Beware The House on Haunted Hill! by Matthew Byrd and Kathryn Funkhouser

Nora Manning and Lance Schroeder are guests at an eccentric millionaire’s party in the 1950s, where they are getting a tour of a famously haunted house, until they hang back behind the rest of the group. Nora is a nervous young woman who introduces herself as a professor of the paranormal. Lance is a friendly but vain actor who believes his handsomeness makes him more capable than he is. Both are a little self-absorbed.

(LANCE lingers behind, and NORA turns towards him as the others leave the room.)

NORA: Lance, are you coming? We really shouldn’t miss any of the tour.

LANCE: A tour? Ha! That’s a good one. Next, you’re going to tell me that you order off the menu. Don’t you want to explore this place on your own?

NORA: I don’t know if that’s a good idea…

LANCE: Of course, I’m right…I’m Lance! Now, let’s start with some of these doors. In my experience, doors almost always have something behind them.

(LANCE mimes opening a door.)

LANCE: See…dusty old bottles! You won’t find those on the beaten path.

NORA: Lance…can you keep a secret?

LANCE: Of course I can! Why, I’ve never even told anyone that Marilyn Monroe is actually a brunette.

NORA: It’s just that I’ve been holding on to something since we’ve got here, and I don’t know if I can keep it to myself any longer…

LANCE: (Looking around and not paying attention to NORA:) Keep talking, I’m absolutely listening.

NORA: Oh, Lance, I knew I could trust you! See, I’m not actually Professor Nora Manning.

LANCE: (Absentmindedly:) Too few of us are these days.

NORA: My real name is Paige Slugworth. I’m a student of Professor Manning’s. It all began years ago when my father bought an old Chevrolet.
LANCE: Sorry. Were you finished?

NORA: —I thought I was finished the day the old Chevrolet skidded off the road.

   (LANCE continues to wander around.)

NORA: The policeman said it was a wonder my family survived the automobile accident at all.
   But my dreams? They were the ones who died that day. Because now I’m the only one in my family who can make any money.

LANCE: I wonder if that’s a closet or another door?

NORA: (Too caught up in her story to notice:) So I worked the counter at the shoe store, I waitressed at the malt shop, I scrimped and saved and got myself a scholarship. But I never knew what struggle was until I got an on-campus job working for the great Professor Manning.

LANCE: It is a closet!

NORA: I know! Never have I been so disrespected. I toiled for this woman while she threw paperweights at my head and called me a waitress.

LANCE: (Totally ignoring her:) You know, they just don’t make cellars like they used to.

NORA: So one day, I walk into an office and find a fancy letter on her desk. I didn’t care what was in it…I just didn’t want her to have it. It turned out to be an invitation and...well, I’d never been to a fancy party. Much less one that offered a prize...

LANCE: Nora, you’ve got to stop talking about whatever you’ve been talking about and open one of these doors! They’re just the best.

NORA: (Exasperated:) Oh, very well...

   (NORA opens a door. A strange noise emerges from inside the newly discovered room. Perhaps a wail or laugh.)

NORA: What was that?

LANCE: What was what?

NORA: That noise!

LANCE: Oh, you’re probably just scaring yourself. I did it all the time when I played one of Frankenstein’s monsters in Seven Brides for Seven Frankensteins...

   (The noise emerges from the room again.)

NORA: Was that one in my head too?

LANCE: Hey you’re right...there is something in there. Don’t worry, I know just how to take care of it.

   (LANCE faces the open door.)
LANCE: LANCE!!!!!!!

(LANCE charges offstage into the room. There is a crashing sound and the door closes.)

NORA: Lance? Lance? Are you okay? What’s in there?

End of Scene.