

Master Read-Along Script

“The Perfect Touch”

by Eli Glass

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CAST

DAVID DAVID TROMBETTA
ROB MAURICE DAVIS
SUSAN KATHY JESTICE
NARRATOR PETER NAZARETIAN

PROLOGUE

NARRATOR: This story is based upon an actual incident which occurred on the night of April 4th, 1964.

It's a strange story, and much care has been taken here to re-create with some fidelity, the strange mood and the unpredictable events of that night. Unlike the events of a book, the events of real life, added end to end, rarely seem to form a plot. It could be said, indeed, that while books of fiction usually make sense, as we expect them to, real life seems to have more interest in making confusion than sense. And the characters of real life—that is, all of us—are not nearly as predictable as those in books. Our own actions, in fact, are often a mystery even to ourselves, as if they were being dictated to us whimsically, according to our own unseen desires and wants and pressures and fears.

If then, this story frames more questions than answers and leaves you more surprised than you think “stories” are supposed to, then just keep in mind, it is a true story—and reality is, indeed, stranger than fiction.

Our story begins on a spring night in 1964.

SCENE ONE

[SOUND OF CAR ENGINE AND SQUEAL OF TIRES ON WINDING ROAD]

ROB: *[NERVOUSLY, INSIDE A MOVING CAR]*

David, don't you think you're going a little too fast? It is dark, you know, and you've... I mean we've never been on this road before.

DAVID: Fear not, m'boy. “The Kid” is at the wheel; all is well.

ROB: What's with you lately? You're so cool it makes me sick. And I'm not “y'r boy.” I'm “y'r friend,” remember? My name is Rob.

DAVID: Ah, yes! Rob, m'boy. You are indeed a friend.

ROB: Oh, take a right up here. It, uh, looks like it might take us to, uh... something interesting.

[THE CAR SLOWS DOWN AND MAKES A TURN.]

DAVID: And you think I'm weird. Here you are, you keep telling me you don't know where we are or where we're going, but you keep giving me directions how to get there. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that you were...

ROB: David, look! That huge house up there, off the road...see it? In the middle of all those trees, on that hill. See it?

DAVID: Yeah... it's a house... in the middle of some trees... on a hill. Am I supposed to faint now or what?

ROB: Look at it! Doesn't it look downright haunted? Hey! Let's see if we can get up there to it.

DAVID: Hmm. It does look a little strange at that, doesn't it?

ROB: Here! Turn left. This must be the driveway.
[PAUSE] Wow! Would you look at that! Now there's a place that'd make anybody believe in ghosts.

DAVID: Well then, what say we, uh... venture inside? Or, don't you have the nerve?

ROB: You want to go in there?

DAVID: Hey... you're talkin' to "Th'Kid." You think "Th'Kid" is afraid of some house? Follow me, m'boy.

[THEY GET OUT OF THE CAR AND WALK UP TO THE DOOR.]

DAVID: Okay, Rob, you go first, and I'll follow.

ROB: Oh, no you don't! This was your idea.

DAVID: All right, have it your own way: you go first and I'll follow *you*.

ROB: Oh... [ALMOST FALLS FOR THE TRICK] Very funny, wise guy. You go first.

DAVID: Chicken. All right. You ready?

ROB: Ready. David, you smell that?

DAVID: All I smell is a musty house.

ROB: No. Not that. Something stinks.

DAVID: What'd you expect? A musty house that doesn't stink?

ROB: It doesn't just smell musty. It smells e-evil.

DAVID: Okay, it smells e-evil. Now come on.

ROB: David...

DAVID: Sh-h-h. Rob, did you hear that?

ROB: What? Did I hear what? What'd you hear?
I didn't hear anything. What'd you hear, David?
What kind of...

DAVID: Sh-h-h. Shut up and listen. Hear that?
Like water.

ROB: Yeah, or blood!

DAVID: Sh-h-h. Sounds like it's coming from upstairs somewhere. Come on!

ROB: You can't be serious! You want to go upstairs?

DAVID: What're you afraid of? Dripping!?

ROB: No! I'm afraid of what's dripping!

DAVID: That looks like the staircase over there.
Come on. Yeah, this is it. Be careful now; these old houses sometimes have loose stairs.

ROB: Yeah, loose stairs and trap doors and hands without arms and heads without bodies and skeletons in the attic and closets filled with eyeballs and...

DAVID: Will you shut up! You're beginning to scare me!

ROB: That's exactly what I'm trying to do.

DAVID: Sh-h-h. Now come on.

[THEY WALK SLOWLY UP THE STAIRS TO A DOOR ON THE SECOND FLOOR.]

DAVID: It must be in there.

ROB: What must be in there?! A head hanging from its own hair dripping blood and brains out of the neck?

DAVID: For the last time, Robert; Shut! Your! Mouth! [OPENS DOOR] Rob, look. There's the puddle. Can you see what color that is? I can't tell what it is, can you? Well...? Can you see it? You can't tell from back there; get up here and look at it.

ROB: Okay, I'm looking. Now take your hands off me. Quit pushing me.

DAVID: Rob...

ROB: What?

DAVID: I'm not touching you. I haven't laid a hand on you.

[THEY RUN DOWN THE STAIRS AND BACK TO THE CAR.]

ROB: [LAUGHING]

DAVID: So what're you laughing at? What's so funny?

ROB: You! You're so funny! You should've seen yourself! You were so scared!

DAVID: Uh-huh, sure. And you were the picture of courage, weren't you? "Oh, David, we can't go upstairs! Oh David, there's a head dripping blood and brains all over the place! Oh David, don't make me go up there, puh-le-ase don't make me go up those stairs! Oh David..." [JOINING IN THE LAUGHTER] Well, Rob—you great lion-hearted chicken you—are you ready to go?

ROB: Drive on, Fearless Leader!

[CAR DRIVES AWAY]

SCENE TWO

[INSIDE MOVING CAR]

DAVID: You've gotta be kidding, Rob. Take Susan up to that house? She'd go bananas for sure. And I thought you told me last week that she was scared half to death over those phone calls she's been getting in the middle of the night.

ROB: She is. She's lost sleep, her grades have gone from A's and B's to C's and D's, and she's breaking out all over her arms with these red blotches. Nervous rash, her doctor calls it.

DAVID: What does this weirdo say, exactly, when he calls her?

ROB: Strange things. Like, "Susan, I'm ver-r-ry concerned about you! You'd better lock your door and sleep with your lights on tonight."

DAVID: Oh, so he knows her name... Doesn't she recognize the voice?

ROB: She said it sounds like he's disguising it somehow, with a handkerchief over his mouth, or something. He calls her about every other night. Always the same thing: "Susan, I'm ver-r-ry concerned about you..." And

yesterday—Get this!—yesterday at school, she got a note in her locker, the whole thing made from letters cut out of magazines; it said, "My Dearest Susan, I'm afraid something awful is about to happen to you." And it was signed, "Your Guardian Angel."

DAVID: That's freaky. Real freaky. So why make things worse by showing her that house? I don't understand.

ROB: Well, the way I see it, it's not the phone calls that're hurting her; it's her fear that's hurting her. So I figure if I took her up to that house, and a few weird-type things happen—nothing real scary, you understand—but a few weird things happened, and when it was all over, she saw that there was really nothing to be afraid of, then she'd probably have a good laugh at everything... I mean, everything that's been happening to her lately. See? If I can get her to laugh at anything scary, she'd probably laugh at all of it, and get over all of it.

DAVID: Yeah, I see what you mean. So, tell me, what kind of "weird-type" things up at that house did you have in mind?

ROB: Oh, I don't know, maybe like while we're sitting in the car looking at the house, the car suddenly starts shaking... or the hood flies up, or something.

DAVID: And how is it that you plan to perform these little miracles from inside the car?

ROB: It was just an idea. I haven't made any plans or anything...

DAVID: Hey! Maybe I can!

ROB: Maybe you can what?

DAVID: Perform those little miracles for you.

ROB: What?

DAVID: Well, suppose I went with you two and rode in the back seat—way down in the back seat—I mean so far down that she couldn't see me, and suppose we just happened to wind up at

the house and suppose while we're there, you guys got out of the car and while you were gone, suppose I slipped out the other door and when you guys got back in the car suppose—just suppose now—I felt like running around from bush to bush with a sheet over my head and then slipped up behind the car and maybe “helped” it to shake a little bit and then slipped around to the front of the car and “helped” the hood fly up and...

ROB: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Slow down!

DAVID: What's wrong? Isn't that a good plan?

ROB: Oh, it's a good plan, all right, but, uh, why are you so eager to “help”? I mean, what's in it for you? You wouldn't have anything in mind like getting back at Susan, would you?

DAVID: Now, Rob, what could I possibly have against your girlfriend?

ROB: The fact that, uh, she used to be your girlfriend.

DAVID: That was over a month ago! Besides, it was my idea to break up with her. I told you that. Remember? Why would I want to “get back” at her when it was my idea to break up in the first place? Believe me, I'm not carrying any torches for that girl.

ROB: You sure?

DAVID: Sure, I'm sure. Look, Rob, I wouldn't lie to you; you're my buddy! Now, I might've lied to her once or twice; it's okay to lie to your girlfriend... but, you never lie to your buddy. It's like this: girlfriends come and go, right? ...but buddies gotta stick together.

ROB: David, you're absolutely right. I shouldn't have doubted you. And I'll tell you another thing, my friend: I like your plan! And if you're willing to go ahead with it, we'll do it!

DAVID: All right! Hey, I got another idea! There's a flashlight somewhere in the glove compartment there. Check and see if it works.

ROB: [*LOOKS IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT*] Yeah, here it is, and it works!

DAVID: Hand it here. Have you ever seen a guy's face in the dark when he holds a flashlight under his chin and shines the light up through his face? Close your eyes until I tell you to look. [*PAUSE*] Okay, look.

ROB: Ugh! That's hideous, David! Your face looks disgusting like one of those rubber masks... only worse, because it looks like real flesh. Uh, David? You're not thinking what I think you're thinking, are you?

DAVID: I think so...

ROB: No! Susan couldn't handle that. Really! It's too grotesque. Everything else is okay, but that flashlight business would be too much for her.

DAVID: Come on, now; it's not that bad. In fact, I think it'd be perfect... the perfect touch! Look, I'd sneak up to her window, give her “the flashlight business”—just for a second or two—and then I'd turn it off, show her it's just me, and we'll all have a big laugh. Just what the doctor ordered!

ROB: I don't know, David. If you do it, you have to tell her later that it was your idea.

DAVID: Okay, okay. If I do it—if I do it— I'll take full responsibility.

SCENE THREE

[*ON SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF SUSAN'S*]

SUSAN: I'm glad you called, Rob. I really needed to get away for awhile. I've been so nervous the last few days, I jump every time the phone rings. [*GETS IN THE CAR*]

[*ROB WALKS AROUND THE CAR AND GETS IN ON THE DRIVER'S SIDE.*]

SUSAN: Where're we going?

ROB: Oh, nowhere, really... just for a ride.

[STARTS THE CAR AND DRIVES OFF] Dad won't let me drive his "big new car"—he says I couldn't handle it—and I just felt like driving around tonight, so David's letting me use his car.

SUSAN: That's nice of him... but does he know you're taking me out tonight? Rob, I asked you a question... Does David know you're taking me out in his car tonight?

ROB: Hey! Why don't we go up to Echo Canyon Bridge? I hear they're finished with it now and...

SUSAN: Rob! Does David know what you're doing tonight?

ROB: Uh... David?

SUSAN: Yes, David!

ROB: You're asking if David knows what I'm doing tonight? Hmm... Does David know what I'm doing tonight? Let's see... Well, uh, let me put it this way: No.

SUSAN: Robert! You're terrible.

ROB: Who? Me?

SUSAN: Yes, you! You know he'd be upset if he knew. I thought you two were good friends.

ROB: We are. David's my best friend. And I figure, why ruin a perfectly good friendship with... with stupid honesty?

SUSAN: What David doesn't know won't hurt him, huh?

ROB: Something like that. The truth is, Susan, he didn't ask me any questions so I didn't answer any. Besides, at that point, I didn't know for sure if you'd go with me or not.

SUSAN: Well, I just hope he can't tell I was in his car. I'd feel terrible. Poor David...

ROB: Then let's keep him a friend to both of us; I won't tell him anything if you don't.

SUSAN: Well, okay, but I at least want you to know, I don't feel at all good about this.

ROB: Okay, you told me. Now let's take it easy and enjoy the ride.

SCENE FOUR

[INSIDE A MOVING CAR]

SUSAN: Rob, where are we? I don't even know what highway this is.

ROB: I don't either.

SUSAN: Well, don't you think we should find out? Oh, I just remembered! David always kept maps in the back seat somewhere. Let me see if I can ...

ROB: No! Don't look back there! I mean... there's nothing back there now. I, uh, I cleaned up the car earlier and took all the maps out.

SUSAN: You cleaned the car? Then why is it so dirty up here? There's dust all over the dashboard, a coke bottle on the floor, dirt all over the windshield... you call this clean?

ROB: Well, I... I didn't have time to clean the whole car.

SUSAN: So you just cleaned the back seat?

ROB: Well, yeah, see... it was the dirtiest.

SUSAN: So where are the maps?

ROB: Uh... the maps... the maps... Oh, yeah, I put them in my garage... at home.

SUSAN: In your garage! That's a great place for maps!

ROB: Susan, look! Up there in those trees... see it? Looks like a house or something.

SUSAN: I don't see anything.

ROB: It's right there in the middle of that group of trees. See it? Let me see if I can get a little closer.

SUSAN: I see it now. Oh, Rob, that place looks awful. I think I've seen enough of it. Let's just drive on by.

ROB: And pass this up? No, I want to stop and look at it for a minute or two. Oh, now that's a great looking house.

SUSAN: I don't like it; it gives me the creeps. I want to go.

ROB: Where's your sense of adventure? Why don't we go in and look around?

SUSAN: Are you out of your mind? I wouldn't go in that house for anything!

ROB: Okay, you wait here, and I'll be back in a few minutes.

SUSAN: Wait a minute! Am I supposed to stay here all alone?

ROB: There's nothing to be afraid of. Sit tight and lock the doors; [*GETS OUT OF THE CAR*] I'll be right back.

SUSAN: You're a fool, Robert! And if you think I'm going to wait out here in the dark, you're not just a fool... You're crazy! [*GETS OUT AND FOLLOWS ROB..*]

SCENE FIVE

[*HIDDEN IN THE BACK SEAT*]

DAVID: [*TO HIMSELF*] "Poor David!" I'll show her a "Poor David." If I can get this sheet over my head. Where's that flashlight? All right, now to get out of this car without being heard. [*HE GETS OUT OF THE BACK SEAT AND WALKS A DISTANCE FROM THE CAR.*]

DAVID: [*TO HIMSELF*] This's a good place to wait. If I know Susan, they'll be out any second now.

[*SUSAN AND ROB COME OUT OF THE HOUSE AND HURRY TO THE CAR.*]

SUSAN: [*FROM A DISTANCE*] ...why did I ever let you talk me into going in there.

ROB: Will you calm down?

SUSAN: I will not calm down! I'm upset!

ROB: Susan!

DAVID: [*THINKING TO HIMSELF*] Oh, that's perfect! She's already on edge. Now, let's see. If I run to that bush over there, and wave my arms, she ought to be able to see me.

[*SUSAN AND ROB ARE NOW INSIDE THE CAR.*]

SUSAN: What was that? Something white, moving. Did you see it?

ROB: There's nothing out there.

DAVID: [*THINKING*] Great! Let's see now... yeah, over there. That looks just like a bush a ghost would run behind.

SUSAN: Rob! Don't tell me you didn't see that! Now it's behind that bush over there!

ROB: Susan, you're seeing things.

SUSAN: Of course, I'm seeing things! I'm seeing something white running around out there!

ROB: It's probably just the moonlight playing tricks on your eyes. Now try to relax.

DAVID: [*THINKING*] Okay, okay, I think it's about time to have a... a little carquake. Yeah, a carquake. Down that hill and around behind looks like the best way. [*HE WALKS THROUGH THE BUSHES.*] [*THINKING*] Now, if I'm right, I should come up behind the car... right about... here. Just over this hill. Perfect! Right on target. Now... easy does it. [*MAKES THE CAR SHAKE*]

SUSAN: What's that? Rob! What's happening to the car? It's moving! Rob, the car's moving!

ROB: It's nothing, Susan. It's probably just the gas settling in the tank. It does that sometimes. It's normal.

SUSAN: I don't care what it is. I want to go! Rob, get me out of here! Please!

ROB: Aw, Susan, don't worry; I'm not going to let anything happen to you.

DAVID: [*STILL THINKING*] Now, if I can get to the front of the car. [*MOVING CARE-FULLY*] Right... about... now! [*THE HOOD FLIES UP.*]

SUSAN: Oh! You can't tell me the gas in the tank did that! For the last time, Rob, please take me home!

ROB: All right, all right. I'm a little scared too, to tell you the truth. I don't know what's going on out there. Let me wait a minute or two, until whatever it is that's out there goes away, and I'll shut the hood and get us out of here.

DAVID: [*THINKING*] And now... the flash-light!

ROB: Oh my God...

SUSAN: Rob, what are you looking at?

ROB: Nothing Susan! Don't turn around! Just keep looking at me.

SUSAN: There's something... something, behind me, isn't there? Outside my window! What're you looking at?

ROB: Susan! Stop! Don't look out that window!

SUSAN: [*SCREAMS*]

DAVID: Susan! Open the door! It's me, David. [*KNOCKS ON THE WINDOW*] It's just me! Susan! Rob! Unlock the door! [*THE DOOR OPENS.*] Susan! Look at me, it's David! Susan, it's me, say something, for God's sake! Rob, what's wrong with her? Why is she staring like that? Susan!...

ROB: David, I don't think she's going to answer. It was the flashlight; I think it was more than she could take.

DAVID: What do you mean, "more than she could take"?

ROB: I've read that this can happen to people. Too much fear, and something in them... just snaps.

DAVID: Oh, Susan! Look what I've done! I never meant to hurt you. Never! Even when I called in the middle of the night, I just wanted to hear you say hello, honest. But, I don't know, when I heard your voice, I just couldn't help myself. I needed to get back at you for what you did to me. I didn't mean this though! Oh, Susan, I hope someday you'll forgive me, because I'll never forgive myself!

ROB: David, let's go. I'd better get her to a hospital.

DAVID: Oh, no... No! I'll walk. I don't even deserve to sit next to her. Rob, this is the worst thing I've ever done!

ROB: It's over twenty miles home from here, David. You can't walk.

DAVID: I wish it were a hundred. [*CLOSES THE CAR DOOR AND LEAVES*]

ROB: Susan? He's gone.

SUSAN: My eyes are burning! Can I blink now?

ROB: Well, it worked. And we were right: David's your "Guardian Angel."

SUSAN: Poor David.