**I Have Been Here Before**

**By: J.B. Priestly**

Act I

Sam and his daughter Sally, proprietors of the Black Bull Inn, are awaiting the arrival of guests when an elderly German professor stops to make enquiries. The inn is booked out; he asks unusual questions about the people staying at the inn, but his conjectures appear to be wrong. Shortly after he is turned away, the three women they had been expecting cancel their bookings by telephone. Sally is annoyed at the cancellation, but almost immediately they receive another telephone call from Mr and Mrs Ormund, a wealthy couple who book two rooms.

Their other guest, the schoolmaster Oliver Farrant, returns from a walk, and is closely followed by the professor, who has seen him enter. The professor introduces himself as Dr Görtler, a German refugee, and asks eagerly for a room.

When the Ormunds arrive, Mr Farrant is startled to realise that they are his new employers; the Ormunds are starting a school, and have already appointed him as headmaster. They chat briefly, but Mr Ormund does not take to him, and expresses reservations to his wife. Dr Görtler joins the Ormunds and unnerves them by asking strangely accurate questions about their feelings of déjà vu. When Görtler has gone to bed, Sally explains to the other guests the inexplicably successful predictions the professor had made that afternoon about their identities.

Act II

Mr Farrant and Mrs Ormund go out walking for the day. In their absence, Dr Görtler interrogates Mr Ormund about his life. His probing into Mr Ormund's emotional state induces the unhappy man to make a quasi-suicide attempt, fetching a revolver from his car and firing it into the ground.

Upset by Dr Görtler's questions and by his expounding of a doctrine of eternal return to the landlord and guests, Sally and Mr Ormund demand that he leaves.

When Mr Farrant and Mrs Ormund come back from their walk, they admit to each other that they have studiously avoided crossing paths all day, in an unconscious attempt to fend off the fatalistic sense that they are doomed to deceive Mr Ormund. As the clock chimes, they embrace.

Act III

Mr Farrant examines Dr Görtler's forgotten notebook. When Mr Ormund arrives, Mr Farrant and Mrs Ormund announce that they are leaving together. The sense of déjà vu is so overpowering that all of their emotional reactions are muted. Dr Görtler returns for his notebook, and explains to them that he was brought here by a precognitive dream: this pair would elope, Mr Ormund would commit suicide, the school would fold, and the lives would be ruined of all concerned.

As a result of Dr Görtler's intervention, there is no suicide. Mr Farrant and Mrs Ormund leave, but Mr Ormund takes the blow calmly, realising that his life has been saved.