

THE INTRUDER

by: Maurice Maeterlinck

CHARACTERS

THE THREE DAUGHTERS
THE GRANDFATHER
THE FATHER
THE UNCLE
THE SERVANT

[A dimly lighted room in an old country-house. A door on the right, a door on the left, and a small concealed door in a corner. At the back, stained-glass windows, in which the color green predominates, and a glass door opening on to a terrace. A Dutch clock in one corner. A lamp lighted.]

THE THREE DAUGHTERS: Come here, grandfather. Sit down under the lamp.

THE GRANDFATHER: There does not seem to me to be much light here.

THE FATHER: Shall we go on to the terrace, or stay in the room?

THE UNCLE: Would it not be better to stay here? It has rained the whole week, and the nights are damp and cold.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Still the stars are shining.

THE UNCLE: Ah! stars--that's nothing.

THE GRANDFATHER: We had better stay here. One never knows what may happen.

THE FATHER: There is no longer any cause for anxiety. The danger is past, and she is saved

THE GRANDFATHER: I fancy she is not going on well

THE FATHER: Why do you say that?

THE GRANDFATHER: I have heard her speak.

THE FATHER: But the doctors assure us we may be easy

THE UNCLE: You know quite well that your father-in-law likes to alarm us needlessly.

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not look at these things as you others do.

THE UNCLE: You ought to rely on us, then, who can see. She looked very well this afternoon. She is sleeping quietly now; and we are not going to spoil, without any reason, the first comfortable evening that luck has thrown in our way It seems to me we have a perfect right to be easy, and even to laugh a little, this evening, without apprehension.

THE FATHER: That's true; this is the first time I have felt at home with my family since this terrible confinement.

THE UNCLE: When once illness has come into a house, it is as though a stranger had forced himself into the family circle.

THE FATHER: And then you understood, too, that you should count on no one outside the family.

THE UNCLE: You are quite right.

THE GRANDFATHER: Why could I not see my poor daughter to-day?

THE UNCLE: You know quite well--the doctor forbade it.

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not know what to think

THE UNCLE: It is absurd to worry.

THE GRANDFATHER: [*pointing to the door on the left*] She cannot hear us?

THE FATHER: We shall not talk too loud; besides, the door is very thick, and the Sister of Mercy is with her, and she is sure to warn us if we are making too much noise.

THE GRANDFATHER: [*pointing to the door on the right*] He cannot hear us?

THE FATHER: No, no.

THE GRANDFATHER: He is asleep?

THE FATHER: I suppose so.

THE GRANDFATHER: Someone had better go and see.

THE UNCLE: The little one would cause *me* more anxiety than your wife. It is now several weeks since he was born, and he has scarcely stirred. He has not cried once all the time! He is like a wax doll.

THE GRANDFATHER: I think he will be deaf--dumb too, perhaps--the usual result of a marriage between cousins

[A reproving silence.]

THE FATHER: I could almost wish him ill for the suffering he has caused his mother.

THE UNCLE: Do be reasonable; it is not the poor little thing's fault. He is quite alone in the room?

THE FATHER: Yes; the doctor does not wish him to stay in his mother's room any longer.

THE UNCLE: But the nurse is with him?

THE FATHER: No; she has gone to rest a little; she has well deserved it these last few days. Ursula, just go and see if he is asleep.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Yes, father.

[THE THREE SISTERS get up, and go into the room on the right, hand in hand.]

THE FATHER: When will your sister come?

THE UNCLE: I think she will come about nine.

THE FATHER: It is past nine. I hope she will come this evening, my wife is so anxious to see her.

THE UNCLE: She is certain to come. This will be the first time she has been here?

THE FATHER: She has never been into the house.

THE UNCLE: It is very difficult for her to leave her convent.

THE FATHER: Will she be alone?

THE UNCLE: I expect one of the nuns will come with her. They are not allowed to go out alone.

THE FATHER: But she is the Superior.

THE UNCLE: The rule is the same for all.

THE GRANDFATHER: Do you not feel anxious?

THE UNCLE: Why should we feel anxious? What's the good of harping on that? There is nothing more to fear.

THE GRANDFATHER: Your sister is older than you?

THE UNCLE: She is the eldest of us all.

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not know what ails me; I feel uneasy. I wish your sister were here.

THE UNCLE: She will come; she promised to.

THE GRANDFATHER: I wish this evening were over!

[THE THREE DAUGHTERS come in again.]

THE FATHER: He is asleep?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Yes, father; very sound.

THE UNCLE: What shall we do while we are waiting?

THE GRANDFATHER: Waiting for what?

THE UNCLE: Waiting for our sister.

THE FATHER: You see nothing coming, Ursula?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: *[at the window]* Nothing, father.

THE FATHER: Not in the avenue? Can you see the avenue?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, father; it is moonlight, and I can see the avenue as far as the cypress wood.

THE GRANDFATHER: And you do not see anyone?

THE DAUGHTER: No one, grandfather.

THE UNCLE: What sort of night is it?

THE DAUGHTER: Very fine. Do you hear the nightingales?

THE UNCLE: Yes, yes.

THE DAUGHTER: A little wind is rising in the avenue.

THE GRANDFATHER: A little wind in the avenue?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes; the trees are trembling a little.

THE UNCLE: I am surprised that my sister is not here yet.

THE GRANDFATHER: I cannot hear the nightingales any longer.

THE DAUGHTER: I think someone has come into the garden, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: Who is it?

THE DAUGHTER: I do not know; I can see no one.

THE UNCLE: Because there is no one there.

THE DAUGHTER: There must be someone in the garden; the nightingales have suddenly ceased singing.

THE GRANDFATHER: But I do not hear anyone coming.

THE DAUGHTER: Someone must be passing by the pond, because the swans are scared.

ANOTHER DAUGHTER: All the fishes in the pond are diving suddenly.

THE FATHER: You cannot see anyone?

THE DAUGHTER: No one, father.

THE FATHER: But the pond lies in the moonlight

THE DAUGHTER: Yes; I can see that the swans are scared.

THE UNCLE: I am sure it is my sister who is scaring them. She must have come in by the little gate.

THE FATHER: I cannot understand why the dogs do not bark.

THE DAUGHTER: I can see the watch-dog right at the back of his kennel. The swans

are crossing to the other bank! . . .

THE UNCLE: They are afraid of my sister. I will go and see. [*He calls.*] Sister! sister! Is that you? . . . There is no one there.

THE DAUGHTER: I am sure that someone has come into the garden. You will see.

THE UNCLE: But she would answer me!

THE GRANDFATHER: Are not the nightingales beginning to sing again, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: I cannot hear one anywhere.

THE GRANDFATHER: And yet there is no noise.

THE FATHER: There is a silence of the grave.

THE GRANDFATHER: It must be some stranger that scares them, for if it were one of the family they would not be silent.

THE UNCLE: How much longer are you going to discuss these nightingales?

THE GRANDFATHER: Are all the windows open, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: The glass door is open, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me that the cold is penetrating into the room.

THE DAUGHTER: There is a little wind in the garden, grandfather, and the rose-leaves are falling.

THE FATHER: Well, shut the door. It is late.

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, father. . . . I cannot shut the door.

THE TWO OTHER DAUGHTERS: We cannot shut the door.

THE GRANDFATHER: Why, what is the matter with the door, my children?

THE UNCLE: You need not say that in such an extraordinary voice. I will go and help them.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: We cannot manage to shut it quite.

THE UNCLE: It is because of the damp. Let us all push together. There must be something in the way.

THE FATHER: The carpenter will set it right to-morrow.

THE GRANDFATHER: Is the carpenter coming to-morrow?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather; he is coming to do some work in the cellar.

THE GRANDFATHER: He will make a noise in the house.

THE DAUGHTER: I will tell him to work quietly.

[Suddenly the sound of a scythe being sharpened is heard outside.]

THE GRANDFATHER: *[with a shudder]* Oh!

THE UNCLE: What is that?

THE DAUGHTER: I don't quite know; I think it is the gardener. I cannot quite see; he is in the shadow of the house.

THE FATHER: It is the gardener going to mow.

THE UNCLE: He mows by night?

THE FATHER: Is not to-morrow Sunday?--Yes.--I noticed that the grass was very long round the house.

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me that his scythe makes as much noise . . .

THE DAUGHTER: He is moving near the house.

THE GRANDFATHER: Can you see him, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: No, grandfather. He stands in the dark.

THE GRANDFATHER: I am afraid he will wake my daughter.

THE UNCLE: We can scarcely hear him.

THE GRANDFATHER: It sounds to me as if he were mowing inside the house.

THE UNCLE: The invalid will not hear it; there is no danger.

THE FATHER: It seems to me that the lamp is not burning well this evening.

THE UNCLE: It wants filling.

THE FATHER: I saw it filled this morning. It has burnt badly since the window was shut.

THE UNCLE: I fancy the chimney is dirty.

THE FATHER: It will burn better presently.

THE DAUGHTER: Grandfather is asleep. He has not slept for three nights.

THE FATHER: He has been so much worried.

THE UNCLE: He always worries too much. At times he will not listen to reason.

THE FATHER: It is quite excusable at his age.

THE UNCLE: God knows what we shall be like at his age!

THE FATHER: He is nearly eighty.

THE UNCLE: Then he has a right to be strange.

THE FATHER: He is like all blind people.

THE UNCLE: They think too much.

THE FATHER: They have too much time to spare.

THE UNCLE: They have nothing else to do.

THE FATHER: And besides, they have no distractions.

THE UNCLE: That must be terrible.

THE FATHER: Apparently one gets used to it.

THE UNCLE: I cannot imagine it.

THE FATHER: They are certainly to be pitied.

THE UNCLE: Not to know where one is, not to know where one has come from, not to

know whither one is going, not to be able to distinguish midday from midnight, or summer from winter--and always darkness, darkness! I would rather not live. Is it absolutely incurable?

THE FATHER: Apparently so.

THE UNCLE: But he is not absolutely blind?

THE FATHER: He can perceive a strong light.

THE UNCLE: Let us take care of our poor eyes.

THE FATHER: He often has strange ideas.

THE UNCLE: At times he is not at all amusing.

THE FATHER: He says absolutely everything he thinks.

THE UNCLE: But he was not always like this?

THE FATHER: No; once he was as rational as we are; he never said anything extraordinary. I am afraid Ursula encourages him a little too much; she answers all his questions. . . .

THE UNCLE: It would be better not to answer them. It's a mistaken kindness to him.

[Ten o'clock strikes.]

THE GRANDFATHER: *[waking up]* Am I facing the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER: You have had a nice sleep, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER: Am I facing the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: There is nobody at the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER: No, grandfather; I do not see anyone.

THE GRANDFATHER: I thought someone was waiting. No one has come?

THE DAUGHTER: No one, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: *[to the UNCLE and FATHER]* And your sister has not come?

THE UNCLE: It is too late; she will not come now. It is not nice of her.

THE FATHER: I'm beginning to be anxious about her.

[A noise, as of someone coming into the house.]

THE UNCLE: She is here! Did you hear?

THE FATHER: Yes; someone has come in at the basement.

THE UNCLE: It must be our sister. I recognize her step.

THE GRANDFATHER: I heard slow footsteps.

THE FATHER: She came in very quietly.

THE UNCLE: She knows there is an invalid.

THE GRANDFATHER: I hear nothing now.

THE UNCLE: She will come up directly; they will tell her we are here.

THE FATHER: I am glad she has come.

THE UNCLE: I was sure she would come this evening.

THE GRANDFATHER: She is a very long time coming up.

THE UNCLE: However, it must be she.

THE FATHER: We are not expecting any other visitors.

THE GRANDFATHER: I cannot hear any noise in the basement.

THE FATHER: I will call the servant. We shall know how things stand. *[He pulls a bell-rope.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: I can hear a noise on the stairs already.

THE FATHER: It is the servant coming up.

THE GRANDFATHER: It sounds to me as if she were not alone.

THE FATHER: She is coming up slowly. . . .

THE GRANDFATHER: I hear your sister's step!

THE FATHER: I can only hear the servant.

THE GRANDFATHER: It is your sister! It is your sister!

[There is a knock at the little door.]

THE UNCLE: She is knocking at the door of the back stairs.

THE FATHER: I will go and open myself. *[He partly opens the little door; THE SERVANT remains outside in the opening.]* Where are you?

THE SERVANT: Here, sir.

THE GRANDFATHER: Your sister is at the door?

THE UNCLE: I can only see the servant.

THE FATHER: It is only the servant. *[to THE SERVANT]* Who was that, that came into the house?

THE SERVANT: Came into the house?

THE FATHER: Yes; someone came in just now?

THE SERVANT: No one came in, sir.

THE GRANDFATHER: Who is it sighing like that?

THE UNCLE: It is the servant; she is out of breath.

THE GRANDFATHER: Is she crying?

THE UNCLE: No; why should she be crying?

THE FATHER: *[to THE SERVANT]* No one came in just now?

THE SERVANT: No, sir.

THE FATHER: But we heard someone open the door!

THE SERVANT: I was shutting the door.

THE FATHER: It was open?

THE SERVANT: Yes, sir.

THE FATHER: Why was it open at this time of night?

THE SERVANT: I do not know, sir. I had shut it myself.

THE FATHER: Then who was it that opened it?

THE SERVANT: I do not know, sir. Someone must have gone out after me, sir. . . .

THE FATHER: You must be careful.--Don't push the door; you know what a noise it makes!

THE SERVANT: But, sir, I am not touching the door.

THE FATHER: But you are. You are pushing as if you were trying to get into the room.

THE SERVANT: But, sir, I am three yards away from the door.

THE FATHER: Don't talk so loud. . . .

THE GRANDFATHER: Are they putting out the light?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: No, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me it has grown pitch dark all at once.

THE FATHER: [*to THE SERVANT*] You can go down again now; but do not make so much noise on the stairs.

THE SERVANT: I did not make any noise on the stairs.

THE FATHER: I tell you that you did make a noise. Go down quietly; you will wake your mistress. And if anyone comes now, say that we are not at home.

THE UNCLE: Yes; say that we are not at home.

THE GRANDFATHER: [*shuddering*] You must not say that!

THE FATHER: . . . Except to my sister and the doctor.

THE UNCLE: When will the doctor come?

THE FATHER: He will not be able to come before midnight. [*He shuts the door. A clock is heard striking eleven.*]

THE GRANDFATHER: She has come in?

THE FATHER: Who?

THE GRANDFATHER: The servant.

THE FATHER: No, she has gone downstairs.

THE GRANDFATHER: I thought that she was sitting at the table.

THE UNCLE: The servant?

THE GRANDFATHER: Yes.

THE UNCLE: That would complete one's happiness!

THE GRANDFATHER: No one has come into the room?

THE FATHER: No; no one has come in.

THE GRANDFATHER: And your sister is not here?

THE UNCLE: Our sister has not come.

THE GRANDFATHER: You want to deceive me.

THE UNCLE: Deceive you?

THE GRANDFATHER: Ursula, tell me the truth, for the love of God!

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Grandfather! Grandfather! what is the matter with you?

THE GRANDFATHER: Something has happened! I am sure my daughter is worse! . . .

THE UNCLE: Are you dreaming?

THE GRANDFATHER: You do not want to tell me! . . . I can see quite well there is something. . . .

THE UNCLE: In that case you can see better than we can.

THE GRANDFATHER: Ursula, tell me the truth!

THE DAUGHTER: But we have told you the truth, grandfather!

THE GRANDFATHER: You do not speak in your ordinary voice.

THE FATHER: That is because you frighten her.

THE GRANDFATHER: Your voice is changed too.

THE FATHER: You are going mad! *[He and THE UNCLE make signs to each other to signify THE GRANDFATHER has lost his reason.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: I can hear quite well that you are afraid.

THE FATHER: But what should we be afraid of?

THE GRANDFATHER: Why do you want to deceive me?

THE UNCLE: Who is thinking of deceiving you?

THE GRANDFATHER: Why have you put out the light?

THE UNCLE: But the light has not been put out; there is as much light as there was before.

THE DAUGHTER: It seems to me that the lamp has gone down.

THE FATHER: I see as well now as ever.

THE GRANDFATHER: I have millstones in my eyes! Tell me, girls, what is going on here! Tell me, for the love of God, you who can see! I am here, all alone, in darkness without end! I do not know who seats himself beside me! I do not know what is happening a yard from me! . . . Why were you talking under your breath just now?

THE FATHER: No one was talking under his breath.

THE GRANDFATHER: You did talk in a low voice at the door.

THE FATHER: You heard all I said.

THE GRANDFATHER: You brought someone into the room! . . .

THE FATHER: But I tell you no one has come in!

THE GRANDFATHER: Is it your sister or a priest?--You should not try to deceive me.--
Ursula, who was it came in?

THE DAUGHTER: No one, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: You must not try to deceive me; I know what I know.--How
many of us are there here?

THE DAUGHTER: There are six of us round the table, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: You are all round the table?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: You are there, Paul?

THE FATHER: Yes.

THE GRANDFATHER: You are there, Oliver?

THE UNCLE: Yes, of course I am here, in my usual place. That's not alarming, is it?

THE GRANDFATHER: You are there, Geneviève?

ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS: Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: You are there, Gertrude?

ANOTHER DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: You are there, Ursula?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather; next to you.

THE GRANDFATHER: And who is that sitting there?

THE DAUGHTER: Where do you mean, grandfather?--There is no one.

THE GRANDFATHER: There, there--in the midst of us!

THE DAUGHTER: But there is no one, grandfather!

THE FATHER: We tell you there is no one!

THE GRANDFATHER: But you cannot see--any of you!

THE UNCLE: Pshaw! You are joking?

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not feel inclined for joking, I can assure you.

THE UNCLE: Then believe those who can see.

THE GRANDFATHER: [*undecidedly*] I thought there was someone. . . . I believe I shall not live long. . . .

THE UNCLE: Why should we deceive you? What use would there be in that?

THE FATHER: It would be our duty to tell you the truth. . . .

THE UNCLE: What would be the good of deceiving each other?

THE FATHER: You could not live in error long.

THE GRANDFATHER: [*trying to rise*] I should like to pierce this darkness! . . .

THE FATHER: Where do you want to go?

THE GRANDFATHER: Over there. . . .

THE FATHER: Don't be so anxious. . . .

THE UNCLE: You are strange this evening.

THE GRANDFATHER: It is all of you who seem to me to be strange!

THE FATHER: Do you want anything? . . .

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not know what ails me.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: Grandfather! grandfather! What do you want, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER: Give me your little hands, my children.

THE THREE DAUGHTERS: Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: Why are you all three trembling, girls?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: We are scarcely trembling at all, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: I fancy you are all three pale.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: It is late, grandfather, and we are tired.

THE FATHER: You must go to bed, and grandfather himself would do well to take a little rest.

THE GRANDFATHER: I could not sleep to-night!

THE UNCLE: We will wait for the doctor.

THE GRANDFATHER: Prepare me for the truth.

THE UNCLE: But there is no truth!

THE GRANDFATHER: Then I do not know what there is!

THE UNCLE: I tell you there is nothing at all!

THE GRANDFATHER: I wish I could see my poor daughter!

THE FATHER: But you know quite well it is impossible; she must not be waked unnecessarily.

THE UNCLE: You will see her to-morrow.

THE GRANDFATHER: There is no sound in her room.

THE UNCLE: I should be uneasy if I heard any sound.

THE GRANDFATHER: It is a very long time since I saw my daughter! . . . I took her hands yesterday evening, but I could not see her! . . . I do not know what has become of her! . . . I do not know how she is. . . . I do not know what her face is like now. . . . She must have changed these weeks! . . . I felt the little bones of her cheeks under my hands. . . . There is nothing but the darkness between her and me, and the rest of you! . . . I cannot go on living like this. . . . this is not living. . . . You sit there, all of you, looking with open eyes at my dead eyes, and not one of you has pity on me! . . . I do not know what ails me. . . . No one tells me what ought to be told me. . . . And everything is terrifying when one's dreams dwell upon it. . . . But why are you not speaking?

THE UNCLE: What should we say, since you will not believe us?

THE GRANDFATHER: You are afraid of betraying yourselves!

THE FATHER: Come now, be rational!

THE GRANDFATHER: You have been hiding something from me for a long time! . . . Something has happened in the house. . . . But I am beginning to understand now. . . . You have been deceiving me too long!--You fancy that I shall never know anything?--There are moments when I am less blind than you, you know! . . . Do you think I have not heard you whispering--for days and days--as if you were in the house of someone who had been hanged--I dare not say what I know this evening. . . . But I shall know the truth! . . . I shall wait for you to tell me the truth; but I have known it for a long time, in spite of you!--And now, I feel that you are all paler than the dead!

THE THREE DAUGHTERS: Grandfather! grandfather! What is the matter, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER: It is not you that I am speaking of, girls. No, it is not you that I am speaking of. . . . I know quite well you would tell me the truth--if they were not by! . . . And besides, I feel sure that they are deceiving you as well. . . . You will see, children--you will see! . . . Do not I hear you all sobbing?

THE FATHER: Is my wife really so ill?

THE GRANDFATHER: It is no good trying to deceive me any longer; it is too late now, and I know the truth better than you! . . .

THE UNCLE: But *we* are not blind; we are not.

THE FATHER: Would you like to go into your daughter's room? This misunderstanding must be put an end to.--Would you?

THE GRANDFATHER: [*becoming suddenly undecided*] No, no, not now--not yet.

THE UNCLE: You see, you are not reasonable.

THE GRANDFATHER: One never knows how much a man has been unable to express in his life! . . . Who made that noise?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: It is the lamp, flickering, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me to be very unsteady--very!

THE DAUGHTER: It is the cold wind troubling it. . . .

THE UNCLE: There is no cold wind, the windows are shut.

THE DAUGHTER: I think it is going out.

THE FATHER: There is no more oil.

THE DAUGHTER: It has gone right out.

THE FATHER: We cannot stay like this in the dark.

THE UNCLE: Why not?--I am quite accustomed to it.

THE FATHER: There is a light in my wife's room.

THE UNCLE: We will take it from there presently, when the doctor has been.

THE FATHER: Well, we can see enough here; there is the light from outside.

THE GRANDFATHER: Is it light outside?

THE FATHER: Lighter than here.

THE UNCLE: For my part, I would as soon talk in the dark.

THE FATHER: So would I. [*Silence.*]

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me the clock makes a great deal of noise. . . .

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: That is because we are not talking any more, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: But why are you all silent?

THE UNCLE: What do you want us to talk about?--You are really very peculiar to-night.

THE GRANDFATHER: It is very dark in this room?

THE UNCLE: There is not much light. [*Silence.*]

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not feel well, Ursula; open the window a little.

THE FATHER: Yes, child; open the window a little. I begin to feel the want of air

myself. *[The girl opens the window.]*

THE UNCLE: I really believe we have stayed shut up too long.

THE GRANDFATHER: Is the window open?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather; it is wide open.

THE GRANDFATHER: One would not have thought it was open; there is not a sound outside.

THE DAUGHTER: No, grandfather; there is not the slightest sound.

THE FATHER: The silence is extraordinary!

THE DAUGHTER: One could hear an angel tread!

THE UNCLE: That is why I do not like the country.

THE GRANDFATHER: I wish I could hear some sound. What o'clock is it, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: It will soon be midnight, grandfather.

[Here THE UNCLE begins to pace up and down the room.]

THE GRANDFATHER: Who is that walking round us like that?

THE UNCLE: Only I! only I! Do not be frightened! I want to walk about a little. *[Silence.]*--But I am going to sit down again;--I cannot see where I am going. *[Silence.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: I wish I were out of this place!

THE DAUGHTER: Where would you like to go, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER: I do not know where--into another room, no matter where! no matter where!

THE FATHER: Where could we go?

THE UNCLE: It is too late to go anywhere else. *[Silence. They are sitting, motionless, round the table.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: What is that I hear, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: Nothing, grandfather; it is the leaves falling.--Yes, it is the leaves falling on the terrace.

THE GRANDFATHER: Go and shut the window, Ursula.

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, grandfather.

[She shuts the window, comes back, and sits down.]

THE GRANDFATHER: I am cold. *[Silence. THE THREE SISTERS kiss each other.]*What is that I hear now?

THE FATHER: It is the three sisters kissing each other.

THE UNCLE: It seems to me they are very pale this evening. *[Silence.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: What is that I hear now, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: Nothing, grandfather; it is the clasping of my hands. *[Silence.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: And that? . . .

THE DAUGHTER: I do not know, grandfather . . . perhaps my sisters are trembling a little? . . .

THE GRANDFATHER: I am afraid, too, my children.

[Here a ray of moonlight penetrates through a corner of the stained glass, and throws strange gleams here and there in the room. A clock strikes midnight; at the last stroke there is a very vague sound, as of someone rising in haste.]

THE GRANDFATHER: *[shuddering with peculiar horror]* Who is that who got up?

THE UNCLE: No one got up!

THE FATHER: I did not get up!

THE THREE DAUGHTERS: Nor I!--Nor I!--Nor I!

THE GRANDFATHER: Someone got up from the table!

THE UNCLE: Light the lamp! . . .

[Cries of terror are suddenly heard from the child's room, on the right; these

cries continue, with gradations of horror, until the end of the scene.]

THE FATHER: Listen to the child!

THE UNCLE: He has never cried before!

THE FATHER: Let us go and see him!

THE UNCLE: The light! The light!

[At this moment, quick and heavy steps are heard in the room on the left.-- Then a deathly silence.--They listen in mute terror, until the door of the room opens slowly, the light from it cast into the room where they are sitting, and the Sister of Mercy appears on the threshold, in her black garments, and bows as she makes the sign of the cross, to announce the death of his wife. They understand, and, after a moment of hesitation and fright, silently enter the chamber of death, while THE UNCLE politely steps aside on the threshold to let the three girls pass. The blind man, left alone, gets up, agitated, and feels his way round the table in the darkness.]

THE GRANDFATHER: Where are you going?--Where are you going?--The girls have left me all alone!

THE CURTAIN