

Start

SOLICITOR

Due to an unfortunate accident, your Uncle, Mr. Anthony Hendon, of Atlantic City, New Jersey, has passed on.

LANDLADY and BOARDERS

Aw. Then it's nothing serious!

(Lights go out on the LANDLADY and BOARDERS, and THEY exit)
We are now in:)

SCENE 2. Solicitor's Office, London.

SOLICITOR

Condolences, Mr. Witherspoon. Condolences. I'm terribly sorry we meet under such tragic circumstances. Make yourself comfortable. (Hands HARRY a tissue) Be emotional if you so desire!

HARRY

Oh, thank you very much. But I never even met my Uncle. He wouldn't have known me from a hole in the wall.

SOLICITOR

And understandably so. Nevertheless, you are his only living relative, and he must have had a certain strange affection for you. You see, Mr. Witherspoon, your Uncle Anthony has left you an inheritance!

HARRY

An inheritance?!

(THE SECRETARY, MISS THORSBY, a straight-laced, normally efficient woman, enters with a rattling tray of tea things. SHE sets it down, and tries to appear in control, but she is visibly nervous.)

MISS THORSBY

Shall I bring it in now, Mr. Hobbs?

SOLICITOR

Not yet, Miss Thorsby. I will buzz.

MISS THORSBY

Thank you, sir.

(SHE exits cautiously.)

HARRY

Crikey! An inheritance! How much is it?

SOLICITOR

Apparently, casino managers do quite well in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In US dollars, Mr. Witherspoon, a currency I find highly distasteful, your Uncle has left you...

HARRY

Yes?

SOLICITOR

Six million.

(MUSIC CUE 3, as HARRY reacts.)

HARRY

Sorry, what?

SOLICITOR

Six million dollars. But before you become too enthusiastic, I must warn you that the terms of the will are highly unusual. When you hear your Uncle's last request, you may choose not to accept the money after all. In that case, it will go to your Uncle's favorite charity, the Universal Dog Home of Brooklyn.

HARRY

Dog Home? I'm not letting six million dollars go to a Dog Home!

SOLICITOR

Dogs are a very worthy cause, sir.

HARRY

Dogs have made my life a misery! Biting me, chasing me, day in and day out...Look, I don't care what my Uncle's last request is. I'll do anything for that money and no dog is going to get his paws on it!

SOLICITOR

Very well. Don't say I didn't warn you. Raise your right hand.

(HARRY raises HIS right hand, and a DRUMROLL begins.)

SOLICITOR

Do you, Harry Charles Witherspoon, solemnly swear to fulfill all terms and conditions of Anthony Hendon's last will and testament, in exchange for his estate of six million dollars?

HARRY

I do.

SOLICITOR (Pushing intercom)

Now, Miss Thorsby. Now!

(MISS THORSBY comes rushing in, pushing DEAD UNCLE ANTHONY in a wheelchair. SHE takes a look at THE BODY, stifles a scream, and rushes off. A beat.)

SOLICITOR

Here we are. Now, your Uncle left a cassette tape with full instructions on it. Here is the cassette player. On, off, rewind, play. On his lap is a heart-shaped box, which you must guard carefully until you receive further instructions. Here is a check which should cover your activities for the week. And the chair operates manually or electrically. That's all there is to it. Bon voyage and good luck.

(THE SOLICITOR begins to leave)

HARRY

But...I don't understand.

SOLICITOR

Sorry. Mr. Witherspoon, this... is your Uncle Anthony. .

HARRY

But...I thought he died.

SOLICITOR

He did. The cassette will explain. So nice to have met you. Take your time. Help yourself to tea. And, congratulations.

(THE SOLICITOR exits.)

Stop

(Gingerly, HARRY turns THE CORPSE around, and peeks under the hat.)

HARRY

Oh, my God!

(HE places the cassette in the player, and turns it on. A pinspot illuminates THE CORPSE, and we hear:)

VOICE OF TONY HENDON

Atlantic City. May 5th. Dear Nephew Harry , This is my last will and testament. I hope it finds you in better health than it does me. Ha ha! Harry , we've never met, so I hope you won't be too surprised when you hear the little favor I want.