

## *Dedication*

This show is for the original Marlo.



# Ha-Ha House

By Vern Harden

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# HA-HA HOUSE

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

|                         |   | <u># of lines</u> |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| MASTER JAMES.....       | distinguished butler<br>who rules Ha-Ha House<br>with an iron hand;<br>his expression never<br>changes except when<br>he feigns a smile | 71                |
| MARLO JEAN.....         | attractive teenaged girl  | 42                |
| ALEX .....              | friend of Marlo's;<br>loves a good mystery<br>to solve  | 44                |
| KAYLA .....             | another friend; easily<br>spooked   | 51                |
| SAMANTHA (SAM).....     | the skeptic; believes<br>everything must be<br>analyzed to be understood  | 41                |
| EMILY .....             | another friend;<br>offbeat individualist  | 56                |
| COOK.....               | aka Elizabeth (Lizzie!)<br>Bordon; carries a heavy<br>cane and isn't too stable<br>in her thinking                                      | 48                |
| DOUGLAS RAY .....       | Marlo's older brother;<br>protective of his sister  | 30                |
| MICHAEL.....            | best friend of Douglas's;<br>a bit clumsy   | 61                |
| BREWSTER HAVERSHOME.... | insane owner of the Ha-Ha<br>House who comes back<br>looking for his long dead wife   | 36                |



## SETTING

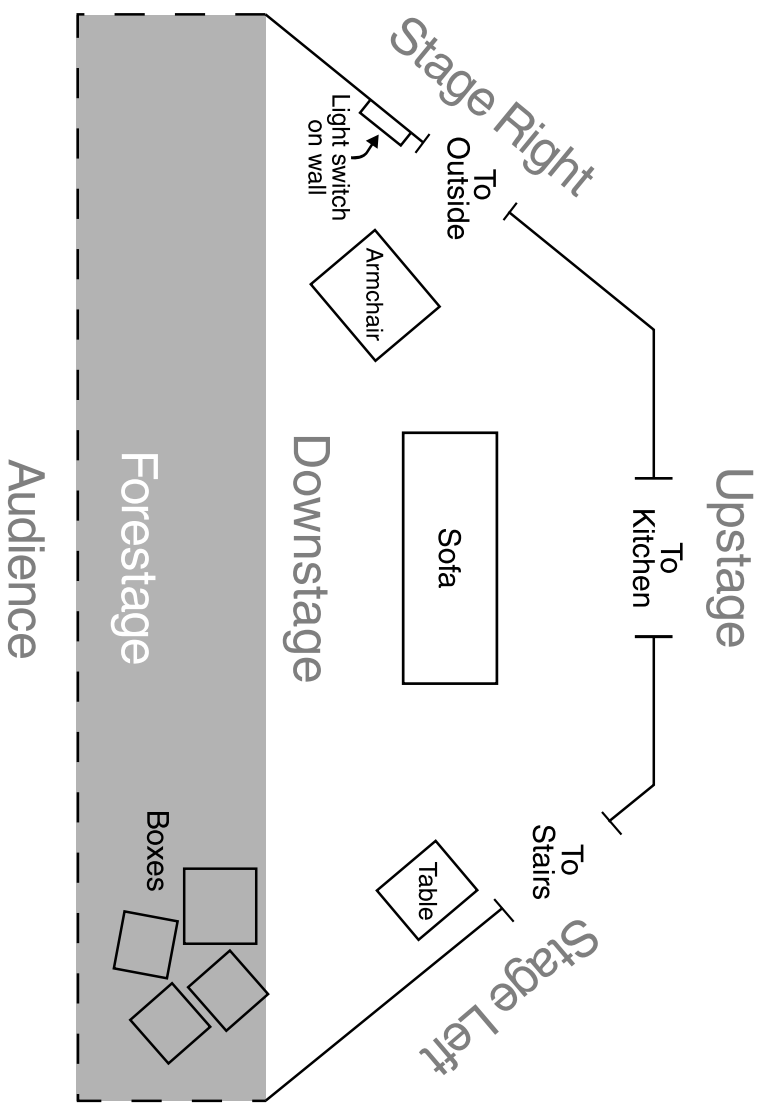
TIME: The present.

PLACE: The gloomy drawing room of Havershome's Haven, a deserted mansion known as the Ha-Ha House.

There are three entrances to the drawing room: RIGHT leads outside, UP CENTER leads to the kitchen and UP LEFT leads to the stairs. While it is difficult to tell what furniture is present since it is all covered with drop cloths or sheets, it appears that there is a sofa CENTER, a table UP LEFT, an armchair DOWN RIGHT and several cardboard boxes DOWN LEFT. Sofa may be a covered line of folding chairs.



Ha-Ha House - Set Design





## HA-HA HOUSE

- 1 AT RISE: The stage is nearly dark. There is only enough light so the doorways and draped furniture may be seen. SOUND EFFECT: a KNOCK beyond the doorway RIGHT. After a pause, ANOTHER LOUDER KNOCK. Again, there is a silent pause. After a few seconds,  
5 JAMES steps silently IN UP CENTER, turns his head slowly and looks towards RIGHT doorway.

**JAMES:** *(Makes a low, growling sound.)* Nnnnnnggggghhhhh. *(SOUND EFFECT: CREAKING DOOR OFF RIGHT. [See PRODUCTION NOTE #1.] As MARLO, ALEX, KAYLA, SAMANTHA and EMILY ENTER, JAMES steps OFF UP CENTER.)*

**MARLO'S VOICE:** *(From OFF RIGHT. Calls hesitantly.)* Is anybody home? *(MARLO ENTERS RIGHT.)*

**ALEX'S VOICE:** *(From OFF RIGHT.)* There has to be somebody here.

- 15 **ALEX:** *(ENTERS RIGHT.)* I saw a light in the window when we walked up the driveway.

**KAYLA:** *(ENTERS behind her.)* Maybe they don't want visitors. *(Frightened. Calls out.)* Hello? Does anybody here want visitors? *(To ALEX.)* Maybe they're hiding.

- 20 **SAMANTHA:** *(ENTERS RIGHT.)* Why would anybody be hiding?

**EMILY:** *(Peers around SAM, ENTERS.)* Maybe they don't want to see us.

**ALEX:** Oh! *(Claps her hands, giggles.)* Maybe everyone here has been murdered! And there's a crazy man waiting in the next room.  
25 With an axe! Ohhh! *(Hugs herself, shudders and giggles.)* I love a murder mystery.

**MARLO:** Alex, you've been watching too many of those old movies on TV. There is no axe murderer here.

- EMILY:** If your stupid cell phone hadn't died at the same time your car  
30 ran out of gas, none of this would have happened.

**MARLO:** Complain! Complain! I didn't know my phone was going to die! Now, come on, everyone, we have to find a telephone so we can call my brother.

**SAMANTHA:** Do you really think there's a working phone in here?

- 35 **MARLO:** Why not? Stranger things have happened.

**EMILY:** Most of them to you.

**MARLO:** Ha ha, very funny. Anyway, like Alex said, there was a light on, so we know there's electricity.



- 1 **KAYLA:** *(Nervous, tugs at MARLO'S sleeve.)* Marlo, maybe I could look around outside for a pay phone. I'm really not very good in places like this.
- EMILY:** *(Stomps her foot and yells at KAYLA.)* Boo!
- 5 **KAYLA:** *(Jumps and screams.)* Oh!
- SAMANTHA:** *(Crosses UP LEFT, looking around.)* Kayla, you should love being here. This is the old Havershome mansion. It's a holdover from the days when gentlemen wore top hats and ladies wore hoop skirts. *(Mimes a deep curtsy.)*
- 10 **EMILY:** *(Curtsies back towards SAM.)* Also known as the Ha-Ha House.
- KAYLA:** *(Still frightened.)* Ha-Ha House?
- EMILY:** Yes. Twenty years ago, Brewster Havershome went bananas when his wife died. They hauled him off to the loony bin laughing like an idiot. They say... *(Pauses for dramatic effect.)* ...he killed her himself!
- MARLO:** Emily, be quiet! *(Frightened, moves CENTER.)* This place can't be as bad as people say. I mean, I don't think it's haunted... much.
- 20 **EMILY:** Oh, this place is haunted. You can take my word on that. I can sense these things. *(Sniffs.)* I smell ectoplasm. I'm psychic.
- SAMANTHA:** More like psychotic.
- KAYLA:** *(Moves slowly UP CENTER, creeping on tiptoe, looking around fearfully.)* I don't like this.
- 25 **MARLO:** Emily, you check around that chair. *(Points DOWN RIGHT.)* Sam, look by that table. *(Points to shrouded table UP LEFT.)* Alex, check out those boxes. *(Points DOWN LEFT. The GIRLS follow her directions.)*
- KAYLA:** *(Frightened.)* I don't think we should be here without somebody's permission. Not in the... *(Shudders.)* ...horrible Ha-Ha House.
- 30 **MARLO:** *(Calls out, hesitant.)* Is anybody here?
- KAYLA:** *(Calls, frightened.)* Is anybody here?
- EMILY:** *(Makes fun of them.)* Ha! Ha! Ha! Is anybody home in the Ha-Ha House?
- 35 **JAMES:** *(ENTERS UP CENTER, holding a flashlight under his chin. Quickly flashes it on then off after his line. Only KAYLA is looking in his direction.)* You called? *(ALL FIVE GIRLS leap and scream at the same time.)*
- KAYLA:** *(Looks up at JAMES, points at him and screams again.)*
- 40 Ha...! Ha...! *(Screams, runs DOWN CENTER. GIRLS rush*



- 1     *DOWN CENTER to KAYLA where they hug, scream and bounce up and down.)*  
**JAMES:** *(Mutters in disgust.)* Children. I hate children. They are so... noisy. *(EXITS UP CENTER.)*
- 5     **EMILY:** What was that?  
**SAMANTHA:** Did anyone else hear a voice?  
**ALEX:** Is there a man in here?  
**KAYLA:** *(Nods, points, babbles.)* Ha... Ha... Ha...  
**MARLO:** *(Grabs KAYLA and shakes her.)* Kayla, stop it! What's wrong?  
10    What happened? *(To OTHERS.)* Somebody find the light switch.  
**SAMANTHA:** I think I saw it... *(Crosses to RIGHT EXIT. [See PRODUCTION NOTE #2.])* Got it! *(LIGHTS UP FULL.)*  
**KAYLA:** Ha... Ha... Ha... *(Grabs her own hair and pulls it up.)* It was a... head!
- 15   **MARLO:** Head? What are you talking about?  
**KAYLA:** It was a head! Just a head! A floating head. *(Cries in fear, chews her nails.)*  
**ALEX:** *(Claps her hands in delight.)* A head? *(Hugs herself.)* Ohhhh! I love a mystery. It's so... mysterious!
- 20   **MARLO:** *(Turns KAYLA to face her.)* Whose head was it?  
**KAYLA:** Nnnnnngggghhhhh. *(Raises her hand to indicate how tall JAMES was.)*  
**EMILY:** *(Turns KAYLA to face her.)* Tall! It was a tall head! That's a baaaaad sign.
- 25   **KAYLA:** Nnnnnnggggghnnnnn! *(Holds arms out from her body and lumbers a couple of steps.)*  
**ALEX:** Fat! It was a fathead! *(Turns KAYLA to face her.)* Am I right?  
**KAYLA:** Nnnnnnggggghhhhh! *(Shakes her head then draws hands down across her face to indicate whiskers, holds out her arms to lumber forward, mouth open, roars in a deep voice.)*  
30   Uuuuuhhhhhnnnnn!
- SAMANTHA:** I know! It was a tall, fat woman with a beard!  
**KAYLA:** No! No! No! No! No! *(Shakes her head in frustration, pulls at her own hair.)*
- 35   **EMILY:** I've got it! It was a tall, fat woman with a beard who was having a bad hair day!  
**KAYLA:** *(Stomps her feet.)* It was a man's head! A man! A great big ugly man! *(ALL catch their breath and FREEZE.)*  
**ALEX:** *(After a moment of silence, speaks quietly.)* The killer has  
40   returned!



- 1 **EMILY:** *(Her voice high and shaking with fear.)* Oh, no! *(In the moment of silence following this announcement, a RHYTHMIC CLUMPING is heard OFF UP CENTER as though someone with a wooden leg were walking.)*
- 5 **MARLO:** *(Whispers.)* Did you hear that?  
**KAYLA:** *(Whispers.)* There's somebody out there!  
**EMILY:** *(Whispers excitedly.)* And the somebody is coming in here!  
**ALEX:** *(Whispers at beginning of speech and gradually increases volume.)* The killer! He's going to kidnap us and murder us and
- 10 hold us all for ransom!  
**KAYLA:** Our parents can't afford to buy us back. We're dead! All of us.  
**EMILY:** *(Cries.)* But... I'm too young to die!  
**SAMANTHA:** Oh, you guys, calm down. There must be a rational
- 15 explanation for all this.  
**ALEX:** *(Enjoying the moment.)* Sure, there is. It's a ghost! A great big hairy ghost!  
**KAYLA:** *(Nods in agreement.)* A ghost with flat feet!  
**MARLO:** Oh, be quiet! *(Crosses RIGHT of covered sofa.)* There is
- 20 no such thing as a... hairy ghost! And anyway, listen, it's quiet. Maybe we just imagined that sound. *(ALL listen but hear nothing. The CLUMPING has stopped.)*  
**SAMANTHA:** *(Looks around, crosses UP LEFT.)* It's hard to believe this was ever a mansion with servants and everything. *(Picks up a*
- 25 *small bell from table.)* What's this?  
**MARLO:** *(Takes bell.)* That's what they used to summon the servants. *(Pretends to be the lady of the house. Crosses DOWN RIGHT.)* I believe I shall have my tea in the drawing room. *(Rings bell.)* Oh, James!
- 30 **JAMES:** *(ENTERS UP CENTER behind them. They do not see him. Speaks with a low voice.)* You rang? *(The GIRLS FREEZE then move into a circle in front of the sofa, holding hands.)*  
**MARLO:** Did anybody else hear what I heard? *(The OTHERS nod their heads slowly.)*
- 35 **JAMES:** *(Paces DOWN RIGHT of sofa, looks at them.)* I said, you rang? *(The GIRLS jump, turn and see him, and ALL scream. Winces.)* If you please, not so loud. On whom did you wish to call?  
**MARLO:** *(The GIRLS move into a line, their backs to the sofa.)*
- 40 Umm... I'd like to call my brother.



- 1 **JAMES:** Madam, your brother is not here.
- MARLO:** I know. That's why I have to call him. (*Crosses towards JAMES.*) He's at home. I want to ask him to come get me. Could I use your phone... please?
- 5 **JAMES:** (*Draws himself up.*) Madam, if you wish to be treated as a lady, you must first act like a lady... (*Crosses to stand DOWN RIGHT of her.*) ...and a lady does not beg.
- MARLO:** (*Frightened.*) But—
- JAMES:** (*Quickly raises one finger to stop her.*) Ah! (*Raises a silver*
- 10 *tray he carries and holds it out towards her.*) You may leave your calling card.
- MARLO:** (*Digs in her pocket and pulls out a card.*) Here. (*Puts it on the tray.*) My calling card. I've afraid it only has a few minutes left on it.
- 15 **JAMES:** (*Looks at card then up at her.*) Your name is Bell... (*Looks back at card and then at her.*) ...Telephone?
- MARLO:** No. Not really. It's just...
- JAMES:** (*Holds card gingerly, as though it were polluted.*) This card is... unacceptable. (*Drops the card to the floor.*) I presume you are
- 20 calling on Lady Havershome.
- MARLO:** (*Shakes head.*) No.
- JAMES:** (*Crosses DOWN RIGHT.*) I regret to inform you, Lady Havershome is not receiving visitors today. I'm afraid you have wasted a trip.
- 25 **EMILY:** (*Concerned.*) Ohhh. Does her Ladyship have a touch of the flu? There's a lot of that going around.
- JAMES:** Lady Havershome is... (*Turns his head to face them.*) ...dead.
- GIRLS:** (*Except MARLO. They jump and squeal.*) Ohhh!
- 30 **JAMES:** (*Crosses to stand DOWN RIGHT of MARLO.*) Madam, who are these... (*With disgust.*) ...persons with you?
- MARLO:** (*Introduces them.*) This is Emily and Alex and Samantha and Kayla. I'm Marlo.
- JAMES:** I am James. Gentleman's gentleman. (*Gives a brief bow.*)
- 35 **ALEX:** (*Elbows closest companion.*) He's the butler.
- JAMES:** Young lady, I do not buttle! (*Looks at them in disgust. Turns to face MARLO.*) Madam, these persons are behaving like... children. I do not like children.
- EMILY:** (*Steps forward.*) Now, you listen to me, Mr.—



- 1 **JAMES:** *(Barks.)* Silence! *(EMILY jumps back into line.)* Ladies, if you are here to steal the lost treasure of Havershome Haven... *(Glares at the GIRLS, speaks in a deadly voice, threatens them.)* ...that would not be wise.
- 5 **SAMANTHA:** *(Grabs MARLO'S arm.)* I've decided I don't like this house. I really, really, really don't like this house.
- JAMES:** *(Bellows.)* Silence!
- KAYLA:** *(Speaks quietly.)* But what if I see a ghost? Can I scream then? Just a little?
- 10 **JAMES:** Only the guilty see ghosts. Or so I've been told. Are you guilty, young lady?
- KAYLA:** *(Shakes her head.)* No. Not me... well, maybe... there was one time...
- JAMES:** Silence! Most things are best left unsaid. *(Turns to MARLO.)*
- 15 **MADAM:** will you and your... *(Looks at the OTHERS with disgust.)* ...associates be staying for dinner?
- MARLO:** No. We really just stopped by to see if we could use your phone. *(SOUND EFFECT: SLOW, RHYTHMIC CLUMPING resumes OFFSTAGE. The GIRLS move closer together.)*
- 20 **EMILY:** I could use something to eat.
- JAMES:** *(Crosses to UP CENTER.)* If you ladies will remain here, I shall have Cook bring you some light refreshments. Do not leave this room.
- SAMANTHA:** Excuse me, but what's that sound?
- 25 **JAMES:** *(Smiles.)* I believe Cook is dismembering... dinner. One word of advice. Never upset Cook. She is not a pleasant person. *(Turns and EXITS UP CENTER. GIRLS break out of line and cluster DOWN CENTER.)*
- EMILY:** *(Whispers.)* Did you hear what he said? There's a treasure
- 30 here!
- ALEX:** Did you hear what else he said? The cook is dismembering somebody for dinner. I'm not going to eat here.
- KAYLA:** She's probably serving "rack of man." Ohhhhh.
- EMILY:** *(Moves DOWN LEFT.)* I wish I had that treasure to help out
- 35 my folks. They really need it.
- SAMANTHA:** I need money to go to college. Do you know how much that costs?
- ALEX:** I think we should look for the treasure right now! If we could find it and get out before he comes back, no one would ever know.
- 40 Come on! *(Moves UP CENTER.)*



1 **KAYLA:** Are you guys nuts? We need to get out of here, pronto.  
Are you seriously so interested in treasure that you want to stick  
around and risk getting served for dinner?

**EMILY:** Haven't you ever heard that old saying, "Greed conquers  
5 all"?

**KAYLA:** Um, isn't that "Love conquers all"?

**EMILY:** *(Looks puzzled, as if she never heard this before.)* No. *(The  
other GIRLS also shake their heads and ad-lib: "No, it's greed." "I  
never heard it with love." "Definitely greed." Etc.)*

10 **KAYLA:** *(Frightened.)* Well, even so, Mr. Demonic Butler said to stay  
here.

**ALEX:** Do you think I'm going to pass up a chance to explore this  
place? No way. *(Stops at UP CENTER EXIT and peeks OUT.)*  
Come on. The coast is clear.

15 **EMILY:** That stomping we heard. It might have been a... ghost. *(Hugs  
herself and shivers.)* ...with a wooden leg. Like Captain Hook.  
Ohhhhh! I'm getting all tingly.

**SAMANTHA:** There are no ghosts!

**MARLO:** Quick. Let's find their phone. We'll call my brother first, and  
20 then we can look for treasure. *(The GIRLS move around the room  
searching for the phone. DOWN LEFT, KAYLA searches through  
a half dozen empty boxes of various sizes. CLUMPING is heard  
again.)*

**KAYLA:** There it is again! It's that ghost. He's coming to get us!

25 **EMILY:** *(Frightened.)* There are no ghosts! *(CLUMPING is heard.)* I  
don't think.

**KAYLA:** *(Returns CENTER with box about a foot square.)* It's coming  
closer!

**ALEX:** Ohhhhhh! I sense an evil presence. Growing closer... and  
30 closer... and... *(The GIRLS cluster in front of sofa as CLUMPING  
APPROACHES.)*

**EMILY:** *(Clutches her stomach, looks ill.)* I think I'd better sit down.

**MARLO:** Remember, we have to stick together. *(ALEX, MARLO,  
EMILY and SAM hold hands and sit on sofa. KAYLA puts box over  
35 her head and sits on floor in front of them.)*

**KAYLA:** *(From under the box.)* Don't tell anybody where I am.

**COOK:** *(ENTERS UP CENTER, a heavy cane in one hand, a tray of  
halfwiches in the other. [See PRODUCTION NOTES #3 and #4.]  
She comes around sofa to DOWN RIGHT end.)* Master James  
40 said I was to bring you some food. *(Smiles.)* To fatten you up.  
*(Leans over and sets tray of sandwiches on box on KAYLA'S*



- 1        *head—KAYLA needs to steady the box so it doesn't tip.) Plump girls are always so much... nicer to have for dinner. (Steps back.) (Smiles.) Now, who will it be? (Pinches SAM'S arm to see if she is plump enough.)*
- 5    **SAMANTHA:** *(Jerks arm away.)* No! You're not going to make... fricassee of me!
- MARLO:** *(Quickly, nervous.)* Nobody is staying for dinner.
- EMILY:** *(Speaks quickly.)* We just need to use your phone.
- SAMANTHA:** *(Frightened.)* And then we'll be leaving. Won't we?
- 10   **ALEX:** In fact, I think we need to leave right now. *(Starts to rise.)*
- COOK:** *(Stomps her cane and smiles.)* No!
- ALEX:** Oh. *(Sinks back on sofa.)* Okay. I guess we could stay... a little while.
- COOK:** *(Shouts suddenly.)* Eat! *(EMILY, MARLO, ALEX and SAM quickly take a halfwich, eat, smile and nod.)*
- 15   **MARLO:** Very good. *(Nods.)*
- EMILY:** What kind are they?
- COOK:** Bread.
- SAMANTHA:** Nothing else?
- 20   **COOK:** Don't you like my halfwiches?
- SAMANTHA:** *(Frightened.)* Yes. Yes. We love them. *(KAYLA'S arm comes up around box, grabs a halfwich and takes it under the box where she eats it.)*
- MARLO:** I'm sorry, I forgot to introduce us. I'm Marlo.
- 25   **COOK:** *(Smiles.)* I don't care who you are. I'm Cook.
- ALEX:** Don't you have a... real name?
- COOK:** Yes. My name is Elizabeth Savannah Bordon. My friends call me Lizzie.
- EMILY:** *(Startled, gulps.)* You're... Lizzie Bordon?
- ALEX:** *(Eyes wide, starts to rise, points at COOK.)* Lizzie Bordon took an axe and gave her mother forty whacks. *(Points at COOK.)* That Lizzie Bordon?
- 30   **COOK:** Oh, no. *(Smiles dreamily.)* Not that one. She was my great aunt. *(Crosses DOWN LEFT.)* People always said we looked just alike. I always wanted to grow up to be just like her. *(Smiles broadly.)* And so I did.
- 35   **SAMANTHA:** *(Rises, moves around behind sofa.)* Your aunt killed her mother!
- COOK:** *(Smiles.)* I know.

End of script preview.



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PO Box 4267

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