one another's company. Though I curse her name to Hell and back, we must accept that her elopement shall forever haunt us unless we act upon it now.

ETHEL

L I would follow you to the ends of the earth, you know that, but I have family here. What shall I tell them?

HAWLEY

Tell them...tell them that you are to see the world whilst you are still young. Tell them that you are with the one that you love and you shall want for nothing.

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL  
Do you have the means to make this so?

HAWLEY  
The means and the desire.

*ETHEL smiles.*

HAWLEY  
So will you away with me to Canada?

ETHEL  
I shall.

*HAWLEY and ETHEL embrace.*

HAWLEY  
Quickly now, we must make haste. The sooner that we are able to leave the better!

*ETHEL nods.*

*Exit HAWLEY and ETHEL.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-5

*AT RISE: INSPECTOR'S DEW'S OFFICE –*

*INSPECTOR DEW is sitting at his desk.*

*Enter FLORIE and MARCIE.*

*INSPECTOR DEW rises to meet them.*

INSPECTOR DEW  
Good morning, thank you for attending at such short notice.

FLORIE  
Not at all. We trust that you have news?

*MARCIE and FLORIE sit.*

INSPECTOR DEW  
I do. I visited Doctor Crippen yesterday evening—

MARCIE  
What did he tell you? Is Belle really dead?

INSPECTOR DEW  
He says not and I believe him.

(CONTINUED)

FLORIE

What makes you so sure?

INSPECTOR DEW

He admitted that he had invented the story of her death to prevent loss of face.  
You see Cora was having an affair—

FLORIE

Nonsense!

MARCIE

We'd have known about it were it true!

INSPECTOR DEW

Ladies – if you will permit me to finish. He returned home early one evening only to stumble upon his wife with another – a lodger of theirs by all accounts.

*FLORIE and MARCIE look at one another.*

INSPECTOR DEW

The marriage deteriorated and Cora left for the United States with her lover. Hurt he turned to confide in another and as you have seen for yourselves, their relationship has blossomed. As a respected practitioner of homeopathic medicine, he wished to keep word of his failed marriage to himself. Alas, under interrogation by your good selves he felt forced to concoct a story – foolish as it were – in order to end the interest in Cora's disappearance.

*Pause*

MARCIE

Well...I never.

FLORIE

*(To MARCIE)*

It must have been with that young fellow who interrupted us that night. I was not aware of any other lodger.

*MARCIE nods.*

INSPECTOR DEW

I'm afraid that there is little in the way of evidence that should lead me to doubt his claims so—

MARCIE

This doesn't make sense.

(CONTINUED)

FLORIE

*(To INSPECTOR DEW)*

Before being informed of Belle's death – which we now know to be untrue, we had a contact of ours check the shipping records regarding any departures for the United States surrounding the date of Cora's leaving that Hawley had supplied to the guild in the resignation letter.

MARCIE

We had to be sure that he was telling the truth. There was no ship bound for that destination on the date proposed and of the ships that set sail near to that date...Mrs. Crippen was not listed as a passenger.

INSPECTOR DEW

I see. Why did you not mention this before now?

FLORIE

We decided to look into this ourselves after our meeting with you.

*INSPECTOR DEW takes out his notebook and begins to write.*

INSPECTOR DEW

It is possible that your contact overlooked something – however I shall check this myself. I still have no reason to believe that Mrs. Crippen did not leave her husband, however...in the interests of being thorough and for your peace of mind I shall attain confirmation of her journey.

*INSPECTOR DEW stands.*

Thank you for your information. I shall be in touch. Now, if you please?

*INSPECTOR DEW motions towards the door.*

*MARCIE and FLORIE stand.*

MARCIE

Of course. We are just happy to help.

FLORIE

We care dearly about Belle and wish to know that she is safe and well.

INSPECTOR DEW

Of course. She is blessed to have friends such as yourselves. I shall be in touch.

(CONTINUED)

*MARCIE and FLORIE exit the office.*

*INSPECTOR DEW returns to his desk and picks up the phone.*

INSPECTOR DEW  
...Operator...White Star lines, please.

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-6

*AT RISE: DINING ROOM – MAID and INSPECTOR DEW enter the dining room.*

MAID  
Please come in...I'm not sure I can help you, though.

INSPECTOR DEW  
I'm here to see Dr. Crippen, I tried his practice, but it was closed. Is he here?

MAID  
I'm afraid not. The Doctor and Miss Le Neve left this morning.

INSPECTOR DEW  
Left? For where?

MAID  
I'm not sure.

INSPECTOR DEW  
It is important that you try and think. Did you hear them discussing potential destinations?

MAID  
I did hear Canada mentioned...along with a place named Antwerp...I was tasked with preparing the house for an extended absence.

INSPECTOR DEW  
*(Assertive)*  
Touch nothing else. I shall be back shortly with a warrant and several officers. This house is a potential crime scene. Remain here but again I must add – do not touch or move anything.

*The MAID nods.*

*Exit INSPECTOR DEW.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-7

*AT RISE: LATER; SAME – INSPECTOR DEW is searching the room.*

*Lights on/off to symbolize the passing of time. Each time the lights come up INSPECTOR DEW is in another position. Sometimes alone, sometimes joined with another officer.*

*Final lights up – Evidence lies on the table. INSPECTOR DEW and OFFICER 1 examine it.*

OFFICER 1

This envelope was found beneath a loose floorboard in one of the back bedrooms.

*INSPECTOR DEW opens it carefully.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Seems to be some kind of powdered medicine. It's not labeled...better get it looked at.

*OFFICER 2 hurries into the dining room. He is pale and in a state of shock.*

OFFICER 2

Sir...

INSPECTOR DEW (*Without turning around*)

What is it, officer?

OFFICER 2

We've found a body buried beneath the cellar.

*INSPECTOR DEW turns to face officer 2*

INSPECTOR DEW

Cora Crippen?

*OFFICER 2 takes a moment to compose himself. He looks as though he is about to vomit.*

OFFICER 2

I can't say for sure...there's no head.

INSPECTOR DEW

My God!

*INSPECTOR DEW pushes past OFFICER 2 and heads to the cellar. OFFICER 1 follows after him.*

*Exit INSPECTOR DEW and OFFICER 1.*

(CONTINUED)

*OFFICER 2 sits on the floor and puts his head in his hands.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-8

*AT RISE: INSPECTOR'S OFFICE – INSPECTOR DEW is at his desk. He busies himself with a pile of papers.*

*VOICE OVER: The murder of Cora Crippen made headline news and was carried by newspapers across the continent. Not since the days of Jack the Ripper had London played host to such savage a crime – A manhunt was launched and the nation observed with interest.*

*Enter OFFICER 1.*

OFFICER 1

Telegram for you sir. Marked as urgent.

*INSPECTOR DEW takes the telegram and opens it.*

INSPECTOR DEW

For the attention of Chief Inspector Dew STOP, Captain Kendall of the SS Montrose sighted Dr. Crippen and Ethel le Neve traveling under false alias STOP Mr. and Master Robinson STOP Bound for Quebec STOP Request assistance on this matter END.

*INSPECTOR DEW places the telegram onto the desk.*

INSPECTOR DEW

The destinations check out, at least according to what the maid said. Has the ship sailed?

OFFICER 1

White Star inform us that it has.

INSPECTOR DEW

Damn it!

OFFICER 1

However, the SS Laurentic leaves Liverpool on the morrow. It shall arrive in Quebec before the Montrose.

*INSPECTOR DEW stands*

INSPECTOR DEW

Then get me on that ship!

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER 1

Right away sir!

*Exit OFFICER 1.*

FADE TO BLACK.

Act 2-9

*VOICE OVER: The transatlantic chase gripped the country. Newspapers carried daily updates on the progress of the two ships and the love triangle between Cora, Hawley and Ethel became familiar breakfast reading. The nation held its breath.*

*AT RISE: DECK OF THE SS MONTROSE – HAWLEY and ETHEL (Disguised as a male) are standing on the deck.*

HAWLEY

We made it, Dear. Canada welcomes us.

ETHEL

The crossing seemed to take forever.

HAWLEY

We can finally breathe again. This could be a new beginning for us!

ETHEL

You are contemplating never returning to London?

HAWLEY

I must entertain the idea! The air is crisper here – there is no choking smog to dull the senses. Yes...We could be happy here. Perhaps we could start a family?

ETHEL

I'd like that very much.

*HAWLEY kisses ETHEL.*

ETHEL

But what of your house, your practice?

HAWLEY

Ours is an age of wonder. With the arrival of the telegraph, one no longer needs to rely upon the letter. I can easily settle my affairs from here. I see a market for my products here, and time to devote to their perfection.

(CONTINUED)

ETHEL

So long as I am with you, it matters not where we call home.

*ETHEL and HAWLEY hold one another and embrace.*

*Enter INSPECTOR DEW disguised as a pilot.*

*HAWLEY sees INSPECTOR DEW and releases ETHEL. He tries to avoid making eye contact with the Inspector.*

INSPECTOR DEW

Good morning, Dr. Crippen. Do you know me? I'm Chief Inspector Dew from Scotland Yard.

*HAWLEY and ETHEL pause, neither daring to look at INSPECTOR DEW.*

*INSPECTOR DEW removes his hat.*

I came a long way to see you, the least you could do is acknowledge me.

HAWLEY

*(To ETHEL)*

Forgive me my dear.

*HAWLEY lets ETHEL go and slowly turns towards INSPECTOR DEW.*

INSPECTOR DEW

And you must be Miss Le Neve?

*Pause*

HAWLEY

*(To INSPECTOR DEW)*

Thank God it's over. The suspense has been too great. I couldn't stand it any longer!

*HAWLEY holds out his hands in order to be cuffed.*

ETHEL

*(Anguished, begins to cry)*

Hawley dear...whatever are you doing?

*INSPECTOR DEW handcuffs HAWLEY.*

(CONTINUED)

INSPECTOR DEW

Hawley Harvey Crippen, I am arresting you for the murder of Cora Crippen. You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so but what you say may be given in evidence.

HAWLEY

I understand.  
(*To ETHEL*)  
I'm sorry Ethel. Truly I am.

ETHEL

(*Breaking down*)  
No! No, surely not! This has to be a mistake?

HAWLEY

Know that I love you Ethel and that the man you fell in love with is not the villain that you are about to hear of.

INSPECTOR DEW

Ethel Le Neve, I am arresting you on suspicion of accessory to murder and of being a fugitive from justice. You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so but what you say may be given in evidence. Alas, only one pair of handcuffs is issued per officer so—

ETHEL

(*Ignoring INSPECTOR DEW*)  
She left you Hawley...you insisted that she left you!

HAWLEY

Please, Ethel, let us comply with the inspector's wishes.

INSPECTOR DEW

You will both accompany me back to England immediately. We have a ship waiting. I must warn you that your exploits have become quite well known in your absence.

HAWLEY

I see.

ETHEL

(*Upset*)  
What exploits? Hawley, what have you done?

HAWLEY

(*To ETHEL*)  
It is better for us both if I say little.

*INSPECTOR DEW motions for them to disembark.*

(CONTINUED)

INSPECTOR DEW

This way...we leave at once.

*ETHEL is crying yet obeys the inspector's command. HAWLEY and INSPECTOR DEW follow her off stage.*

*Exit HAWLEY, ETHEL and INSPECTOR DEW.*

FADE TO BLACK. CURTAINS CLOSE. END OF ACT TWO.

ACT 3Act 3-1

*AT RISE: COURTROOM – HAWLEY stands in the dock on the left side of the stage, ETHEL on the right. The Spotlights illuminate each character in succession when addressed by the JUDGE or PROSECUTION. The JUDGE/PROSECUTION appears in VOICE ONLY. Both HAWLEY and ETHEL address the audience for the duration of this scene.*

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

JUDGE

*(VOICE ONLY)*

Hawley Harvey Crippen, you are charged with the murder of Cora Crippen and of being a fugitive from justice. How do you plead?

HAWLEY

*(Reluctant)*

Not guilty.

*Illuminate ETHEL.*

JUDGE

Ethel Le Neve, you are charged with being an accessory to murder and of being a fugitive from justice. How do you plead?

ETHEL

*(Sobbing)*

Not guilty your honor.

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

PROSECUTION

*(VOICE ONLY)*

Human remains were unearthed from beneath your cellar. Though the body had been dismembered in order to prevent identification, an identifying mark confirmed that the body was indeed that of Cora Crippen.

HAWLEY

Cora is alive and well.

PROSECUTION

Then how do you explain the body beneath your cellar?

HAWLEY

We had not long moved into the property – barely a year or so ago. The body was left by a previous tenant.

PROSECUTION

Yet I have documents that claim to the contrary – you have in fact lived at 39 Hilldrop crescent for a number of years...five in fact.

HAWLEY

I know not how the body ended up there, nor as to whom it once belonged.

*Illuminate ETHEL.*

PROSECUTION

What is your relationship with Dr. Crippen?

ETHEL

I suppose you might call us lovers.

PROSECUTION

And when did your relationship begin?

ETHEL

We became friends when I began to work for Hawley, that would be in 1903.

PROSECUTION

Friends or lovers?

ETHEL

Just friends. Yes, I felt for him a great deal and I suspected that he might also, yet his religion and his marriage vows, they prevented him from acting upon any desire he might have harbored towards me. He is a good man.

PROSECUTION

Yes—quite. But you did admit to being lovers, correct?

ETHEL

Yes, but not until recently. Hawley discovered that his wife was having an affair. Our relationship blossomed not long afterward.

PROSECUTION

Whilst Cora Crippen was still living with Hawley Crippen.

ETHEL

Yes.

*Illuminate HAWLEY*

PROSECUTION

Would you say that you had a tempestuous relationship with your wife?

HAWLEY

Cora was a difficult woman to live with. She was often taken to wild flights of fancy, flights which I was expected to finance. Yet I loved her all the same.

PROSECUTION

It is said that she courted numerous lovers. Were you aware of this fact?

HAWLEY

No.

PROSECUTION

So you were unaware of her affair with a lodger by the name of Simon Harper?

HAWLEY

*(Flustered)*

I was unaware yes.

PROSECUTION

Yet you told Chief Inspector Walter Dew that Cora had in fact left you for one of your lodgers? Correct?

HAWLEY

No – well yes but I panicked. I made that up.

PROSECUTION

You told the Music Hall Ladies Guild that Cora had left to attend to the needs of a sick relative? Correct?

HAWLEY

Yes.

PROSECUTION

You also told said members of the Ladies Guild that Cora had fallen ill and passed away...and her body cremated, correct?

HAWLEY

Yes.

PROSECUTION

Neither of these stories are true. Records indicate that Cora Crippen did not travel to the United States during any of the period of her reported missing. Nor was anyone by that name cremated.

HAWLEY

She likely traveled under another alias perhaps her real name – Kunigunde Mackamotzki.

PROSECUTION

Lies upon lies Dr. Crippen. What a wicked web you weave!

*Illuminate ETHEL.*

PROSECUTION

When Hawley informed you of his wife's departure, how did you feel?

ETHEL

Relieved. It meant that we could finally be together.

PROSECUTION

Did her leaving not strike you as somewhat sudden?

ETHEL

A little, but I knew that tensions had been building for a while. She was prone to unpredictable outbursts...she...

PROSECUTION

Go on.

ETHEL

Once she knew about Hawley's affair she came to the office. I don't know how but she realized that it was I Hawley was involved with. She got angry...she pushed me to the ground...I was pregnant and I...

*ETHEL begins to cry.*

PROSECUTION

I know this is difficult, but please go on.

ETHEL

I was pregnant and I lost the baby that night.

PROSECUTION

As a result of Cora's assault.

ETHEL

Yes.

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

PROSECUTION

Your young lover Ethel le Neve, she was pregnant wasn't she?

HAWLEY  
Yes.

PROSECUTION  
I say was because there was an altercation between Cora and Ethel which resulted in the loss of her child.

HAWLEY  
Yes. Cora pushed her to the ground.

PROSECUTION  
This made you angry?

HAWLEY  
*(Angry)*  
Of course, it did! I had only ever wanted to be a father! Belle had no time for children. She saw them as a drain...a distraction...a hindrance to her career.

PROSECUTION  
Angry enough to kill?

HAWLEY  
No! Nor could I do the unspeakable things that I am accused of! I am a practitioner of homeopathic medicine...only a monster could have committed the atrocities that you bring before me!

PROSECUTION  
A monster indeed. Let it be known to the court that a sizable amount of hydro-bromide of hyoscine was found concealed beneath the floor of 39 Hilldrop Crescent. For those of you unfamiliar with medicine – hydro-bromide of hyoscine is used to slow a rapid heart rate. A high dose can result in death.

HAWLEY  
I have no idea how that substance came to be in my house.

*Illuminate* *ETHEL*

PROSECUTION  
How did Hawley take the loss of your child?

ETHEL  
He was upset. He was angry – angry that she had taken the chance of fatherhood from him.

PROSECUTION  
And it was shortly after this that Mrs. Crippen disappeared?

ETHEL

Yes.

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

PROSECUTION

We have a multitude of stories regarding Cora's disappearance, none of which have an ounce of evidence to support them. We have a mutilated corpse buried beneath your cellar floor – no more than a few months old. We have a sample of a highly toxic chemical which was hidden within your property—

HAWLEY

Which I told you I know nothing about.

PROSECUTION

I'll wager we even have a motive! Not only was your wife conducting numerous affairs beneath your nose, all of which you were aware of—

HAWLEY

That was not the case!

PROSECUTION

You were also angry at her for the loss of your child— brought about by her actions. I put it to the jury that you drugged her, dismembered her corpse in order to prevent identification and buried her remains beneath your cellar floor. Ironic that the healer has become the murderer.

HAWLEY

I did no such thing!

PROSECUTION

Tell the court, where is her head? Where are her limbs?

HAWLEY

I know not! She left me. She went back home to the United States using another name!

PROSECUTION

And why would she use a false identity?

HAWLEY

I don't know...so that I couldn't trace her perhaps?

PROSECUTION

But if she were to the United States and you did wish to contact her... you would know where to look, correct?

*HAWLEY does not answer.*

PROSECUTION

What did you do to her Dr. Crippen?

HAWLEY

I told you she left.

PROSECUTION

With another?

HAWLEY

No. She was not having an affair. We merely fell out of love.

PROSECUTION

Why will you not admit that you knew she was having an affair?

HAWLEY

Cora was many things, but I shall not have her name tarnished in this court, not while she still lives and breathes.

PROSECUTION

Quite. Why did you elect to leave the country after speaking with Inspector Dew?

HAWLEY

I suggested that it was time for a break. The stresses that we had both endured had taken a large toll upon us.

PROSECUTION

An extended break by all accounts. Your maid was instructed to prepare the house for a long absence.

HAWLEY

She was mistaken.

PROSECUTION

You can understand how it looks to the rest of us – an innocent man leaving for another continent after the sudden disappearance of his wife.

HAWLEY

Yes.

*Illuminate ETHEL.*

PROSECUTION

Did you suspect foul play?

ETHEL

No, not at all! Nor can I believe it now!

PROSECUTION

Though the evidence remains.

ETHEL

Yes.

PROSECUTION

Did he ever mention anything that may have led you to believe that Cora was, in fact, dead?

ETHEL

No, only that he was convinced she would never return to cause us grief.

PROSECUTION

Miss Le Neve, let me put it to you thus – did you help in the murder of Cora Crippen?

ETHEL

No!

PROSECUTION

Did you help in the concealment of Cora Crippen's body?

ETHEL

*(Sobbing)*

No...no. I just did what Hawley wanted. He wanted to get away from the stares and the accusations...I believed that Canada could offer us a fresh start!

PROSECUTION

No further questions.

JUDGE

Thank you, Miss Le Neve. I turn to the members of the jury, it is up to you to decide whether Miss Le Neve played an active part in the murder and concealment of Cora Crippen, or whether she was merely following the will of a man whom she loved and would do anything to be with.

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

PROSECUTION

You believe that Cora is alive and well?

HAWLEY

Yes.

PROSECUTION

And you insist that you do not know the identity of the body found beneath your cellar, nor how it ended up there?

HAWLEY

I maintain that I have no idea.

PROSECUTION

No further questions.

JUDGE

Members of the jury may I remind you of the facts...The body in the cellar, fresh and dismembered to prevent identification. The poison hidden beneath the floor boards and the loss of Ethel Le Neve's baby. Let us not forget the Atlantic chase. I ask you to consider only the facts and that you arrive at a majority verdict.

*Lights illuminate HAWLEY and ETHEL in turn. Synchronized to a loud and quickening (Audible) heartbeat.*

*Illuminate ETHEL.*

JUDGE

Ethel le Neve, the jury have found you not guilty of all charges. The court believes that you had no prior knowledge of Hawley Crippen's heinous crimes.

ETHEL

*(Sobbing)*

Thank you...Thank you.

JUDGE

You are free to go.

*Illuminate HAWLEY.*

JUDGE

Hawley Harvey Crippen, you have been found guilty of the murder of Cora Crippen.

HAWLEY

*(Shocked)*

No-no this is a mistake I tell you – a mistake!

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

