SYNOPSIS OF THE GHOST SONATA
from Jeremy-brett.fr

“In the imagination, anything may happen. Everything is possible and probable. Time and space
do not exist. On an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders
novel patterns. A medley of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities and improvisations.
The characters split, double, multiply, vanish, solidify, blur, clarify but one consciousness reigns
above them all - that of the dreamer. And before it there are no secrets, no incongruities, no
scruples, no laws...”

In a street, The Old Man sits next to a drinking fountain in his wheelchair. The ghost of The
Milkmaid appears and walks past him but he cannot see her. The Student also appears - he has
been helping to rescue people from collapsed house and is both dirty and thirsty. The Student
drinks from the fountain and asks The Milkmaid to wipe his eyes for him. The Old Man can see
no one apart from The Student.

The Old Man recognizes The Student as the son of an old business acquaintance. The Student, in
turn, recognizes The Old Man as the person responsible for bankrupting his father. Convincing
The Student that he was not at fault, The Old Man takes advantage of The Student's admitted
financial embarrassment and offers him a job. The Student agrees and, immediately, The Old
Man starts scheming - he will use him to gain entrance to The Colonel's house (which they are
standing in front of) by bringing him to The Colonel’s notice at the next performance of The
Valkyrie. The Old Man discovers that The Student is a 'Sunday Child ‘and he can see things that
other people cannot see. The Student tells him of The Milkmaid and The Old Man becomes
visibly agitated.

That evening, inside The Colonel's house, his Daughter sits in The Hyacinth Room, leading off
from the main Salon. She sits at her harp. Two servants - Bengtsson and Johansson -enter the
room and set it up for the usual tea-party, or “Spook Supper”. Bengtsson tells him that the
Colonel's wife is mad - she lives in a cupboard. He opens the cupboard to reveal The Mummy, as
they call her, sitting on a chair, surrounded by cobwebs and making parrot noises. She has been
like this for forty years. Bengtsson also points out a black Japanese screen in the corner of the
salon. It is a “death screen” - it is used when someone is due to die.

The Old Man appears behind them, personally uninvited but there nonetheless. He demands to
see The Colonel. The Mummy appears from the cupboard and he is appalled at what she has now
become, as she was once beautiful. She asks him why he has come here. He has come for their
daughter - The Colonel's Daughter. She goes back into the cupboard as The Colonel approaches.

The Colonel says he is aware that all his 'notes of hand ‘have been bought up by The Old Man
and he wants to know his business with him. The Old Man systematically destroys the Colonel
by disproving his rank, his status and his family name, leaving him with nothing. Invited to
dinner, The Student arrives and he is asked to introduce himself to The Colonel’s Daughter while
The Colonel and The Old Man conclude their business.
The other guests arrive and sit down to tea. They are all spiritually corrupt in their own way and are known to The Old Man, who harangues them. Composing himself, he tells them that The Colonel's Daughter is, in fact, his own daughter and she has lost the desire to live, a fact which he blames firmly on them (“this air-foul with crime, false with treachery has withered her”). He has brought The Student there so that she may absorb some of his “light and warmth”.

The Mummy wakes from her torpor and accuses The Old Man of hypocrisy - he is worse than any of them. Bengtsson tells them all about The Old Man: his nastiness, his cheapness, his involvement in the drowning of a woman - milkmaid - who had been a witness to one of his transactions. The Old Man is mentally and spiritually beaten - he hands over everything he has taken from The Colonel. The Old Man crawls across the floor while making parrot noises and is shut in the cupboard. The death screen is placed in front of the cupboard door and they all sit down to tea again.

In the Hyacinth Room, The Student sings as The Colonel’s Daughter plays the harp. He tells her that he has fallen in love with her, but she tells him that she cannot return that love. She is being suffocated by the atmosphere of decaying the house. The Student wants to take her away from all of this but she explains to him that it is her destiny to stay there - she is tired of life. He is angry for her - the house is full of lies and deceit and it is suffocating her. Just by being there he feels poisoned himself.

The Colonel's Daughter tells him that she is dying - she cannot bear to live any longer in the house. They move the death screen in front of her. The Student tells her that she has suffered for the guilt of others and wishes her sweet dreams and a better life in the “next world.”