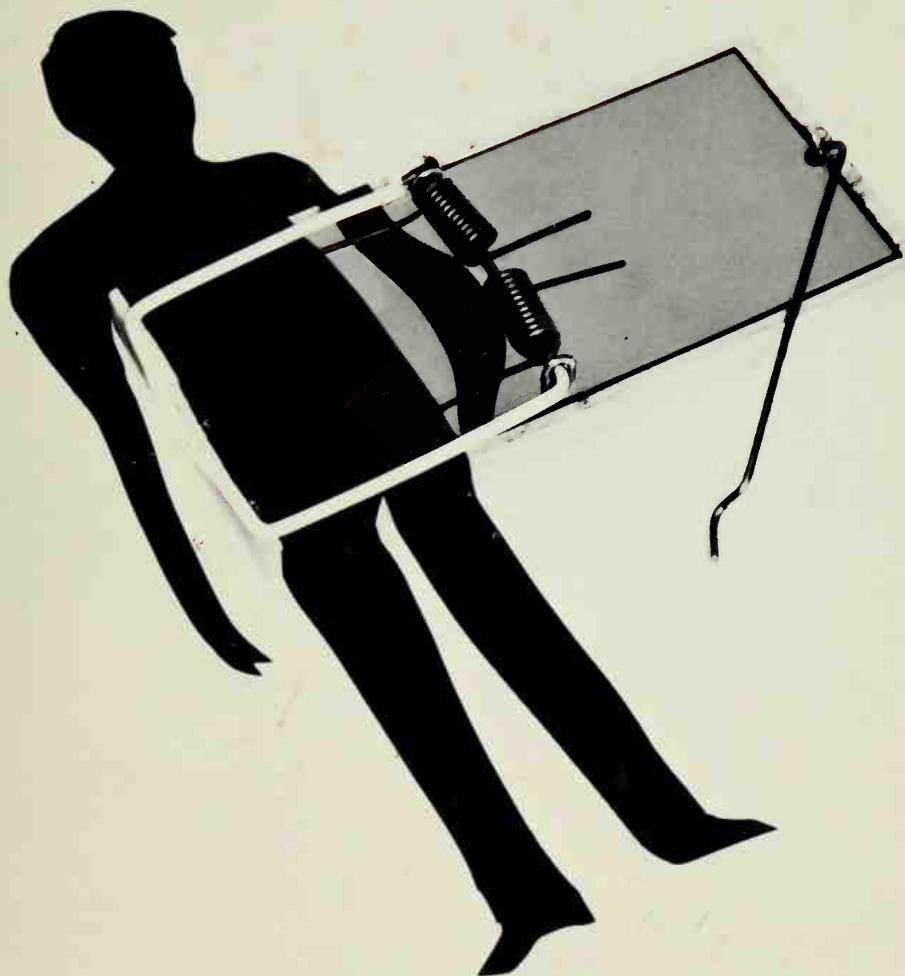


The Mousetrap *and Other Plays*



by Agatha Christie
INTRODUCTION BY IRA LEVIN

The Mousetrap *and Other Plays* *by Agatha Christie*

Now in its 26th year—
the longest-running play ever...

During her lifetime, Agatha Christie steadfastly refused to publish her plays. Now—after much arduous negotiating—readers can delight in this first volume of eight brilliant stage thrillers from the Grande Dame of suspense. Here, making their initial appearance, are some of the most ingenious and chilling whodunits ever to grace the stage. And heading the list is the record-breaking, phenomenally successful *The Mousetrap*, now in its 26th year of continuous performance in London.

THE MOUSETRAP. A superbly constructed mystery, irresistibly suspenseful from the first moment, this legendary drama about eight people snowbound with an avenging murderer has been wearing out actors, furniture and theatrical records ever since it first opened in London in 1952. The longest-running play in the history of the English-speaking stage, it appears here in print for the first time.

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION. Classic, "double-twist" stunner about a sensational murder trial. International stage success, New York Drama Critics Award-winner and hit motion picture.

TEN LITTLE INDIANS. A great success on stage in London and New York, this famous "locked-room" puzzler has also been seen in three film versions.

(continued on back flap)



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THE MOUSETRAP & OTHER PLAYS

& OTHER PLAYS

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

INTRODUCTION BY DAVID LEVY

Dodd Mead & Company • New York

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BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

INTRODUCTION BY IRA LEVIN

Dodd, Mead & Company • New York

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Introduction to
AGATHA CHRISTIE'S PLAYS
Ira Levin

An Agatha Christie is, of course, a mystery novel, cleanly written, masterfully surprising, and usually featuring Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple. One begins it, if one is sensible, around nine P.M., and some time after midnight one smites one's brow and says, "Of course! Why didn't I see it? It was staring me in the face!" One marvels awhile and falls into peaceful slumber. As the *New York Times* understated in a funeral piece on Dame Agatha, "She gave more pleasure than most other people who have written books."

There are about sixty Agatha Christies, which in a way is a pity, because their continuing popularity has overshadowed a second definition of the generic noun; for an Agatha Christie is also a mystery *play*, cleanly written, masterfully surprising, and *not* featuring Poirot or Miss Marple. It unfolds in two hours instead of four or five, and being both alive and more concentrated, produces a more intense pleasure. It runs for years, or in one instance forever.

There are about a dozen of these other Agatha Christies, and in them, if one knows the turf, is an accomplishment even more awe-inspiring than those sixty-odd novels. Other novelists, after all, have given us large numbers of first-rate mysteries; John Dickson Carr and George Simenon spring to mind. No playwright except Christie, however, has given us more than one great stage mystery. Check any critic's list of the ten or twelve masterworks in that trickiest and most demanding of genres and you'll find that each play—*Night Must Fall*, *Angel Street*, *The Bad Seed*, *Dial "M" for Murder*, *Sleuth*, and so on—is the work of a different hand. One real stunner per playwright seems to be all that's possible, and not for want of trying. The sole exception is Dame Agatha, who managed to

write not one, not two, but three of the great stage mysteries: *Ten Little Indians*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, and *The Mousetrap*. When you have read them—all three are in this volume, along with five other Christie plays—perhaps you too will wonder that the second definition of an Agatha Christie isn't as widely known as the first.

Agatha Christie turned to playwriting in the midst of her novel-writing career for a reason that was, like the lady herself, both modest and astute. Other playwrights had adapted some of her novels to the stage; they had erred, she felt, in *following the books too closely*. A rare complaint for a novelist, believe me. But "a detective story is particularly unlike a play . . ." she explains in her autobiography. "It has such an intricate plot, and usually so many characters and false clues, that the thing is bound to be confusing and overladen. What was wanted was *simplification*."

And so, with *Ten Little Indians*, she decided to try the job herself. She proved to be instinctively theatrical, and ruthless as no other playwright would have dared be with her work. Three of the plays in this volume—*Appointment with Death*, *The Hollow*, and *Go Back for Murder*—are adapted from Poirot novels, but you won't find Poirot listed in the *dramatis personae*; Dame Agatha deemed him unnecessary. In *Appointment with Death* she found a new murderer among the principal characters; the novel's murderer becomes the play's comic relief. Two of the dead bodies of *Ten Little Indians* survive and find love in the stage version, and somehow do so without disturbing the pattern of that most dazzling of all Christie plots. (The novel, in its American editions, is called *And Then There Were None*, if you care to compare, and I hope you do.)

Nowhere is Agatha Christie's remarkable ingenuity more evident than in her adaptation of *Witness for the Prosecution*. The short story of the same title is seemingly perfect and complete, with a stunning final revelation that lifts the reader in his chair. Yet for the stage version Dame Agatha devised still another revelation beyond that one, an entirely plausible surprise that not only makes for an electrifying curtain but at the same time legitimizes what would otherwise have been a necessary deception in the list of characters. Again I hope you will read and compare, especially if you're an aspiring playwright.

Verdict is the only play in this volume not adapted from another Christie work. Dame Agatha considered it her best play except for *Witness for the Prosecution*; I would put it somewhat lower on the scale, but I am here to introduce, not argue.

The Mousetrap, based on a radio sketch written to commemorate the eightieth birthday of Queen Mary, is the Christie play that is running forever. It opened in London in 1952 and has been wearing out actors, furniture, and theatrical records ever since. Cynics attribute its perpetual run to the smallness of the theater in which it plays, but that small theater was there long before 1952; why did none of its previous tenants become a tourist attraction as popular as Madame Tussaud's and the Tower of London? *The Mousetrap* is a superbly constructed mystery, irresistibly suspenseful from its very first moment, and therein lies the real reason for its enduring success.

Playwriting was, for Agatha Christie, a holiday from the book-a-year routine of her professional life. Reading her plays—more concise than the novels, richer than the short stories—can be the same sort of holiday for her readers. One word of advice to those not accustomed to reading plays: Don't worry too much about the chairs and tables. It rarely matters whether they're at stage right or stage left, or whether the doors are upstage or down. What does matter is the dialogue. Try to *hear* it, and try to hear the pauses too, that's where the shivers are.

I was fifteen when my parents took me to see the New York production of *Ten Little Indians*. As those figurines vanished one by one from the mantelpiece and the actors vanished one by one from the stage, I fell in love—with theater that grips and dazzles and surprises. I was already a would-be novelist, thanks in part to the other Agatha Christies; now I was a would-be playwright too. That 15-year-old boy and I are pleased to be introducing these plays to you.

Ira Levin

New York City
June, 1978

TOWARDS ZERO

Presented by Peter Saunders at the St. James's Theatre, London, on the 4th September, 1956, with the following cast of characters:

(In the order of their appearance)

THOMAS ROYDE	Cyril Raymond
KAY STRANGE	Mary Law
MARY ALDIN	Gillian Lind
MATHEW TREVES	Frederick Leister
NEVILLE STRANGE	George Baker
LADY TRESSILIAN	Janet Barrow
AUDREY STRANGE	Gwen Cherrell
TED LATIMER	Michael Scott
SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE, C.I.D., <i>Scotland Yard</i>	William Kendall
INSPECTOR LEACH, <i>local C.I.D.</i>	Max Brimmell
P. C. BENSON	Michael Nightingale

Directed by MURRAY MACDONALD

Décor by MICHAEL WEIGHT

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play passes in the drawing-room at Gull's Point, Lady Tressilian's house at Saltcreek, Cornwall.

ACT I

SCENE 1: A morning in September.

SCENE 2: After dinner, four days later.

ACT II

SCENE 1: Early the following morning.

SCENE 2: Two hours later.

ACT III

SCENE 1: The next morning.

SCENE 2: The same evening.

TIME: The present

Act One

Scene I

SCENE: *The drawing-room at Gull's Point, Lady Tressilian's house at Saltcreek, Cornwall. A morning in September. It is a large, very beautiful room, obviously belonging to somebody with exquisite taste. It has been furnished to combine elegance with comfort. There is a deep, arched alcove up R. with French windows opening on to a terrace overlooking the garden and tennis court. A large curved-bay window up L., with a built-in window-seat, shows a view across the river to Easterhead Bay, with a large hotel on the cliff opposite. This window is slightly raised above the rest of the stage on a platform or rostrum. A door down L. leads to the other parts of the house. There is a chaise-longue R. C.; easy chairs down R. and down L. and armchairs L. C. and R. In the alcove R. there is a bureau-bookcase with a carver chair, a small table and an upright chair. A waste-paper basket stands L. of the bureau. Down R. there is a small table, and on it a framed photograph of Audrey. A standing work-basket is R. of the armchair L. C. On the rostrum in the bay window is a low butler's tray with a variety of drinks and glasses. A large circular coffee table stands C. A low bookcase, with a table-lamp on it, is L. of the window and there is a corner table R. of the window. On the window-seat, at the L. end is a portable record player with some loose records. At night the room is lit by electric-candle wall-brackets down L. and above and below the alcove R. The switches are below the door down L.*

When the curtain rises, the room is empty. An incongruous carpet sweeper stands negligently against the easy chair down L. Thomas Royde enters immediately by the French windows. He is a bronzed middle-aged man, good-looking in a rugged way. He carries a suitcase and a set of golf clubs. As he reaches the upstage end of the chaise, the door down L. is banged by someone as though rushing out of the room. Royde shrugs, moves to the window bay, puts his case and clubs at the L. end of it, opens the C. sash of the window, then takes his pipe and pouch from his pocket and stands gazing out of the window

and filling his pipe. *Kay Strange rushes in R. She is dressed in tennis kit and carries a towel. Clearly upset about something, she does not see Royde, tosses the towel on the the chaise, goes to the table down R. and takes a cigarette from the box on it. As she does so, she sees the photograph of Audrey, drops the cigarette, picks up the photograph, rips it from the frame, tears it in half and throws it angrily into the waste-paper basket. Royde turns sharply. Kay pauses a moment, then looks round and sees Royde. She looks at once like a guilty child and is for a moment too startled to say anything.*

KAY. Oh! Who are you?

ROYDE. (*Moving to R. of the rostrum*) I've just walked up from the bus stop. I'm . . .

KAY. (*Interrupting.*) I know who you are. You're the man from Malaya.

ROYDE. (*Gravely.*) Yes, I'm the man from Malaya.

KAY. (*Moving to the coffee table c.*) I just—came in, to get a cigarette. (*She takes a cigarette from the box on the coffee table, crosses to the French windows and turns.*) Oh, hell, what's the good of explaining? What do I care what you think, anyway? (*Kay rushes out R. Royde stares thoughtfully after her. Mary Aldin enters L. She is a dark-haired woman of about thirty-six, pleasant and noncommittal in manner and entirely competent. Nevertheless there is something faintly intriguing about her reserve. Royde turns to Mary.*)

MARY. (*Moving L. c.*) Mr. Royde? (*Royde moves to R. of Mary and shakes hands with her.*) Lady Tressilian is not down yet. I am Mary Aldin—Lady Tressilian's dogsbody.

ROYDE. Dogsbody?

MARY. The official term is secretary—but as I don't know shorthand and such talents I have are purely domestic, "dogsbody" is a much better word.

ROYDE. I know all about you. Lady Tressilian told me in her Christmas letter what a wonderful difference you had made to her.

MARY. I've very fond of her. She has a lot of personality.

ROYDE. (*Moving to L. of the chaise*) That's quite an understatement. (*He turns to Mary.*) How's her arthritis?

MARY. It makes her rather helpless, poor dear.

ROYDE. I'm sorry about that.

MARY. (*Moving on to the rostrum*) Can I offer you a drink?

ROYDE. No, thank you. (*He moves on to the R. end of the rostrum and looks out of the window.*) What's that great caravanserai over there?

MARY. That's the new *Easterhead Bay Hotel*. It was only finished last year— isn't it a horror? *(She closes the window.)* Lady Tressilian doesn't like this window opened, she's always afraid that someone might fall out. Yes, Easterhead Bay is a terrific resort, you know, nowadays. *(She crosses to the chaise, picks up Kay's towel and tidies the cushions.)* I suppose when you came here as a boy there was nothing the other side of the estuary except a few fishermen's cottages. *(She pauses.)* You did come here for your school holidays, didn't you? *(She puts the towel tidily on the end of the chaise.)*

ROYDE. Yes, old Sir Mortimer used to take me out sailing—he was mad keen on sailing.

MARY. Yes. He was drowned out there.

ROYDE. Lady Tressilian saw it happen, I wonder she can go on living here.

MARY. I think she preferred to remain with her memories. But she won't have any boat kept here—she even had the boathouse pulled down.

ROYDE. So if I want to sail or go for a row, I've got to go to the ferry.

MARY. *(Crossing to the butler's tray)* Or cross to the Easterhead side. That's where all the boats are nowadays.

ROYDE. *(Moving above the chaise.)* I hate changes. Always have. *(Rather self-consciously.)* May I ask who else is staying here?

MARY. Old Mr. Treves—you know him? *(Royde nods.)* And the Stranges.

ROYDE. *(Moving to R of her.)* The Stranges? You mean—Audrey Strange, Neville's first wife?

MARY. Audrey, yes. But Neville Strange and his—new wife are here, too.

ROYDE. Isn't that a bit odd?

MARY. Lady Tressilian thinks it very odd indeed.

ROYDE. Bit awkward—what? *(Mathew Treves enters by the French windows R., fanning himself with an old-fashioned panama hat. He is an elderly and distinguished lawyer of ripe experience and great shrewdness. He has retired from his London firm some years ago and is now a keen observer of human nature. His voice is dry and precise.)*

TREVES. *(As he enters.)* Rather too much glare on the terrace today . . . *(He sees Royde.)* Ah, Thomas. Nice to see you after all these years. *(He stands up L. of the chaise.)*

ROYDE. *(Moving to Treves.)* I'm very glad to be here. *(He shakes hands with Treves.)*

MARY. *(Moving to Royde's suitcase.)* Shall I take your things up to your room?

ROYDE. *(Crossing quickly to Mary.)* No, no, I can't let you do that. *(He*

picks up his suitcase and golf clubs. Mary leads the way to the door L., sees the sweeper and picks it up.)

MARY. (*With a vexed exclamation.*) Really! Mrs. Barrett . . . These daily women are impossible. It makes Lady Tressilian very angry when things are left all over the place.

ROYDE. (*Following Mary to the door L.*) I think my sudden arrival on the terrace frightened the poor woman. (*He looks towards Treves. Treves smiles.*)

MARY. Oh, I see. (*Mary and Royde exit L. Treves turns to the bureau, sees the torn photograph in the waste-paper basket, stoops with a little difficulty and picks up the pieces. His eyebrows rise and he makes a little sound like "Tut, tut."*)

KAY. (*Off L.; calling.*) Where are you going to, Neville?

NEVILLE. (*Off L.*) Only into the house for a moment. (*Treves puts the pieces of the photograph into the waste-paper basket. Neville Strange enters by the French windows L. He wears tennis kit and carries the remains of a glass of lemonade. He crosses to the coffee table and puts the glass on it.*) Isn't Audrey here?

TREVES. No.

NEVILLE. Where is she? Do you know?

TREVES. I have no idea.

KAY. (*Off, calling.*) Neville—Neville. (*Treves moves down R. of the chaise.*)

NEVILLE. (*Frowning.*) Oh, damn!

KAY. (*Off, nearer.*) Neville.

NEVILLE. (*Crossing to the French windows and calling.*) Coming—coming. (*Royde enters L.*)

ROYDE. (*Moving to L. of the coffee table.*) Neville.

NEVILLE. (*Moving to R. of the coffee table.*) Hullo, Thomas. (*They shake hands above the coffee table.*) What time did you get here?

ROYDE. Just now.

NEVILLE. Must be quite a long time since I saw you last. When was it you were home, three years ago?

ROYDE. Seven.

NEVILLE. Good Lord, is it, really? How time flies.

KAY. (*Off.*) Neville!

NEVILLE. (*Moving above the chaise.*) All right, Kay. (*Kay enters by the French windows R.*)

KAY. (*Moving to R. of Neville.*) Why can't you come? Ted and I are waiting.

NEVILLE. I just came to see if Audrey . . .

KAY. (*Turning away.*) Oh, bother Audrey—we can get on quite well . . .
(*Kay and Neville exit by the French windows R. Their voices die away.*)

ROYDE. And who is Kay?

TREVES. (*Moving below the chaise to R. of the coffee table.*) The present Mrs. Neville Strange. (*Lady Tressilian enters L. Mary assists her on. Lady Tressilian uses a walking stick. She is a white-haired, aristocratic-looking woman, a little younger than Treves. Mary carries Lady Tressilian's sewing.*) Good morning, Camilla.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Good morning, Mathew. (*She greets Royde affectionately.*) Well, Thomas, so here you are. I'm very glad to see you.

ROYDE. (*Rather shyly.*) Very glad to be here. (*Mary puts the sewing in the work-box and arranges the cushion in the armchair L. C.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Tell me all about yourself.

ROYDE. (*Mumbling.*) Nothing to tell.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Studying him.*) You look exactly the same as you did at fourteen. That same boiled owl look. And no more conversation now than you had then. (*Treves moves up C. Mary moves to the butler's tray.*)

ROYDE. Never had the gift of the gab.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Then it's time you learnt. Have some sherry? Mathew? Thomas?

ROYDE. Thank you. (*Mary pours two glasses of sherry.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Indicating the sofa.*) Then go and sit down. Somebody's got to amuse me by bringing me all the gossip. (*She sits in the armchair L. C.*) Why can't you be more like Adrian? I wish you'd known his brother, Mary, a really brilliant young man, witty, amusing—(*Royde sits on the chaise.*) all the things that Thomas isn't. And don't go grinning at me, Thomas Royde, as though I were praising you. I'm scolding you.

ROYDE. Adrian was certainly the show man of our family.

MARY. (*Handing a glass of sherry to Treves.*) Did he—was he—killed in the war?

ROYDE. No, he was killed in a motor accident two years ago.

MARY. How dreadful! (*She hands a glass of sherry to Royde.*)

TREVES. The impossible way young people drive cars nowadays . . .
(*Lady Tressilian picks up her sewing.*)

ROYDE. In his case it was some fault in the steering. (*He takes his pipe*

from his pocket and looks at Lady Tressilian.) I'm so sorry, may I?
(Mary pours another glass of sherry.)

LADY TRESSILIAN. I wouldn't know you without your pipe. But don't think you can just sit back and puff contentedly while you're here. You've got to exert yourself and *help*.

ROYDE. *(Surprised.)* Help? *(Treves perches himself on the upstage end of the chaise.)*

LADY TRESSILIAN. We've got a difficult situation on our hands. Have you been told who's here? *(Mary takes the glass of sherry to Lady Tressilian. To Mary.)* No, no, much too early, pour it back into the decanter. *(Mary resignedly pours the glass of sherry into the decanter.)*

ROYDE. Yes, I've just heard.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Well, don't you think it's disgraceful?

ROYDE. Well . . .

TREVES. You'll have to be a little more explicit, Camilla.

LADY TRESSILIAN. I intend to be. When I was a girl such things did not happen. Men had their affairs, naturally, but they did *not* allow them to break up their married life.

TREVES. Regrettable though the modern point of view may be, one has to accept it, Camilla. *(Mary moves to the easy chair down L. and sits on the upstage arm of it.)*

LADY TRESSILIAN. That's not the point. We were all delighted when Neville married Audrey. Such a sweet gentle girl. *(To Royde.)* You were all in love with her—you, Adrian and Neville. Neville won.

ROYDE. Naturally. He always wins.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Of all the defeatist . . .

ROYDE. I don't blame her, Neville had everything—good looks, first-class athlete—even had a shot at swimming the channel.

TREVES. And all the kudos of that early Everest attempt—never stuck up about it.

ROYDE. *Mens sana in corpore sana.*

LADY TRESSILIAN. Sometimes I think that's the only bit of Latin you men ever learn in your expensive education.

TREVES. My dear Camilla, you must allow for its being invariably quoted by one's housemaster whenever he is slightly embarrassed.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Mary, I wish you wouldn't sit on the arms of chairs—you know how much I dislike it.

MARY. (*Rising.*) Sorry, Camilla. (*She sits in the easy chair down L. Treves rises guiltily and quickly, then sits above Royde on the chaise.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Now where was I?

MARY. You were saying that Audrey married Nevile.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Oh, yes. Well, Audrey married Nevile and we were all delighted. Mortimer was particularly pleased, wasn't he, Mathew?

TREVES. Yes, yes.

LADY TRESSILIAN. And they were very happy together until this creature Kay came along; how Nevile could leave Audrey for a girl like Kay I simply cannot imagine.

TREVES. I can—I've seen it happen so often.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Kay is quite the wrong wife for Nevile, no background.

TREVES. But a singularly attractive young woman.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Bad stock, her mother was notorious all over the Riviera.

ROYDE. What for?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Never you mind. What an upbringing for a girl. Kay made a dead set at Nevile from the moment they met, and never rested until she got him to leave Audrey and go off with her. I blame Kay entirely for the whole thing.

TREVES. (*Rising and moving above the coffee table, fairly amused.*) I'm sure you do. You're very fond of Nevile.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Nevile's a fool. Breaking up his marriage for a silly infatuation. It nearly broke poor Audrey's heart. (*To Royde.*) She went to your mother at the Vicarage and practically had a nervous breakdown.

ROYDE. Er—yes—I know.

TREVES. When the divorce went through, Nevile married Kay.

LADY TRESSILIAN. If I had been true to my principles I should have refused to receive them here.

TREVES. If one sticks too rigidly to one's principles one would hardly see anybody.

LADY TRESSILIAN. You're very cynical, Mathew—but it's quite true. I've accepted Kay as Nevile's wife—though I shall never really like her. But I must say I was dumbfounded and very much upset, wasn't I, Mary?

MARY. Yes, you were, Camilla.

LADY TRESSILIAN. When Nevile wrote asking if he could come home with Kay, under the pretext, if you please, that it would be nice if Audrey and Kay could be friends—(*Scornfully.*) friends—I said I couldn't en-

ertain such a suggestion for a moment and that it would be very painful for Audrey.

TREVES. (*Putting his glass on the coffee table.*) And what did he say to that?

LADY TRESSILIAN. He replied that he had already consulted Audrey and she thought it a good idea.

TREVES. And did Audrey think it a good idea?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Apparently, yes. (*She tosses a knot of silk to Mary.*) Unravel that.

MARY. Well, she said she did, quite firmly.

LADY TRESSILIAN. But Audrey is obviously embarrassed and unhappy. If you ask me, it's just Neville being like Henry the Eighth.

ROYDE. (*Puzzled.*) Henry the Eighth?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Conscience. Neville feels guilty about Audrey and is trying to justify himself. (*Mary rises, moves above the armchair L. C. and puts the silks in the work-basket.*) Oh! I don't understand any of this modern nonsense. (*To Mary.*) Do you? (*Royde puts his glass on the coffee table.*)

MARY. In a way.

LADY TRESSILIAN. And you, Thomas?

ROYDE. Understand Audrey—but I don't understand Neville. It's not like Neville.

TREVES. I agree. Not like Neville at all, to go looking for trouble. (*Mary transfers Royde's and Treves' glasses to the butler's tray.*)

MARY. Perhaps it was Audrey's suggestion.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Oh, no. Neville says it was entirely his idea.

MARY. Perhaps he thinks it was. (*Treves looks sharply at Mary.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. What a fool the boy is, bringing two women together who are both in love with him. (*Royde looks sharply at Lady Tressilian.*) Audrey has behaved perfectly, but Neville himself has paid far too much attention to her, and as a result Kay has become jealous, and as she has no kind of self-control, it is all most embarrassing—(*To Treves.*) isn't it? (*Treves, gazing towards the French windows, does not hear.*) Mathew?

TREVES. There is undeniably a certain tension . . .

LADY TRESSILIAN. I'm glad you admit it. (*There is a knock on the door L.*) Who's that?

MARY. (*Moving to the door L.*) Mrs. Barrett, I expect, wanting to know something.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Irritably.*) I wish you could teach these women that

they only knock on *bedroom* doors. (*Mary exits L.*) The last so-called butler we had, actually whistled, *Come into the garden, Maud*, as he served at table. (*Mary enters L.*)

MARY. It's only about the lunch, Camilla. I'll see to it. (*Mary exits L.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. I don't know what I should do without Mary. She's so self-effacing that I sometimes wonder whether she *has* a self of her own.

TREVES. I know. She's been with you nearly two years now, but what's her background?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Her father was a professor of some kind, I believe. He was an invalid and she nursed him for years. Poor Mary, she's never had any life of her own. And now, perhaps, it's too late. (*She rises and puts her sewing in the work-box.*)

TREVES. I wonder. (*He strolls to the French windows.*) They're still playing tennis. (*Royde rises, moves and stands behind Treves, gazing off R.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Nevile and Kay?

TREVES. No, Kay and that friend of hers from the *Easterhead Bay Hotel*—young Latimer.

LADY TRESSILIAN. That theatrical-looking young man. (*She moves to L. of the coffee table.*) Just the sort of friend she would have.

TREVES. One wonders what he does for a living.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Lives by his wits, I imagine.

TREVES. (*Moving slowly down R.*) Or by his looks. A decorative young man. (*Dreamily.*) Interesting shaped head. The last man I saw with a head shaped like that was at the Central Criminal Court—a case of brutal assault on an elderly jeweller.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Mathew! Do you mean to tell me . . . ?

TREVES. (*Perturbed.*) No, no, no, you misunderstand me. I am making no suggestion of any kind. I was only commenting on a matter of anatomical structure.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Oh, I thought . . .

TREVES. What reminded me of that was that I met a very old friend of mine this morning, Superintendent Battle of Scotland Yard. He's staying down here on holiday with his nephew who's in the local police.

LADY TRESSILIAN. You and your interest in criminology. The truth is I am thoroughly jumpy—I feel the whole time as though something was going to happen. (*She moves on to the rostrum.*)

TREVES. (*Crossing and standing down R. of Lady Tressilian.*) Yes, there is

a suggestion of gunpowder in the air. One little spark might set off an explosion.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Must you talk as though you were Guy Fawkes? Say something cheerful.

TREVES. (*Turning and smiling at her.*) What can I say? "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them—but not for love."

LADY TRESSILIAN. And he calls that cheerful. I shall go out on the terrace for a little. (*Treves crosses to the French windows and looks off. She moves up L. of the chaise. To Royde, confidentially.*) Don't make a fool of yourself a second time.

ROYDE. What do you mean?

LADY TRESSILIAN. You know quite well what I mean. Last time, you let Neville walk off with Audrey under your nose.

ROYDE. (*Moving below the chaise.*) Is it likely she'd have preferred me to Neville?

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Moving above the chaise.*) She might have—if you'd asked her. (*Royde moves to L. of Lady Tressilian.*) Are you going to ask her this time?

ROYDE. (*With sudden force.*) You bet your life I am. (*Audrey enters by the French windows. She is very fair and has an Undine-like look. There is something strange about her air of repressed emotion. With Royde she is natural and happy.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*As Audrey enters.*) Thank God for that. (*Audrey, with hands outstretched, crosses below Treves and Lady Tressilian to R. of Royde.*)

AUDREY. Thomas—dear Thomas. (*Royde takes Audrey's hands. Lady Tressilian looks for a moment at Royde and Audrey.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Mathew, your arm. (*Treves assists Lady Tressilian, and exits with her by the French windows.*)

AUDREY. (*After a pause.*) It's lovely to see you.

ROYDE. (*Shyly.*) Good to see you.

AUDREY. (*Crossing below Royde to L.*) It's years since you've been home. Don't they give you any leave on rubber plantations?

ROYDE. I was coming home two years ago . . . (*He breaks off awkwardly.*)

AUDREY. Two years ago! And then you didn't.

ROYDE. My dear, you know—there were reasons.

AUDREY. (*Sitting in the armchair L. C.; with affection*) Oh, Thomas—you look just the same as when we last met—pipe and all.

ROYDE. (*Moving to L. of the coffee table, after a pause*) Do I?

AUDREY. Oh, Thomas—I am so glad you've come back. Now, at last I can talk to someone. Thomas—there's something wrong.

ROYDE. Wrong?

AUDREY. Something's changed about this place. Ever since I arrived I've felt there was something not quite right. Don't you feel there's something different? No—how can you, you've only just come. The only person who doesn't seem to feel it is Nevile.

ROYDE. Damn Nevile!

AUDREY. You don't like him?

ROYDE. (*With intensity.*) I hate his guts—always have. (*He quickly recovers himself.*) Sorry.

AUDREY. I—didn't know . . .

ROYDE. Lots of things one—doesn't know—about people.

AUDREY. (*Thoughtfully.*) Yes—lots of things.

ROYDE. Gather there's a spot of bother. What made you come here at the same time as Nevile and his new wife? Did you have to agree?

AUDREY. (*Rising and standing L. of the armchair L. c.*) Yes. Oh, I know you can't understand . . .

ROYDE. (*Moving to R. of the armchair L. c.*) But I do understand. I know all about it. (*Audrey looks doubtfully at Royde.*) I know exactly what you've been through—(*With meaning.*) But it's all *past*, Audrey, it's *over*. You must forget the past and think of the future. (*Nevile enters by the French windows and moves up R. of the chaise.*)

NEVILE. Hullo, Audrey, where have you been all the morning? (*Audrey moves to R. of the easy chair down L. Royde moves above the coffee table.*)

AUDREY. I haven't been anywhere particular.

NEVILE. I couldn't find you anywhere. What about coming down to the beach for a swim before lunch?

AUDREY. (*Crossing to the coffee table.*) No, I don't think so. (*She looks among the magazines on the table. Royde moves on to the rostrum.*) Have you seen this week's *London Illustrated News*?

NEVILE. (*Moving to R. of Audrey.*) No. Come on—the water will be really warm today.

AUDREY. Actually, I told Mary I'd go into Saltington with her to shop.

NEVILE. Mary won't mind. (*Audrey picks up a magazine. He takes her hand.*) Come on, Audrey.

AUDREY. No, really . . . (*Kay enters by the French windows.*)

NEVILE. (*As he sees Kay.*) I'm trying to persuade Audrey to come bathing.

KAY. (*Moving to R. of the chaise.*) Oh? And what does Audrey say?

AUDREY. Audrey says "no." (*Audrey withdraws her hand from Neville's and exits L.*)

ROYDE. If you'll excuse me, I'll go and unpack. (*Royde pauses a moment by the bookshelves up L., selects a book, then exits L.*)

KAY. So that's that. Coming, Neville?

NEVILLE. Well, I'm not sure. (*He takes a magazine from the coffee table, sits on the chaise, leans back and puts his feet up.*)

KAY. (*Impatiently.*) Well, make up your mind.

NEVILLE. I'm not sure I won't just have a shower and laze in the garden.

KAY. It's a perfect day for bathing. Come on.

NEVILLE. What have you done with the boy friend?

KAY. Ted? I left him on the beach and came up to find you. You can laze on the beach. (*She touches his hair.*)

NEVILLE. (*Moving her hand from his hair.*) With Latimer, I suppose? (*He shakes his head.*) Doesn't appeal to me a lot.

KAY. You don't like Ted, do you?

NEVILLE. Not madly. But if it amuses you to pull him around on a string

. . .

KAY. (*Tweaking his ear.*) I believe you're jealous.

NEVILLE. (*Pushing her hand from his ear.*) Of Latimer? Nonsense, Kay.

KAY. Ted's very attractive.

NEVILLE. I'm sure he is. He has that lithe South American charm.

KAY. You needn't sneer. He's very popular with women.

NEVILLE. Especially with the ones over fifty.

KAY. (*Pleased.*) You are jealous.

NEVILLE. My dear—I couldn't care less—he just doesn't count.

KAY. I think you're very rude about my friends. I have to put up with yours.

NEVILLE. What do you mean by that?

KAY. (*Moving above the chaise to R. of the coffee table.*) Dreary old Lady Tressilian and stuffy old Mr. Treves and all the rest of them. (*She sits on the coffee table, facing Neville.*) Do you think I find them amusing? (*Suddenly.*) Neville, do we *have* to stay on here? Can't we go away—tomorrow? It's so boring . . .

NEVILLE. We've only just come.

KAY. We've been here four days—four whole long days. *Do* let's go, Neville, please.

NEVILLE. Why?

KAY. I want to go. We could easily find some excuse. Please, darling.

NEVILLE. Darling, it's out of the question. We came for a fortnight and

we're going to stay a fortnight. You don't seem to understand. Sir Mortimer Tressilian was my guardian. I came here for holidays as a boy. Gull's Point was practically my home. Camilla would be terribly hurt. (*He smiles.*)

KAY. (*Rising and moving to the window up L.; impatiently.*) Oh, all right, all right. I suppose we have to suck up to old Camilla, because of getting all that money when she dies.

NEVILLE. (*Rising and moving on to the rostrum, angrily.*) It's not a question of sucking up. I wish you wouldn't look at it like that. She's no control over the money. Old Mortimer left it in trust to come to me and my wife at her death. Don't you realize it's a question of affection?

KAY. Not with me, it isn't. She hates me.

NEVILLE. Don't be stupid.

KAY. (*Moving to L. of the armchair L. c.*) Yes, she does. She looks down that bony nose of hers at me, and Mary Aldin talks to me as though I were someone she'd just met on a train. They only have me here on sufferance. You don't seem to know what goes on.

NEVILLE. They always seem to me to be very nice to you. (*He moves to the coffee table and throws the magazine on it.*) You imagine things.

KAY. Of course they're polite. But they know how to get under my skin all right. I'm an interloper. That's what they feel.

NEVILLE. Well—I suppose that's only natural . . .

KAY. Oh, yes, I daresay it's quite natural. They're devoted to Audrey, aren't they? (*She turns and looks towards the door L.*) Dear, well bred, cool, colorless Audrey. Camilla has never forgiven me for taking Audrey's place. (*She turns, moves above the armchair L. c. and leans on the back of it.*) I'll tell you something—Audrey gives me the creeps. You never know what she's thinking.

NEVILLE. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) Oh, nonsense, Kay, don't be absurd.

KAY. Audrey's never forgiven you for marrying me. Once or twice I've seen her looking at you—and the way she looked at you frightened me.

NEVILLE. You're prejudiced, Kay. Audrey's been charming. No one could have been nicer.

KAY. It seems like that, but it isn't true. There's something behind it all. (*She runs above the chaise to R. of Neville and kneels beside him.*) Let's go away—at once—before it's too late.

NEVILLE. Don't be melodramatic. I'm not going to upset old Camilla just because you work yourself up into a state about nothing at all.

KAY. It isn't nothing at all. I don't think you know the first thing about your precious Audrey. (*Lady Tressilian and Treves enter by the French windows.*)

NEVILE. (*Furiously.*) She isn't my—precious Audrey. (*Lady Tressilian moves above the chaise.*)

KAY. Isn't she? Anyone would think so, the way you follow her about. (*She sees Lady Tressilian.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Are you going down to bathe, Kay?

KAY. (*Rising, nervously.*) Yes—yes, I was.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Almost high tide. It ought to be very pleasant. (*She knocks her stick against the leg of the chaise.*) What about you, Nevile?

NEVILE. (*Sulkily.*) I don't want to bathe.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*To Kay.*) Your friend, I think, is down there waiting for you. (*Kay hesitates a moment, then crosses and exits by the French window. Treves moves down R.*) Nevile, you're behaving very badly. You really must stand up when I come into the room. What's the matter with you—forgetting your manners?

NEVILE. (*Rising quickly.*) I'm sorry.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Crossing to the armchair L. c.*) You're making us all very uncomfortable. I don't wonder your wife is annoyed.

NEVILE. My wife? Audrey?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Kay is your wife now.

NEVILE. With your High Church principles I wonder you admit the fact.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Sitting in the armchair L. c.*) Neville, you are exceedingly rude. (*Nevile crosses to R. of Lady Tressilian, takes her hand and kisses her on the cheek.*)

NEVILE. (*With sudden disarming charm.*) I'm very sorry, Camilla. Please forgive me. I'm so worried I don't know what I'm saying. (*Treves sits in the easy chair down R.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*With affection.*) My dear boy, what else could you expect with this stupid idea of being all friends together?

NEVILE. (*Wistfully.*) It still seems to me the sensible way to look at things.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Not with two women like Audrey and Kay.

NEVILE. Audrey doesn't seem to care.

TREVES. How did the matter first come up, Nevile? (*Nevile withdraws his hand from Lady Tressilian's and moves down L. of the chaise.*)

NEVILE. (*Eagerly.*) Well, I happened to run across Audrey in London,

quite by chance, and she was awfully nice about things—didn't seem to bear any malice or anything like that. While I was talking to her the idea came to me how sensible it would be if—if she and Kay could be friends—if we could all get together. And it seemed to me that this was the place where it could happen quite naturally.

TREVES. You thought of that—all by yourself?

NEVILLE. Oh, yes, it was all my idea. And Audrey seemed quite pleased and ready to try.

TREVES. Was Kay equally pleased?

NEVILLE. Well—no—I had a spot of bother with Kay. I can't think why. I mean if anyone was going to object, you'd think it would be Audrey.

LADY TRESSILIAN. (*Rising.*) Well, I'm an old woman. (*Treves rises.*) Nothing people do nowadays seems to make any sense. (*She moves to the door L.*)

TREVES. (*Crossing to the door L.*) One has to go with the times, Camilla. (*He opens the door.*)

LADY TRESSILIAN. I feel very tired. I shall rest before lunch. (*She turns to Neville.*) But you must behave yourself, Neville. With or without reason, Kay is jealous. (*She emphasizes her following words by banging her stick on the carpet.*) I will not have these discordant scenes in my house. (*She peaks off L.*) Ah, Mary—I shall lie down on the library sofa. (*Lady Tressilian exits L. Treves closes the door.*)

NEVILLE. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) She speaks to me as though I were six.

TREVES. (*Moving up R. C. and standing with his back to the audience.*) At her age, she doubtless feels you are six.

NEVILLE. (*Recovering his temper with an effort.*) Yes, I suppose so. It must be ghastly to be old.

TREVES. (*After a slight pause, turning.*) It has its compensations, I assure you. (*Dryly.*) There is no longer any question of emotional involvements.

NEVILLE. (*Grinning.*) That's certainly something. (*He rises and moves above the chaise to the French windows.*) I suppose I'd better go and make my peace with Kay. I really can't see, though, why she has to fly off the handle like this. Audrey might very well be jealous of *her*, but I can't see why she should be jealous of Audrey. Can you? (*Neville grins and exits by the French windows. Treves thoughtfully strokes his chin for a moment or two, then goes to the waste-paper basket, takes out the pieces of the torn photograph and turns to the bureau to put the pieces into a pigeon-hole. Audrey enters L., looking round rather cautiously for Neville. She carries a magazine.*)

AUDREY. (*Crossing to the coffee table, surprised.*) What are you doing with my photograph? (*She puts the magazine on the table.*)

TREVES. (*Turning and holding out the pieces of the photograph.*) It seems to have been torn.

AUDREY. Who tore it?

TREVES. Mrs. Barrett, I suppose—that is the name of the woman in the cloth cap who cleans this room? I thought I would put it in here until it can be mended. (*Treves' eyes meet Audrey's for a moment, then he puts the pieces of the photograph in the bureau.*)

AUDREY. It wasn't Mrs. Barrett, was it?

TREVES. I have no information—but I should think probably not.

AUDREY. Was it Kay?

TREVES. I told you—I have no information. (*There is a pause, during which Audrey crosses to R. of the armchair R.*)

AUDREY. Oh, dear, this is all very uncomfortable.

TREVES. Why did you come here, my dear?

AUDREY. I suppose because I always come here at this time. (*She crosses and stands below the armchair L. C.*)

TREVES. But with Neville coming here, wouldn't it have been better to have postponed your visit?

AUDREY. I couldn't do that. I have a job, you know. I have to earn my living. I have two weeks' holiday and once that is arranged I can't alter it.

TREVES. An interesting job?

AUDREY. Not particularly, but it pays quite well.

TREVES. (*Moving to R. of the coffee table.*) But, my dear Audrey, Neville is a very well-to-do man. Under the terms of your divorce he has to make suitable provision for you.

AUDREY. I have never taken a penny from Neville. I never shall.

TREVES. Quite so. Quite so. Several of my clients have taken that point of view. It has been my duty to dissuade them. In the end, you know, one must be guided by common sense. You have hardly any money of your own, I know. It is only just and right that you should be provided for suitably by Neville, who can well afford it. Who were your solicitors, because I could . . .

AUDREY. (*Sitting in the armchair L. C.*) It's nothing to do with solicitors. I won't take anything from Neville—anything at all.

TREVES. (*Eyeing her thoughtfully.*) I see—you feel strongly—very strongly.

AUDREY. If you like to put it that way, yes.

TREVES. Was it really Nevile's idea to come here all together?

AUDREY. (*Sharply.*) Of course it was.

TREVES. But you agreed?

AUDREY. I agreed. Why not?

TREVES. It hasn't turned out very well, has it?

AUDREY. That's not my fault.

TREVES. No, it isn't your fault—ostensibly.

AUDREY. (*Rising.*) What do you mean?

TREVES. I was wondering . . .

AUDREY. You know, Mr. Treves, sometimes I think I'm just a little frightened of you.

TREVES. Why should you be?

AUDREY. I don't know. You're a very shrewd observer. I sometimes . . .

(*Mary enters L.*)

MARY. Audrey, will you go to Lady Tressilian? She's in the library.

AUDREY. Yes. (*Audrey crosses and exits L. Treves sits on the chaise. Mary goes to the butler's tray and collects the dirty sherry glasses.*)

TREVES. Miss Aldin, who do you think is behind this plan of meeting here?

MARY. (*Moving to R. of the butler's tray.*) Audrey.

TREVES. But why?

MARY. (*Moving to L. of Treves.*) I suppose—she still cares for him.

TREVES. You think it's that?

MARY. What else can it be? He's not really in love with Kay, you know.

TREVES. (*Primly.*) These sudden passionate infatuations are very often not of long duration.

MARY. You'd think Audrey would have more pride.

TREVES. In my experience, pride is a word often on women's lips—but they display little sign of it where love affairs are concerned.

MARY. (*With bitterness.*) Perhaps. I wouldn't know. (*She looks towards the French windows.*) Excuse me. (*Mary exits L. Royde enters by the French windows. He carries a book.*)

TREVES. Ah, Thomas, have you been down to the ferry?

ROYDE. (*Crossing to c.*) No, I've been reading a detective story. Not very good. (*He looks down at the book.*) Always seems to me these yarns begin in the wrong place. Begin with the murder. But the murder's not really the beginning.

TREVES. Indeed? Where would you begin?

ROYDE. As I see it, the murder is the end of the story. (*He sits in the armchair L. c.*) I mean, the real story begins long before—years be-

fore, sometimes. Must do. All the causes and events that bring the people concerned to a certain place on a certain day at a certain time. And then, over the top—zero hour.

TREVES. (*Rising.*) That is an interesting point of view.

ROYDE. (*Apologetically.*) Not very good at explaining myself, I'm afraid.

TREVES. (*Moving above the coffee table.*) I think you've put it very clearly, Thomas. (*He uses the coffee table as a globe.*) All sorts of people converging towards a given spot and hour—all going towards zero. (*He pauses briefly.*) Towards Zero. (*Treves looks at Royde, and the lights fade to Black-Out, as—the Curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

Scene II

SCENE: *The same. After dinner, four days later. When the Curtain rises, the lights are on. The curtains of the bay window are half closed. The French windows are open, the curtains undrawn. The night is very warm, sultry and cloudy. Kay is seated on the chaise, smoking a cigarette. She is in evening dress and looks rather sulky and bored. Ted Latimer is standing on the rostrum, gazing out of the window. He is a very dark, good-looking man of about twenty-six. His dinner suit fits him a shade too well.*

KAY. (*After a pause.*) This is what I call a wildly hilarious evening, Ted.

LATIMER. (*Turning.*) You should have come over to the hotel as I suggested. (*He moves to the downstage edge of the rostrum.*) They've got a dance on. The band's not so hot, but it's fun.

KAY. I wanted to, but Neville wasn't keen.

LATIMER. So you behaved like a dutiful wife.

KAY. Yes—and I've been rewarded by being bored to death.

LATIMER. The fate of most dutiful wives. (*He moves to the record player on the window-seat.*) Aren't there any dance records? We could at least dance.

KAY. There's nothing like that *here*. Only Mozart and Bach—all classical stuff.

LATIMER. (*Moving to the coffee table.*) Oh, well—at least we've been spared the old battleaxe tonight. (*He takes a cigarette from the box.*)

Doesn't she ever appear at dinner, or did she just shirk it because I was there? (*He lights his cigarette.*)

KAY. Camilla always goes to bed at seven. She's got a groggy heart or something. She has her dinner sent up on a tray.

LATIMER. Not what you'd call a gay life.

KAY. (*Rising abruptly.*) I hate this place. (*She moves below the chaise then up R. of it.*) I wish to God we'd never come here.

LATIMER. (*Moving to L. of her.*) Steady, honey. What's the matter?

KAY. I don't know. (*She crosses and stands below the armchair L. C.*) It's just—sometimes I get—scared.

LATIMER. (*Moving to R. of the coffee table.*) That doesn't sound like you, Kay.

KAY. (*Recovering.*) It doesn't, does it? But there's something queer going on. I don't know what, but I'll swear that Audrey's behind it all.

LATIMER. It was a damn silly idea of Neville's—coming here with you at the same time as his ex-wife.

KAY. (*Sitting in the armchair L. C.*) I don't think it *was* his idea. I'm convinced *she* put him up to it.

LATIMER. Why?

KAY. I don't know—to cause trouble probably.

LATIMER. (*Moving to Kay and touching her arm.*) What *you* want is a drink, my girl.

KAY. (*Moving his hand from her arm, irritably.*) I don't want a drink and I'm not your girl.

LATIMER. You would have been if Neville hadn't come along. (*He moves to the butler's tray and pours two glasses of whisky and soda.*) Where is Neville, by the way?

KAY. I've no idea.

LATIMER. They're not a very sociable crowd, are they? Audrey's out on the terrace talking to old Treves, and that fellow Royde's strolling about the garden all by himself, puffing at that eternal pipe of his. Nice, cheery lot.

KAY. (*Crossly.*) I wouldn't care a damn if they were all at the bottom of the sea—except Neville.

LATIMER. I should have felt much happier, darling, if you'd included Neville. (*He picks up the drinks and takes one to Kay.*) You drink that, my sweet. You'll feel much better. (*Kay takes her drink and sips it.*)

KAY. God, it's strong.

LATIMER. More soda?

KAY. No, thanks. I wish you wouldn't make it so clear you don't like Neville.

LATIMER. Why should I like him? He's not my sort. (*Bitterly.*) The ideal Englishman—good at sport, modest, good-looking, always the little pukka sahibit. Getting everything he wants all along the line—even pinched my girl.

KAY. I wasn't your girl.

LATIMER. (*Moving above the coffee table.*) Yes, you were. If I'd been as well off as Neville . . .

KAY. I didn't marry Neville for his money.

LATIMER. Oh, I know, and I understand—Mediterranean nights and dewy-eyed romance . . .

KAY. I married Neville because I fell in love with him.

LATIMER. I'm not saying you didn't, my sweet, but his money helped you to fall.

KAY. Do you really think that?

LATIMER. (*Moving up c.*) I try to—it helps soothe my injured vanity.

KAY. (*Rising and moving to L. of him.*) You're rather a dear, Ted—I don't know what I should do without you, sometimes.

LATIMER. Why try? I'm always around. You should know that by this time. The faithful swain—or should it be swine? Probably depends which you happen to be—the wife or the husband. (*He kisses Kay's shoulder. Mary enters L. She wears a plain dinner frock. Kay moves hastily on to the rostrum up L.*)

MARY. (*Pointedly.*) Have either of you seen Mr. Treves? Lady Tressilian wants him.

LATIMER. He's out on the terrace, Miss Aldin.

MARY. Thank you, Mr. Latimer. (*She closes the door.*) Isn't it stifling? I'm sure there's going to be a storm. (*She crosses to the French windows.*)

LATIMER. I hope it holds off until I get back to the hotel. (*He moves to L. of Mary and glances off.*) I didn't bring a coat. I'll get soaked to the skin going over in the ferry if it rains.

MARY. I daresay we could find you an umbrella if necessary, or Neville could lend you his raincoat. (*Mary exits by the French windows.*)

LATIMER. (*Moving up c.*) Interesting woman, that—bit of a dark horse.

KAY. I feel rather sorry for her. (*She moves to the armchair L. c., sits and sips her drink.*) Slaving for that unpleasant old woman—and she

won't get anything for it, either. All the money comes to me and Nevile.

LATIMER. (*Moving to R. of Kay.*) Perhaps she doesn't know that.

KAY. That would be rather funny. (*They laugh. Audrey and Treves enter by the French windows. Treves is wearing an old-fashioned dinner suit. Audrey is in evening dress. She notices Latimer and Kay together, then moves below the chaise. Treves stops in the doorway and speaks over his shoulder.*)

TREVES. I shall enjoy a little gossip with Lady Tressilian, Miss Aldin. With, perhaps, the remembering of a few old scandals. A touch of malice, you know, adds a certain savour to conversation. (*He crosses to the door L.*) Doesn't it, Audrey?

AUDREY. She chooses the person she wants and summons them by a kind of Royal Command.

TREVES. Very aptly put, Audrey. I am always sensible of the royal touch in Lady Tressilian's manner. (*Treves exits L.*)

AUDREY. (*Listlessly.*) It's terribly hot, isn't it? (*She sits on the chaise.*)

LATIMER. (*With a step towards the butler's tray.*) Would you—like a drink?

AUDREY. (*Shaking her head.*) No, thank you. I think I shall go to bed very soon. (*There is a short silence. Nevile enters L. He is wearing a dinner suit and is carrying a magazine.*)

KAY. What have you been doing all this time, Nevile?

NEVILE. I had a couple of letters to write—thought I might as well get 'em off my chest.

KAY. (*Rising.*) You might have chosen some other time. (*She moves to the butler's tray and puts her glass on it.*)

NEVILE. (*Crossing and standing above the coffee table.*) Better the hour, better the deed. By the way, here's the *Illustrated News*. Somebody wanted it.

KAY. (*Holding out her hand.*) Thank you, Nevile.

AUDREY. (*At almost the same moment.*) Oh! Thank you, Nevile. (*She holds out her hand. Nevile hesitates between them, smiling.*)

KAY. (*With a slight note of hysteria.*) I want it. Give it to me.

AUDREY. (*Withdrawing her hand, slightly confused.*) Oh, sorry. I thought you were speaking to me, Nevile. (*Nevile hesitates for a moment, then holds out the magazine to Audrey.*)

NEVILE. (*Quietly.*) Here you are, Audrey.

AUDREY. Oh, but I . . .

KAY. (*In suppressed fury, and almost crying.*) It is stifling in here. (*She moves quickly to the coffee table, picks up her evening bag and rushes below the chaise to the French windows.*) Let's go out in the air, Ted. I can't stand being cooped up in this lousy hole any longer. (*Kay almost stumbles as she exits by the French windows. Latimer, with an angry look at Neville, follows Kay off. Neville tosses the magazine on to the coffee table.*)

AUDREY. (*Rising, reproachfully.*) You shouldn't have done that, Neville.

NEVILLE. Why not?

AUDREY. (*Crossing below the coffee table and standing down L.*) It was stupid. You'd better go after Kay and apologize.

NEVILLE. I don't see why I should apologize.

AUDREY. I think you'd better. You were very rude to your wife. (*Mary enters by the French windows and stands above the chaise.*)

NEVILLE. (*In a low voice.*) You're my wife, Audrey. You always will be. (*He sees Mary.*) Ah—Miss Aldin—are you going up to Lady Tressilian? (*Audrey moves on to the L. end of the rostrum.*)

MARY. (*Crossing to L. C.*) Yes—when Mr. Treves comes down. (*Royde enters by the French windows and stands R. of the chaise. Neville stares for a moment at Royde, then exits by the French windows. Wearily.*) Oh, dear! I don't think I've ever felt so tired in my life. If Lady Tressilian's bell rings tonight, I'm quite certain I shall never hear it. (*She sits in the armchair L. C.*)

AUDREY. (*Turning and moving to the downstage edge of the rostrum.*) What bell?

MARY. It rings in my room—in case Lady Tressilian should want anything in the night. It's one of those old-fashioned bells—on a spring and worked with a wire. It makes a ghastly jangle, but Lady Tressilian insists that it's more reliable than electricity. (*She yawns.*) Excuse me—it's this dreadful sultry weather, I think.

AUDREY. You ought to go to bed, Mary. You look worn out.

MARY. I shall—as soon as Mr. Treves has finished talking to Lady Tressilian. Then I shall tuck her up for the night and go to bed myself. Oh, dear. It's been a very trying day. (*Latimer enters by the French windows and moves down R.*)

ROYDE. It certainly has.

AUDREY. (*After a look at Latimer.*) Thomas! Let's go on to the terrace. (*She crosses to the French windows.*)

ROYDE. (*Moving to Audrey.*) Yes—I want to tell you about a detective

story I've been reading . . . (*Audrey and Royde exit by the French windows. There is a pause, as Latimer looks after Royde and Audrey for a moment.*)

LATIMER. You and I, Miss Aldin, seem to be the odd men out. We must console each other. (*He moves to the butler's tray.*) Can I get you a drink?

MARY. No, thank you.

LATIMER. (*Pouring a drink for himself.*) One conjugal reconciliation in the rose garden, one faithful swain nerving himself to pop the question. Where do we come in? Nowhere. We're the outsiders. (*He moves to the downstage edge of the rostrum and raises his glass.*) Here's to the outsiders—and to hell with all those inside the ringed fence. (*He drinks.*)

MARY. How bitter you are.

LATIMER. So are you.

MARY. (*After a pause.*) Not really.

LATIMER. (*Moving below the coffee table to R. of it.*) What's it like, fetching and carrying, running up and down stairs, endlessly waiting on an old woman?

MARY. There are worse things.

LATIMER. I wonder. (*He turns and looks towards the terrace.*)

MARY. (*After a pause.*) You're very unhappy.

LATIMER. Who isn't?

MARY. Have—(*She pauses.*) you always been in love with Kay?

LATIMER. More or less.

MARY. And she?

LATIMER. (*Moving up R. c.*) I thought so—until Nevile came along. Nevile with his money and his sporting record. (*He moves to L. of the chaise.*) I could go climbing in the Himalayas if I'd ever had the cash.

MARY. You wouldn't want to.

LATIMER. Perhaps not. (*Sharply.*) What do you want out of life?

MARY. (*Rising, after a pause.*) It's almost too late.

LATIMER. But not quite.

MARY. No—not quite. (*She moves on to the rostrum.*) All I want is a little money—not very much—just enough.

LATIMER. Enough for what?

MARY. Enough to have some sort of life of my own before it's too late. I've never had anything.

LATIMER. (*Moving to R. of Mary.*) Do you hate them, too, those inside the fence?

MARY. (*Violently.*) Hate them—I . . . (*She yawns.*) No—no—I'm too tired to hate anybody. (*Treves enters L.*)

TREVES. Ah, Miss Aldin, Lady Tressilian would like you to go to her now if you will be so kind. I think she's feeling sleepy.

MARY. That's a blessing. Thank you, Mr. Treves. I'll go up at once. (*She crosses to the door L.*) I shan't come down again so I'll say good night now. Good night, Mr. Latimer. Good night, Mr. Treves.

LATIMER. Good night. (*Mary exits L. Treves moves on to the L. end of the rostrum.*) I must be running along myself. With luck I shall get across the ferry and back to the hotel before the storm breaks. (*He moves above the chaise. Royde enters by the French windows.*)

ROYDE. Are you going, Latimer? Would you like a raincoat?

LATIMER. No, thanks, I'll chance it.

ROYDE. (*Moving on to the rostrum.*) Hell of a storm coming.

TREVES. Is Audrey on the terrace?

ROYDE. I haven't the faintest idea. (*He crosses to the door L.*) I'm for bed.

Good night. (*Royde exits L. There is a flash of lightning and a low rumble of thunder is heard off.*)

LATIMER. (*With malice.*) It would seem that the course of true love has not run smoothly. Was that thunder? Some way away still—(*He moves to the French windows.*) but I think I'll make it.

TREVES. I'll come with you and bolt the garden gate. (*He crosses to the French windows. Latimer and Treves exit by the French windows.*)

AUDREY. (*Off, to Latimer.*) Good night. (*Audrey enters rather quickly by the French windows. There is a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder. Audrey stands for a moment looking around the room, then moves slowly on to the rostrum, sits on the window-seat and looks out at the night. Nevile enters by the French windows and moves above the chaise.*)

NEVILE. Audrey.

AUDREY. (*Rising quickly and moving to the L. end of the rostrum.*) I'm going to bed, Nevile. Good night.

NEVILE. (*Moving on to the rostrum.*) Don't go yet. I want to talk to you.

AUDREY. (*Nervously.*) I think you'd better not.

NEVILE. (*Moving to R. of her.*) I must. I've got to. Please listen to me, Audrey.

AUDREY. (*Backing to the L. wall of the window bay.*) I'd rather you didn't.

NEVILE. That means you know what I'm going to say. (*Audrey does not reply.*) Audrey, can't we go back to where we were? Forget everything that has happened?

AUDREY. (*Turning a little.*) Including—Kay?

NEVILLE. Kay will be sensible.

AUDREY. What do you mean by—sensible?

NEVILLE. (*Eagerly.*) I shall tell her the truth—that you are the only woman I've ever loved. That is the truth, Audrey. You've got to believe that.

AUDREY. (*Desperately.*) You loved Kay when you married her.

NEVILLE. My marriage to Kay was the biggest mistake I ever made. I realize now what a damned fool I've been. I . . . (*Kay enters by the French windows.*)

KAY. (*Moving to R. C.*) Sorry to interrupt this touching scene, but I think it's about time I did.

NEVILLE. (*Moving to C. of the rostrum.*) Kay, listen . . .

KAY. (*Furiously.*) Listen! I've heard all I want to hear—too much.

AUDREY. (*With relief.*) I'm going to bed. (*She moves to the door L.*) Good night.

KAY. (*Crossing to R. of Audrey.*) That's right. Go to bed! You've done all the mischief you wanted to do, haven't you? But you're not going to get out of it as easily as all that. I'll deal with you after I've had it out with Neville.

AUDREY. (*Coldly.*) It's no concern of mine. Good night. (*Audrey exits L. There is a flash of lightning and a peal of thunder off.*)

KAY. (*Looking after Audrey.*) Of all the damned, cool . . .

NEVILLE. (*Moving to R. of the coffee table.*) Look here, Kay, Audrey had absolutely nothing to do with this. It's not her fault. Blame me if you like . . .

KAY. (*Working herself up.*) And I do like. What sort of man do you think you are? (*She turns to Neville. Her voice rises.*) You leave your wife, come bald-headed after me, get your wife to divorce you. Crazy about me one minute, tired of me the next. Now I suppose you want to go back to that—(*She looks towards the door L.*) whey-faced, mewling, double-crossing little cat . . .

NEVILLE. (*Angrily.*) Stop that, Kay.

KAY. (*Moving on to the rostrum.*) That's what she is. A crafty, cunning, scheming, little . . .

NEVILLE. (*Moving to Kay and gripping her arms.*) Stop it!

KAY. (*Releasing herself.*) Leave me alone! (*She moves slowly to L. of the chaise.*) What the hell do you want?

NEVILLE. (*Turning and facing up stage.*) I can't go on. I'm every kind of worm you like to call me. But it's no good, Kay. I can't go on. (*Kay sits on the chaise. He turns.*) I think—really—I must have loved

Audrey all the time. I've only just realized it. My love for you was—was a kind of madness. But it's no good—you and I don't belong. It's better to cut our losses. (*He moves above the chaise to R. of it.*)

KAY. (*In a deceptively quiet voice.*) What exactly are you suggesting, Neville?

NEVILE. We can get a divorce. You can divorce me for desertion.

KAY. You'd have to wait three years for it.

NEVILE. I'll wait.

KAY. And then, I suppose, you'll ask dear, sweet, darling Audrey to marry you all over again? Is *that* the idea?

NEVILE. If she'll have me.

KAY. She'll have you all right. And where do I come in?

NEVILE. Naturally, I'll see you're well provided for.

KAY. (*Losing control of herself.*) Cut out the bribes. (*She rises and moves to Neville.*) Listen to me, Neville. I'll *not* divorce you. (*She beats her hands against his chest.*) You fell in love with me and you married me and I'm not going to let you go back to the sly little bitch who's got her hooks into you again.

NEVILE. (*Throwing Kay on to the chaise.*) Shut up, Kay. For God's sake. You can't make this kind of scene here.

KAY. She meant this to happen. It's what she's been playing for. She's probably gloating over her success now. But she's not going to bring it off. You'll see what I can do. (*She flings herself on the chaise in a paroxysm of hysterical sobbing. Neville gives a despairing gesture. Treves enters by the French windows and stands watching. At the same moment there is a brilliant flash of lightning, a rolling peal of thunder and the storm bursts as—the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

Act Two

Scene I

SCENE: *The same. Early the following morning.*

When the curtain rises, it is a fine morning with the sun streaming in through the bay window. The French windows are open. The butler's tray has been removed. The room is empty. Royde enters by the French windows. He is sucking at his pipe which appears to have become stopped up. He looks around for an ashtray, sees one on the coffee table, moves to it and knocks out the ashes from his pipe. Finding it is still stopped up, he takes a penknife from his pocket and gently probes the bowl. Treves enters down L.

TREVES. Good morning, Thomas.

ROYDE. (*Moving above the coffee table.*) 'Morning. Going to be another lovely day by the look of it.

TREVES. Yes. (*He goes on to the L. end of the rostrum and looks out of the window.*) I thought possibly the storm might have broken up the spell of fine weather, but it has only removed that oppressive heat—which is all to the good. (*He moves to the R. end of the rostrum.*) You've been up for hours as usual, I presume?

ROYDE. Since just after six. Been for a walk along the cliffs. Only just got back, as a matter of fact.

TREVES. Nobody else appears to be about yet. Not even Miss Aldin.

ROYDE. Um.

TREVES. Possibly she is fully occupied attending to Lady Tressilian. I should imagine she may be rather upset after that unfortunate incident last night. (*He moves to L. of the chaise.*)

ROYDE. (*Blowing down his pipe.*) Bit of a rumpus, wasn't there?

TREVES. (*Moving down R.*) You have a positive genius for understatement, Thomas. That unpleasant scene between Nevile and Kay

. . .

ROYDE. (*Surprised.*) Nevile and Kay? The row I heard was between Nevile and Lady Tressilian.

TREVES. (*Moving R. of the chaise.*) When was this?

ROYDE. Must have been about twenty past ten. They were going at it hammer and tongs. Couldn't help hearing. My room's practically opposite hers, you know.

TREVES. (*Moving above the chaise, troubled.*) Dear, dear, this is news to me.

ROYDE. Thought that was what you meant.

TREVES. (*Moving to R. of Royde.*) No, no, I was referring to a most distressing scene that took place in here earlier, to part of which I was a reluctant witness. That unfortunate young woman—er—Kay, had a fit of violent hysterics.

ROYDE. What was the row about?

TREVES. I'm afraid it was Neville's fault.

ROYDE. That doesn't surprise me. He's been behaving like a damn fool. (*He moves on to the rostrum.*)

TREVES. I entirely agree. His conduct has been most reprehensible. (*He sighs and sits on the chaise.*)

ROYDE. Was—Audrey mixed up in the row?

TREVES. She was the cause of it. (*Kay enters quickly L. She looks subdued and tired. She carries her handbag.*)

KAY. Oh! Good—good morning.

TREVES. (*Rising.*) Good morning, Kay.

ROYDE. Good morning.

KAY. (*Moving L. C.; nervous and ill at ease.*) We're—we're the only ones up, aren't we?

TREVES. I think so. I haven't seen anyone else. I breakfasted in—er—solitary state.

ROYDE. Haven't had mine yet. Think I'll go and hunt some up. (*To Kay.*) Have you had breakfast?

KAY. No. I've only just come down. I—I don't want any breakfast. I feel like hell.

ROYDE. Um—could eat a house, myself. (*He crosses below Kay to the door L.*) See you later. (*Royde exits L.*)

KAY. (*With a step or two towards Treves, after a slight pause.*) Mr. Treves—I—I'm afraid I behaved—rather badly last night.

TREVES. It was very natural that you should be upset.

KAY. I lost my temper and I said a lot of—of foolish things.

TREVES. We are all apt to do that at times. You had every provocation. Neville was, in my opinion, very much to blame.

KAY. He was led into it. Audrey's been determined to cause trouble between Neville and me ever since we came here.

TREVES. (*Moving above the coffee table.*) I don't think you're being quite fair to her.

KAY. She planned this, I tell you. She knows that Neville's always—always felt guilty at the way he treated her.

TREVES. (*Moving to R. of Kay.*) No, no, I'm sure you're wrong.

KAY. No, no, I'm not wrong. You see, Mr. Treves, I went over it all in the night, and Audrey thought that if she could get us all here together and—(*She crosses to R. of the coffee table.*) and pretend to be friendly and forgiving that she could get him back. She's worked on his conscience. Pale and aloof—creeping about like a—like a grey ghost. She knew what effect *that* would have on Neville. He's always reproached himself because he thought he'd treated her badly. (*She sits on the chaise.*) Right from the beginning—or nearly the beginning—Audrey's shadow has been between us. Neville couldn't quite forget about her—she was always there at the back of his mind.

TREVES. You can hardly blame her for that.

KAY. Oh, don't you *see*? She *knew* how Neville felt. She *knew* what the result would be if they were thrown together again.

TREVES. I think you are giving her credit for more cunning than she possesses.

KAY. You're all on her side—all of you.

TREVES. My dear Kay!

KAY. (*Rising.*) You'd like to see Neville go back to Audrey. I'm the interloper—I don't *belong*—Neville said so last night and he was right. Camilla's always disliked me—she's put up with me for Neville's sake. I'm supposed to see everyone's point of view but my own. What I feel or think doesn't matter. If *my* life is all smashed up it's just too bad, but it doesn't matter. It's only *Audrey* who matters.

TREVES. No, no, no.

KAY. (*Her voice rising.*) Well, she's not going to smash up my life. I don't care what I do to stop it, but I will. I'll make it impossible for Neville to go back to her. (*Neville enters L.*)

NEVILLE. (*Taking in the situation.*) What's the matter *now*? More trouble?

KAY. What do you expect after the way you behaved last night? (*She sits on the chaise and takes a handkerchief from her bag. Treves moves on to the R. end of the rostrum.*)

NEVILLE. (*Crossing slowly and standing up L. of Kay.*) It was you who made all the fuss, Kay. I was prepared to talk the matter over calmly.

KAY. Calmly! Did you imagine that I was going to accept your suggestion that I should divorce you, and leave the way clear for Audrey, as if—

as if you were inviting me to—to go to a dance? (*Treves crosses to the L. of the rostrum.*)

NEVILLE. No, but at least you needn't behave in this hysterical fashion when you're staying in other people's houses. For goodness' sake control yourself and try to behave properly.

KAY. Like *she* does, I suppose?

NEVILLE. At any rate, Audrey doesn't make an exhibition of herself.

KAY. She's turning you against me—just as she intended.

NEVILLE. Look here, Kay, this isn't Audrey's fault. I told you that last night. I explained the situation. I was quite open and honest about it.

KAY. (*Scornfully.*) Open and honest!

NEVILLE. Yes. I can't help feeling the way I do.

KAY. How do you suppose I feel? You don't care about that, do you?

TREVES. (*Moving down c. and interposing.*) I really think, Neville, that you should very seriously consider your attitude in this—er—matter. Kay is your wife. She has certain rights of which you cannot deprive her in this—this cavalier manner.

NEVILLE. I admit that, but—I'm willing to do the—the right thing.

KAY. The *right* thing!

TREVES. Furthermore it is hardly the—er—proper procedure to discuss this under Lady Tressilian's roof. It is bound to upset her very seriously. (*He crosses below Neville to L. of Kay.*) My sympathies are entirely with Kay, but I think you *both* have a duty to your hostess and to your fellow guests. I suggest that you postpone any further discussion of the matter until your visit here has terminated.

NEVILLE. (*A little shamefacedly.*) I suppose you're right, Mr. Treves—yes, of course, you're right. I'm willing. What do you say, Kay?

KAY. As long as Audrey doesn't try and . . .

NEVILLE. (*Sharply.*) Audrey hasn't tried anything.

TREVES. (*To Kay.*) Ssh! I think, my dear, you would be well advised to agree to my suggestion. It is only a question of a few more days.

KAY. (*Rising, ungraciously.*) Oh, very well then. (*She moves to the French windows.*)

NEVILLE. (*Relieved.*) Well, that's that. I'm going to get some breakfast. (*He moves to the door L.*) We might all go sailing later on. (*He goes on to the L. end of the rostrum and glances out of the window.*) There's quite a good breeze. (*He looks at Treves.*) Would you like to come?

TREVES. I'm afraid I'm a little too old for that sort of thing. (*He crosses towards the door L.*)

NEVILLE. What about you, Kay?

KAY. (*Moving R. c.*) What about Ted? We promised him we'd go over this morning.

NEVILLE. There's no reason why he shouldn't come, too. I'll get hold of Royde and Audrey and see what they drink of the idea. It should be lovely out in the bay. (*Audrey enters L. She looks worried.*)

AUDREY. (*Anxiously.*) Mr. Treves—what do you think we ought to do? We can't wake Mary. (*Kay moves down R. of the chaise.*)

NEVILLE. Can't wake her? (*He moves off the rostrum to c.*) What do you mean?

AUDREY. Just that. When Mrs. Barrett came, she took up Mary's morning tea as usual. (*She moves slowly L. c.*) Mary was fast asleep. Mrs. Barrett drew the curtains and called to her, but Mary didn't wake up, so she left the tea on the bedside table. She didn't bother much when Mary didn't come down, but when Mary didn't come down to fetch Camilla's tea, Mrs. Barrett went up again. Mary's tea was stone cold and she was still asleep.

TREVES. (*Moving down L. of the armchair L. c.*) She was very tired last night, Audrey.

AUDREY. But this isn't a *natural* sleep, Mr. Treves. It *can't* be. Mrs. Barrett shook her—hard—and she didn't wake. I went in to Mary and I tried to wake her, too. There's definitely something wrong with her.

NEVILLE. Do you mean she's unconscious?

AUDREY. I don't know. She looks very pale and she just lies there—like a log.

KAY. Perhaps she took some sleeping pills.

AUDREY. (*Moving c.*) That's what I thought, but it's so unlike Mary. (*She turns to Treves.*) What shall we do?

TREVES. I think you should get a doctor. She may be ill.

NEVILLE. (*Crossing to the door L.*) I'll go and phone Lazenby and get him to come at once. (*Neville exits quickly L.*)

TREVES. (*Moving L. c.*) Have you told Lady Tressilian, Audrey?

AUDREY. (*Moving R. c.; shaking her head.*) No, not yet. I didn't want to disturb her. They're making her some fresh tea in the kitchen. I'm going to take it up. I'll tell her then.

TREVES. I sincerely hope it's nothing serious.

KAY. She's probably taken an overdose of sleeping stuff. (*She sits in the easy chair down R.*)

TREVES. That *could* be extremely serious.

AUDREY. I can't imagine Mary doing such a thing. (*Royde enters L.*)

ROYDE. (*Moving between Treves and Audrey.*) I heard Strange telephoning Dr. Lazenby. What's the matter?

AUDREY. It's Mary. She's still asleep and we can't get her to wake up. Kay thinks she may have taken an overdose of some drug.

KAY. Something like that must have happened or you'd be able to wake her.

ROYDE. Sleeping stuff, do you mean? Shouldn't think she'd have needed anything like that last night. She was dog tired.

TREVES. I'm sure she wouldn't take any sort of drug, you know—in case the bell rang.

KAY. Bell?

ROYDE. There's a bell in her room. Lady Tressilian always rings it if she wants anything in the night. (*To Audrey.*) Remember she was telling us about it last night.

AUDREY. Mary wouldn't take anything that would stop her hearing the bell, in case it was urgent. (*Nevile enters quickly L.*)

NEVILE. Lazenby's coming round right away.

AUDREY. (*Crossing to the door L.*) Oh, good. Before he gets here I'd better go and see about Camilla's tea. She'll be wondering what's happened.

NEVILE. Can I help?

AUDREY. No, thank you. I can manage. (*Audrey exits L. Kay rises and moves up R. of the chaise.*)

ROYDE. (*Moving to the chaise.*) I wonder if it could be some kind of heart attack. (*He sits on the chaise. Treves sits in the armchair L. C.*)

NEVILE. (*Crossing and standing on the right end of the rostrum.*) It's not much use conjecturing, is it? Lazenby'll be able to tell us. Poor old Mary. I don't know what will happen if she's really ill.

TREVES. It would be disastrous. Lady Tressilian relies on Mary for everything.

KAY. (*Moving to R. of Nevile, hopefully.*) I suppose we should all have to pack up and go?

NEVILE. (*Smiling at Kay.*) Perhaps it isn't anything serious after all. (*Kay moves down R.*)

ROYDE. Must be something pretty bad if she can't be wakened.

TREVES. It can't take Dr. Lazenby very long to get here, and then we shall know. He lives a very short distance away.

NEVILE. He ought to be here in about ten minutes, I should think.

TREVES. Possibly he will be able to relieve all our minds. I trust so.

NEVILLE. (*With a determinedly cheerful air.*) No good looking on the black side of things, anyway.

KAY. (*Moving to R. of the chaise.*) Always the perfect optimist, aren't you, Neville?

NEVILLE. Well, things usually work out all right.

ROYDE. They certainly do for you.

NEVILLE. (*Moving to L. of Royde.*) I don't quite know what you mean by that, Thomas.

ROYDE. (*Rising.*) I should have thought it was obvious.

NEVILLE. What are you insinuating?

ROYDE. I'm not insinuating anything. I'm stating facts.

TREVES. (*Rising.*) Ssh! (*He moves C. and hastily changes the subject.*) Do you think—er—we ought to see if there is anything we could do to—er—help. Lady Tressilian might wish . . . (*Royde crosses above the others and stands on the left end of the rostrum.*)

NEVILLE. If Camilla wants us to do anything she'll soon say so. I wouldn't interfere unless she does, if I were you. (*Audrey is heard to scream off L. Royde exits hurriedly. There is a short pause. Audrey, supported by Royde, enters L. She looks almost dazed.*)

AUDREY. Camilla—Camilla . . .

TREVES. (*Concerned.*) My dear! What's the matter?

AUDREY. (*In a husky whisper.*) It's—Camilla.

NEVILLE. (*Surprised.*) Camilla? What's wrong with her?

AUDREY. She's—she's dead.

KAY. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) Oh, no, no.

NEVILLE. It must have been her heart.

AUDREY. No—it—it wasn't her heart. (*She presses her hands to her eyes. They all stare at her. She shouts.*) There's blood—all over her head. (*She suddenly screams out hysterically.*) She's been murdered. Don't you understand? She's been murdered. (*Audrey sinks into the easy chair down L. and the lights fade to Black-Out, as—the Curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

Scene II

SCENE—*The same. Two hours later. The furniture has been moved to make the room more suitable for the police interrogations. The coffee table has been moved into the alcove R., and the chaise on to the rostrum. A card table has been placed R. C. with the upright chair from the alcove L. of it. The armchair L. C. is now above the card table and the easy chair down L. is now L. C. On the card table is a small tray with a jug of water and two glasses. Also on the card table are a box of cigarettes, an ashtray and a box of matches. A copy of "The Times" lies half open on the window-seat.*

When the Curtain rises, Treves is standing L. of the card table, looking around the room. After a moment he moves up C. on the rostrum. Superintendent Battle enters L. He is a big man, aged about fifty, and is quietly dressed. His face is heavy but intelligent.

TREVES. Ah. Battle.

BATTLE. That's fixed up, sir.

TREVES. It was all right, was it, Battle?

BATTLE. (*Crossing to C.*) Yes, sir. The Chief Constable got through to the Yard. As I happened to be on the spot they've agreed to let me handle the case. (*He moves down R., turns and looks around the room.*)

TREVES. (*Moving down C.*) I'm very glad. It's going to make it easier having you instead of a stranger. Pity to have spoilt your holiday, though.

BATTLE. Oh, I don't mind that, sir. I'll be able to give my nephew a hand. It'll be his first murder case, you see.

TREVES. (*Moving to the bureau chair.*) Yes, yes—I've no doubt he will find your experience of great help. (*He moves the chair to R. of the card table.*)

BATTLE. (*Crossing to R. C.*) It's a nasty business.

TREVES. Shocking, shocking. (*He crosses and stands below the easy chair L. C.*)

BATTLE. I've seen the doctor. Two blows were struck. The first was sufficient to cause death. The murderer must have struck again to make sure, or in a blind rage.

TREVES. Horrible. (*He sits in the easy chair L. C.*) I can't believe it could have been anyone in the house.

BATTLE. Afraid it was, sir. We've been into all that. No entry was forced. (*He moves in the direction of the French windows.*) All the doors and windows were fastened this morning as usual. And then there's the drugging of Miss Aldin—that must have been an inside job.

TREVES. How is she?

BATTLE. Still sleeping it off, but she was given a pretty heavy dose. It looks like careful planning on somebody's part. (*He crosses to C.*) Lady Tressilian might have pulled that bell which rings in Miss Aldin's room, if she'd been alarmed. That had to be taken care of—so Miss Aldin was doped.

TREVES. (*Troubled.*) It still seems to me quite incredible.

BATTLE. We'll get to the bottom of it, sir, in the end. (*He moves to L. of the card table.*) Death occurred, according to the doctor, between ten-thirty and midnight. Not earlier than ten-thirty, not later than midnight. That should be a help. (*He sits on the chair L. of the card table.*)

TREVES. Yes, yes. And the weapon used was a niblick?

BATTLE. Yes, sir. Thrown down by the bed, blood-stained and with white hairs sticking to it. (*Treves makes a gesture of repulsion.*) I shouldn't have deduced a niblick from the appearance of the wound, but apparently the sharp edge of the club didn't touch the head. The doctor says it was the rounded part of the club hit her.

TREVES. The—er—murderer was incredibly stupid, don't you think, to leave the weapon behind?

BATTLE. Probably lost his head. It happens.

TREVES. Possibly—yes, possibly. I suppose there are no fingerprints?

BATTLE. (*Rising and moving up R. C.*) Sergeant Pengelly is attending to that now, sir. I doubt if it's going to be as easy as that. (*Inspector Leach enters L. He is a youngish man, about thirty-eight to forty, thin and dark. He speaks with a slight Cornish accent. He carries a niblick golf club.*)

LEACH. (*Crossing above the easy chair L. C. to L. of Battle.*) See here, Uncle. Pengelly has brought up a beautiful set of dabs on this—clear as day.

BATTLE. (*Warningly.*) Be careful how you go handling that, my boy.

LEACH. It's all right, we've got photographs. Got specimens of the blood

and hair, too. (*He shows the club to Battle.*) What do you think of these dabs? Clear as clear, aren't they? (*Battle inspects the fingerprints on the shaft of the club, then crosses to R. of Treves.*)

BATTLE. They're clear enough. What a fool! (*He shows the club to Treves.*)

LEACH. That's so to be sure.

BATTLE. All we've got to do now, my lad, is ask everyone nicely and politely if we may take their fingerprints—no compulsion, of course. Everyone will say "yes"—and one of two things will happen. Either none of the prints will agree, or else . . .

LEACH. It'll be in the bag, eh? (*He crosses to the door L. Battle nods.*)

TREVES. Doesn't it strike you as extremely odd, Battle, that the—er—murderer should have been so foolish as to leave such a damning piece of evidence behind—actually on the scene of the crime?

BATTLE. I've known 'em do things equally foolish, sir. (*He puts the club on the chaise.*) Well, let's get on with it. Where's everybody?

LEACH. (*Moving up L.*) In the library. Pollock is going through all their rooms. Except Miss Aldin's, of course. She's still sleeping off the effects of that dope.

BATTLE. We'll have 'em in here one at a time. (*To Treves.*) Which Mrs. Strange was it who discovered the murder?

TREVES. Mrs. Audrey Strange.

BATTLE. Oh, yes. Difficult when there are two Mrs. Stranges. Mrs. Audrey Strange is the divorced wife, isn't she?

TREVES. Yes. I explained to you the—er—situation.

BATTLE. Yes, sir. Funny idea of Mr. Strange's. I should have thought that most men . . . (*Kay enters quickly L. She is very upset and slightly hysterical.*)

KAY. (*Crossing towards the French windows, to Battle.*) I'm not going to stay cooped up in that damned library any longer. I want some air and I'm going out. You can do what the hell you like about it. (*Leach moves down L.*)

BATTLE. Just a minute, Mrs. Strange. (*Kay stops and turns by the French windows.*) There's no reason why you shouldn't go out if you wish, but it'll have to be later.

KAY. I want to go now.

BATTLE. I'm afraid that's impossible.

KAY. (*Moving slowly down R.*) You've no right to keep me here. I haven't done anything.

BATTLE. (*Soothingly.*) No, no, of course you haven't. But you see, there'll be one or two questions we'll have to ask you.

KAY. What sort of questions? I can't help you. I don't know anything about it.

BATTLE. (*Moving down c.; to Leach.*) Get Benson, will you, Jim? (*Leach nods and exits L.*) Now you just sit down here, Mrs. Strange—(*He indicates the chair L. of the card table*) and relax.

KAY. (*Moving and sitting L. of the card table.*) I've told you I don't know anything. Why do I have to answer a lot of questions when I don't know anything?

BATTLE. (*Moving above the card table and standing down R. of it, apologetically.*) We've got to interview everybody, you see. It's just part of the routine. Not very pleasant for you, or for us, but there you are.

KAY. Oh, well—all right. (*Police-Constable Benson enters L. Leach follows him on. Benson is a youngish man, fairish and very quiet. He moves to L. of the chaise and takes out a notebook and pencil.*)

BATTLE. (*Sitting R. of the card table.*) Now, just tell us about last night, Mrs. Strange.

KAY. What about last night?

BATTLE. What did you do—say from after dinner, onwards?

KAY. I had a headache. I—I went to bed quite early.

BATTLE. How early?

KAY. I don't know exactly. It was about a quarter to ten, I think.

TREVES. (*Interposing gently.*) Ten minutes to ten.

KAY. Was it? I wouldn't know to the minute.

BATTLE. We'll take it was ten minutes to ten. (*He makes a sign to Benson. Benson makes a note in his book.*) Did your husband accompany you?

KAY. No.

BATTLE. (*After a pause.*) What time did he come to bed?

KAY. I've no idea. You'd better ask *him* that.

LEACH. (*Crossing to L. of Kay.*) The door between your room and your husband's is locked. Was it locked when you went to bed?

KAY. Yes.

LEACH. Who locked it?

KAY. I did.

BATTLE. Was it usual for you to lock it?

KAY. No.

BATTLE. (*Rising.*) Why did you do so last night, Mrs. Strange? (*Kay does not reply. Leach moves up R. c.*)

TREVES. (*After a pause.*) I should tell them, Kay.

KAY. I suppose if I don't, you will. Oh, well, then. You can have it. Nevile and I had a row—a flaming row. (*Leach looks at Benson, who makes a note.*) I was furious with him. I went to bed and locked the door because I was still in a flaming rage with him.

BATTLE. I see—what was the trouble about?

KAY. Does it matter? I don't see how it concerns . . .

BATTLE. You're not compelled to answer, if you'd rather not.

KAY. Oh, I don't mind. My husband has been behaving like a perfect fool. It's all that woman's fault, though.

BATTLE. What woman?

KAY. Audrey—his first wife. It was she who got him to come here in the first place.

BATTLE. I understood that it was Mr. Strange's idea.

KAY. Well, it wasn't. It was hers.

BATTLE. But why should Mrs. Audrey Strange have suggested it? (*During the following speech, Leach crosses slowly to the door L.*)

KAY. To cause trouble, I suppose. Nevile thinks it was his own idea—poor innocent. But he never thought of such a thing until he met Audrey in the Park one day in London, and she put the idea into his head and made him believe he'd thought of it himself. I've seen her scheming mind behind it from the first. She's never taken *me* in.

BATTLE. Why should she be so anxious for you all to come here together?

KAY. (*Quickly and breathlessly.*) Because she wanted to get hold of Nevile again. That's why. She's never forgiven him for going off with me. This is her revenge. She got him to fix it so that we'd be here together and then she got to work on him. She's been doing it ever since we arrived. (*Battle crosses above the card table to c.*) She's clever, damned clever. She knows just how to look pathetic and elusive. Poor sweet, injured little kitten—with all her blasted claws out.

TREVES. Kay—Kay . . .

BATTLE. I see. Surely, if you felt so strongly, you could have objected to this arrangement of coming here?

KAY. Do you think I didn't try? Nevile was set on it. He insisted.

BATTLE. But you're quite sure it wasn't his idea?

KAY. I'm positive. That white-faced little cat planned it all.

TREVES. You have no actual evidence on which to base such an assertion, Kay.

KAY. (*Rising and crossing to R. of Treves.*) I know, I tell you, and you know it, too, though you won't admit it. Audrey's been . . .

BATTLE. Come and sit down, Mrs. Strange. (*Kay crosses reluctantly to L.*

of the card table and sits.) Did Lady Tressilian approve of the arrangement?

KAY. She didn't approve of anything in connection with me. Audrey was her pet. She disliked me for taking Audrey's place with Neville.

BATTLE. Did you—quarrel with Lady Tressilian?

KAY. No.

BATTLE. After you'd gone to bed, Mrs. Strange, did you hear anything? Any unusual sounds in the house?

KAY. I didn't hear anything. I was so upset I took some sleeping stuff. I fell asleep almost at once.

BATTLE. (*Crossing to R. of the card table.*) What kind of sleeping stuff?

KAY. They're little blue capsules. I don't know what's in them. (*Battle looks at Benson, who makes a note.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving to the chaise.*) You didn't see your husband after you went up to bed?

KAY. No, no, no. I've already told you that I locked the door.

BATTLE. (*Picking up the niblick and bringing it to L. of Kay.*) Have you ever seen this before, Mrs. Strange?

KAY. (*Shrinking away.*) How—how horrible. Is that what—what it was done with?

BATTLE. We believe so. Have you any idea to whom it belongs?

KAY. (*Shaking her head.*) There are packets of golf clubs in the house. Mrs. Royde's—Nevile's—mine . . .

BATTLE. This is a man's club. It wouldn't be one of yours.

KAY. Then it must be . . . I don't know.

BATTLE. I see. (*He moves to the chaise and replaces the niblick on it.*)

Thank you, Mrs. Strange, that's all for the present. (*Kay rises and moves down R.*)

LEACH. There's just one other thing. (*Kay turns. He crosses to L. of Kay.*) Would you object to letting Detective Sergeant Pengelly take your fingerprints?

KAY. My—fingerprints?

BATTLE. (*Smoothly.*) It's just a matter of routine, Mrs. Strange. We're asking everybody.

KAY. I don't mind anything—so long as I don't have to go back to that menagerie in the library.

LEACH. I'll arrange for Sergeant Pengelly to take your fingerprints in the breakfast room. (*Kay crosses below Leach to L. c., looks closely at Treves for a moment, then exits L. Leach crosses and exits L. Benson closes his notebook and waits stolidly.*)

BATTLE. Benson. Go and ask Pollock if he saw some small blue capsules in Mrs. Strange's room—Mrs. Kay Strange. I want a specimen of them.

BENSON. Yes, sir. (*He moves to the door L.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving c.*) Come back here when you've done that.

BENSON. Yes, sir. (*Benson exits L.*)

TREVES. (*Rising.*) Do you think the same drug was used to—er—dope Miss Aldin?

BATTLE. (*Moving on to the R. end of the rostrum.*) It's worth checking up on. Would you mind telling me, sir, who stands to gain by Lady Tressilian's death?

TREVES. Lady Tressilian had very little money of her own. The late Sir Mortimer Tressilian's estate was left in trust for her during her lifetime. On her death it is to be equally divided between Neville and his wife.

BATTLE. Which wife?

THIEVES. His first wife.

BATTLE. Audrey Strange?

TREVES. Yes. The bequest is quite clearly worded, "Nevile Henry Strange, and his wife, Audrey Elizabeth Strange, née Standish." The subsequent divorce makes no difference whatever to that bequest.

BATTLE. (*Moving down R.*) Mrs. Audrey Strange is of course fully aware of that?

TREVES. Certainly.

BATTLE. And the present Mrs. Strange—does she know that she gets nothing?

TREVES. Really I cannot say. (*His voice is doubtful.*) Presumably her husband has made it clear to her. (*He moves to L. of the card table.*)

BATTLE. If he hadn't she might be under the impression that she was the one who benefited?

TREVES. It's possible—yes. (*He sits L. of the card table.*)

BATTLE. Is the amount involved a large one, sir?

TREVES. Quite considerable. Approaching one hundred thousand pounds.

BATTLE. Whew! That's quite something, even in these days. (*Leach enters L. He is carrying a crumpled dinner jacket.*)

LEACH. (*Moving L. C.*) I say, take a look at this. Pollock has just found it bundled down in the bottom of Nevile Strange's wardrobe. (*Battle crosses to R. of Leach. He points to the sleeve.*) Look at these stains. That's blood, or I'm Marilyn Monroe.

BATTLE. (*Taking the jacket from Leach.*) You're certainly not Marilyn

Monroe, Jim. It's spattered all up the sleeve as well. Any other suits in the room?

LEACH. Dark grey pinstripe hanging over a chair. And there's a lot of water round the wash basin on the floor—quite a pool of it. Looks as if it had slopped over.

BATTLE. Such as might have been made if he'd washed the blood off his hands in the devil of a hurry, eh?

LEACH. Yes. (*He takes some small tweezers from his pocket and picks some hairs off the inside of the collar.*)

BATTLE. Hairs! A woman's fair hairs on the inside of the collar.

LEACH. Some on the sleeve, too.

BATTLE. Red ones, these. Mr. Strange seems to have had his arm around one wife and the other one's head on his shoulder.

LEACH. Quite a Mormon. Looks bad for him, don't it?

BATTLE. We'll have to have the blood on this tested later to see if it's the same group as Lady Tressilian's.

LEACH. I'll try and arrange it, Uncle.

TREVES. (*Rising and moving down R.; very perturbed.*) I can't believe, I really can't believe that Neville, whom I've known all his life, is capable of such a terrible act. There *must* be a mistake.

BATTLE. (*Moving and putting the jacket on the chaise.*) I hope so, I'm sure, sir. (*To Leach.*) We'll have Mr. Royde in next. (*Leach nods and exits L.*)

TREVES. I'm quite sure there must be some innocent explanation, Battle, for that stained dinner jacket. Quite apart from lack of motive, Neville is . . .

BATTLE. Fifty thousand pounds is a pretty good motive, sir, to my mind.

TREVES. But Neville is well off. He's not in need of money.

BATTLE. There may be something we know nothing about, sir. (*Benson enters L. and crosses to L. of Battle. He carries a small round box.*)

BENSON. Pollock found the pills, sir. (*He hands the box to Battle.*) Here you are.

BATTLE. (*Looking into the box.*) These are the things. I'll get the doctor to tell us whether they contain the same stuff that was given to Miss Aldin. (*He moves up R. Royde enters L.*)

ROYDE. (*Moving L. C.*) You want to see me?

BATTLE. (*Moving down R. C.*) Yes, Mr. Royde. (*He indicates the chair L. of the card table.*) Will you sit down, sir?

ROYDE. Rather stand.

BATTLE. Just as you like. (*Benson takes out his notebook and pencil.*)

Treves sits in the easy chair down R.) I'd like you to answer one or two questions, if you've no objection.

ROYDE. No objection at all. Nothing to hide.

BATTLE. (*Moving below the card table.*) I understand that you have only just returned from Malaya, Mr. Royde.

ROYDE. That's right. First time I've been home for seven years.

BATTLE. You've known Lady Tressilian for a long time?

ROYDE. Ever since I was a boy.

BATTLE. Can you suggest a reason why anyone should want to kill her?

ROYDE. No.

BATTLE. (*Moving up R. of the card table.*) How long have you known Mr. Neville Strange?

ROYDE. Practically all my life.

BATTLE. (*Moving up R. C.*) Do you know him sufficiently well to be aware if he was worried over money?

ROYDE. No, but I shouldn't think so. Always seems to have plenty.

BATTLE. If there was any trouble like that, he wouldn't be likely to confide in you?

ROYDE. Very unlikely.

BATTLE. (*Moving down L. of the card table.*) What time did you go to bed last night, Mr. Royde?

ROYDE. Round about half past nine, I should think.

BATTLE. That seems to be very early.

ROYDE. Always go to bed early. Like to get up early.

BATTLE. I see. Your room is practically opposite Lady Tressilian's, isn't it?

ROYDE. Practically.

BATTLE. Did you go to sleep immediately you went to bed?

ROYDE. No. Finished a detective story I was reading. Not very good—it seems to me they always . . .

BATTLE. Yes, yes. Were you still awake at half past ten?

ROYDE. Yes.

BATTLE. (*Sitting L. of the card table.*) Did you—this is very important, Mr. Royde—did you hear any unusual sounds round about that time?

(*Royde does not reply.*) I'll repeat that question. Did you . . . ?

ROYDE. There's no need. I heard you.

BATTLE. (*After a pause.*) Well, Mr. Royde?

ROYDE. Heard a noise in the attic over my head, rats, I expect. Anyway, that was later.

BATTLE. I don't mean that.

ROYDE. (*Looking at Treves, reluctantly.*) There was a bit of a rumpus.

BATTLE. What sort of rumpus?

ROYDE. Well—an argument.

BATTLE. An argument? Who was the argument between?

ROYDE. Lady Tressilian and Strange.

BATTLE. Lady Tressilian and Mr. Strange were quarreling?

ROYDE. Well, yes. I suppose you'd call it that.

BATTLE. (*Rising and moving to R. of Royde.*) It's not what I would call it, Mr. Royde. Do you call it that?

ROYDE. Yes.

BATTLE. Thank you. What was this quarrel about?

ROYDE. Didn't listen. Not my business.

BATTLE. But you are quite sure they *were* quarreling?

ROYDE. Sounded like it. Their voices were raised pretty high.

BATTLE. Can you place the time exactly?

ROYDE. About twenty past ten I should think.

BATTLE. Twenty past ten. You didn't hear anything else?

ROYDE. Strange slammed the door when he left.

BATTLE. You heard nothing more after that?

ROYDE. (*Crossing below Battle to the card table.*) Only rats. (*He knocks out his pipe in the ashtray.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving to the chaise.*) Never mind the rats. (*He picks up the niblick. Royde fills and lights his pipe. He moves to L. of Royde.*) Does this belong to you, Mr. Royde? (*Royde, engrossed with his pipe, does not reply.*) Mr. Royde!

ROYDE. (*Looking at the niblick.*) No. All my clubs have got T.R. scratched on the shaft.

BATTLE. Do you know to whom it does belong?

ROYDE. No idea. (*He moves up R.*)

BATTLE. (*Replacing the niblick on the chaise.*) We shall want to take your fingerprints, Mr. Royde. Have you any objection to that?

ROYDE. Not much use objecting, is it? Your man's already done it. (*Benson laughs quietly.*)

BATTLE. Thank you, then, Mr. Royde. That's all for the present.

ROYDE. Do you mind if I go out for a bit? Feel like some fresh air. Only out on the terrace, if you want me.

BATTLE. That'll be quite all right, sir.

ROYDE. Thanks. (*Royde exits by the French windows. Benson sits on the window-seat.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving C.*) The evidence seems to be piling up against Mr. Strange, sir.

TREVES. (*Rising and moving to R. of the card table.*) It's incredible—incredible. (*Leach enters L. and crosses to L. c.*)

LEACH. (*Jubilantly.*) The fingerprints are Neville Strange's all right.

BATTLE. That would seem to clinch it, Jim. He leaves his weapon—he leaves his fingerprints; I wonder he didn't leave his visiting card.

LEACH. Been easy, hasn't it?

TREVES. It *can't* have been Neville. There must be a mistake. (*He pours himself a glass of water.*)

BATTLE. It all adds up. We'll see what Mr. Strange has to say, anyhow. Bring him in, Jim. (*Leach exits L.*)

TREVES. I don't understand it. I'm sure there's something wrong. (*Battle moves down L. c.*) Neville's not a complete and utter fool. Even if he were capable of committing such a brutal act—which I refuse to believe—would he have left all this damning evidence strewn about so carelessly? (*He moves up R.*)

BATTLE. Well, sir, apparently he did. (*He moves to R. of the easy chair L. c.*) You can't get away from facts. (*Nevile and Leach enter L. Nevile looks worried and a little nervous. He stands a moment in the doorway. He indicates the chair L. of the card table.*) Come and sit down, Mr. Strange.

NEVILE. (*Crossing to the chair L. of the card table.*) Thank you. (*He sits. Treves crosses slowly above the others and stands down L.*)

BATTLE. We should like you to answer certain questions, but it's my duty to caution you that you are not bound to answer these questions unless you wish.

NEVILE. Go ahead. Ask me anything you wish.

BATTLE. (*Moving c.*) You realize that anything you say will be taken down in writing and may subsequently be used in evidence in a court of law?

NEVILE. Are you threatening me?

BATTLE. No, no, Mr. Strange. Warning you.

TREVES. (*Moving below the easy chair L. c.*) Superintendent Battle is obliged to conform to the regulations, Neville. You need say nothing unless you wish to?

NEVILE. Why shouldn't I wish to?

TREVES. It might be wiser not to.

NEVILE. Nonsense! Go ahead, Superintendent. Ask me anything you like. (*Treves makes a despairing gesture and sits in the easy chair L. c. Benson rises.*)

BATTLE. (*Crossing below Neville and standing down R.*) Are you prepared to make a statement?

NEVILLE. If that's what you call it. I'm afraid, though, I can't help you very much.

BATTLE. Will you begin by telling us exactly what you did last night? From dinner onwards? (*He sits R. of the card table.*)

NEVILLE. Let me see. Immediately after dinner I went up to my room and wrote a couple of letters—I'd been putting them off for a long time and I thought I might as well get them done. When I'd finished I came down here.

BATTLE. What time would that be?

NEVILLE. I suppose it was about a quarter past nine. That's as near as dammit, anyhow. (*Battle helps himself to a cigarette.*)

BATTLE. (*Offering the cigarettes to Neville.*) I'm so sorry.

NEVILLE. No, thank you.

BATTLE. What did you do after that? (*He lights his cigarette.*)

NEVILLE. I talked to—to Kay, my wife, and Ted Latimer.

BATTLE. Latimer—who's he?

NEVILLE. A friend of ours who's staying at the *Easterhead Bay Hotel*. He'd come over for dinner. He left soon after and everybody else went off to bed.

BATTLE. Including your wife?

NEVILLE. Yes, she was feeling a bit off color.

BATTLE. (*Rising.*) I understand there was some sort of—unpleasantness?

NEVILLE. Oh—(*He looks at Treves.*) you've heard about that, have you? It was purely a domestic quarrel. Can't have anything to do with this horrible business.

BATTLE. I see. (*He crosses below the table and moves up C. After a pause.*) After everybody else had gone to bed, what did you do then?

NEVILLE. I was a bit bored. It was still fairly early and I decided to go across to the *Easterhead Bay Hotel*.

BATTLE. In the storm? It had broken by this time, surely?

NEVILLE. Yes, it had. But it didn't worry me. I went upstairs to change . . .

BATTLE. (*Moving quickly to Neville, breaking in quickly.*) Change into what, Mr. Strange?

NEVILLE. I was wearing a dinner jacket. As I proposed to take the ferry across the river and it was raining pretty heavily, I changed. Into a grey pinstripe—(*He pauses.*) if it interests you.

BATTLE. (*After a pause.*) Go on, Mr. Strange.

NEVILLE. (*Showing signs of increasing nervousness.*) I went up to change, as I said. I was passing Lady Tressilian's door, which was ajar, when

she called, "Is that you, Neville?" and asked me to come in. I went in and—and we chatted for a bit.

BATTLE. How long were you with her?

NEVILLE. About twenty minutes, I suppose. When I left her I went to my room, changed, and hurried off. I took the latchkey with me because I expected to be late.

BATTLE. What time was it then?

NEVILLE. (*Reflectively.*) About half past ten, I should think, I just caught the ten-thirty-five ferry and went across to the Easterhead side of the river. I had a drink or two with Latimer at the hotel and watched the dancing. Then we had a game of billards. In the end I found I'd missed the last ferry back. It goes at one-thirty. Latimer very decently got out his car and drove me home. It's fifteen miles round by road, you know. (*He pauses.*) We left the hotel at two o'clock and reached here at half past. Latimer wouldn't come in for a drink, so I let myself in and went straight up to bed. (*Battle and Treves exchange looks.*)

BATTLE. (*Crossing below Neville to R. of the card table.*) During your conversation with Lady Tressilian—was she quite normal in her manner? (*He stubs out his cigarette in the ashtray on the card table.*)

NEVILLE. Oh, yes, quite.

BATTLE. (*Moving above the card table.*) What did you talk about?

NEVILLE. This and that.

BATTLE. (*Moving behind Neville.*) Amiably?

NEVILLE. Of course.

BATTLE. (*Moving down L. C.; smoothly.*) You didn't have a violent quarrel?

NEVILLE. (*Rising, angrily.*) What the devil do you mean?

BATTLE. You'd better tell the truth, Mr. Strange. I'll warn you—you were overheard.

NEVILLE. (*Crossing slowly below the card table to R. of it*) Well, we *did* have a difference of opinion. She—she disapproved of my behaviour over—over Kay and—and my first wife. I may have got a bit heated, but we parted on perfectly friendly terms. (*He bangs his fist on the table. With a sudden burst of temper.*) I didn't bash her over the head because I lost my temper—if that's what you think. (*Battle moves to the chaise, picks up the niblick, then moves to L. of the card table.*)

BATTLE. Is this your property, Mr. Strange?

NEVILLE. (*Looking at the niblick.*) Yes. It's one of Walter Hudson's niblicks from St. Egbert's.

BATTLE. This is the weapon we think was used to kill Lady Tressilian.

Have you any explanation for your fingerprints being on the grip?

NEVILLE. But—of course they would be—it's my club. I've often handled it.

BATTLE. Any explanation, I mean, for the fact that your fingerprints show that you were the *last* person to have handled it?

NEVILLE. That's not true. It *can't* be. Somebody could have handled it after me—someone wearing gloves.

BATTLE. Nobody could have handled it in the sense you mean—by raising it to strike—without blurring your own marks.

NEVILLE. (*Staring at the niblick in sudden realization.*) It can't be! (*He sits R. of the card table and covers his face with his hands.*) Oh, God! (*After a pause he takes his hands away and looks up.*) It isn't that! It simply isn't true. You think I killed her, but I didn't. I swear I didn't. There's some horrible mistake. (*Battle replaces the niblick on the chaise.*)

TREVES. (*Rising and crossing to L. of the card table.*) Can't you think of any explanation to account for those fingerprints, Neville? (*Battle picks up the dinner jacket.*)

NEVILLE. No—no—I can't think—of anything. (*Treves moves above the card table.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving to L. of the card table.*) Can you explain why the cuffs, and sleeve of this dinner jacket—*your* dinner jacket—are stained with blood?

NEVILLE. (*In a horror-stricken whisper.*) Blood? It couldn't be.

TREVES. You didn't, for instance, cut yourself?

NEVILLE. (*Rising and pushing his chair violently backwards.*) No—no, of course I didn't. It's fantastic—simply fantastic. It's none of it *true*.

BATTLE. The facts are true enough, Mr. Strange.

NEVILLE. But why should I do such a dreadful thing? It's unthinkable—unbelievable. I've known Lady Tressilian all my life. (*He moves to R. of Treves.*) Mr. Treves—you don't believe it, do you? You don't believe that I would do a thing like this? (*Battle replaces the jacket on the chaise.*)

TREVES. No, Neville, I can't believe it.

NEVILLE. I didn't. I swear I didn't. What reason could I have . . . ?

BATTLE. (*Turning and standing on the rostrum.*) I believe that you inherit a great deal of money on Lady Tressilian's death, Mr. Strange.

NEVILLE. (*Moving down R.*) You mean—You think that . . . ? It's ridiculous! I don't need money. I'm quite well off. You've only to enquire at my bank . . . (*Treves sit R. of the card table.*)

BATTLE. We shall check up on that. But there may be some reason why you suddenly require a large sum of money—some reason unknown to anyone except yourself.

NEVILE. There's nothing of the sort.

BATTLE. As to that—we shall see.

NEVILE. (*Crossing slowly below the card table to R. of Battle.*) Are you going to arrest me?

BATTLE. Not yet—we propose to give you the benefit of the doubt.

NEVILE. (*Bitterly.*) You mean that you've made up your mind I did it, but you want to be sure of my motive so as to clinch the case against me. (*He moves above the armchair R. C.*) That's it, isn't it? (*He grips the back of the armchair.*) My God! It's like some awful dream. Like being caught in a trap and you can't get out. (*He pauses.*) Do you want me any more now? I'd like to—to get out—by myself—and think over all this. It's been rather a shock.

BATTLE. We've finished with you for the present, sir.

NEVILE. Thank you.

BATTLE. (*Moving down L. C.*) Don't go too far away, though, will you, sir?

NEVILE. (*Moving to the French windows.*) You needn't worry. I shan't try and run away—if *that's* what you mean. (*He glances off R.*) I see you've taken your precautions, anyway. (*Nevile exits by the French windows. Benson sits on the window-seat.*)

LEACH. (*Moving to L. of Battle.*) He did it all right.

BATTLE. (*Moving C.*) I don't know, Jim. If you want the truth, I don't like it. I don't like *any* of it. There's *too much* evidence against him. Besides, it doesn't quite fit. Lady Tressilian calls him into the room, and he goes happening to have a niblick in his hand. Why?

LEACH. So as to bash her over the head.

BATTLE. Meaning it's premeditated? All right, he's drugged Miss Aldin. But he can't count on her being asleep so soon. He couldn't count on *anybody* being asleep so soon.

LEACH. Well then, say he's cleaning his clubs. Lady T calls him. They have a row—he loses his temper and bashes her with the club he just *happens* to be holding.

BATTLE. That doesn't account for the drugging of Mary Aldin. And she *was* drugged—the doctor says so. Of course—(*Meditatively.*) she could have drugged herself.

LEACH. Why?

BATTLE. (*Moving to L. of the card table, to Treves.*) Is there any possible motive in Miss Aldin's case?

TREVES. Lady Tressilian left her a legacy—not a very large one—a few hundreds a year. As I told you, Lady Tressilian had very little personal fortune.

BATTLE. A few hundreds a year. (*He sits L. of the card table.*)

TREVES. (*Rising and moving down R.*) I agree. An inadequate motive.

BATTLE. (*Sighing.*) Well, let's see the first wife. Jim, get Mrs. Audrey Strange. (*Leach exits L.*) There's something peculiar about this business, sir. A mixture of cold premeditation and unpremeditated violence, and the two don't mix.

TREVES. Exactly, Battle. The drugging of Miss Aldin suggests premeditation . . .

BATTLE. And the way the murder was carried out looks as though it was done in a fit of blind rage. Yes, sir. It's all *wrong*.

TREVES. Did you notice what he said—about a trap?

BATTLE. (*Thoughtfully.*) "A trap." (*Leach enters L. and holds the door open. Audrey enters L. She is very pale but completely composed. Benson rises. Treves moves up R. Leach exits L. and closes the door.*)

AUDREY. (*Crossing to C.*) You wish to see me?

BATTLE. (*Rising.*) Yes. (*He indicates the chair L. of the card table.*) Please sit down, Mrs. Strange. (*Audrey crosses quickly to the chair L. of the card table and sits.*) You've already told me how you came to make the discovery, so we needn't go into that again.

AUDREY. Thank you.

BATTLE. (*Moving down R.*) I'm afraid, however, that I shall have to ask you several questions that you may find embarrassing. You are not compelled to answer them unless you like.

AUDREY. I don't mind. I only wish to help. (*Treves moves slowly down L.*)

BATTLE. First of all, then, will you tell us what you did after dinner last night?

AUDREY. I was on the terrace for some time talking to Mr. Treves. Then Miss Aldin came out to say that Lady Tressilian would like to see him in her room, and I came in here. I talked to Kay and Mr. Latimer and, later, to Mr. Royde and Neville. Then I went up to bed.

BATTLE. What time did you go to bed?

AUDREY. I think it was about half past nine. I'm not sure of the time exactly. It may have been a little later.

BATTLE. There was some sort of trouble between Mr. Strange and his wife, I believe. Were you mixed up in that?

AUDREY. Neville behaved very stupidly. I think he was rather excited and

overwrought. I left them together and went to bed. I don't know what happened after that, naturally. (*Treves sits in the easy chair L. C.*)

BATTLE. Did you go to sleep at once?

AUDREY. No. I was reading for some little while.

BATTLE. (*Moving on to the rostrum.*) And you heard nothing unusual during the night?

AUDREY. No, nothing. My room is on the floor above Cam—Lady Tressilian's. I wouldn't have heard anything.

BATTLE. (*Picking up the niblick.*) I'm sorry, Mrs. Strange—(*He moves to L. of Audrey and shows her the niblick.*) we believe this was used to kill Lady Tressilian. It has been identified by Mr. Strange as his property. It also bears his fingerprints.

AUDREY. (*Drawing in her breath sharply.*) Oh, you—you're not suggesting that it was—Nevile . . .

BATTLE. Would it surprise you?

AUDREY. Very much. I'm sure you're quite wrong, if you think so. Nevile would never do a thing like that. Besides, he had no reason.

BATTLE. Not if he wanted money very urgently?

AUDREY. He wouldn't. He's not an extravagant person—he never has been. You're quite, quite wrong if you think it was Nevile.

BATTLE. You don't think he would be capable of violence in a fit of temper?

AUDREY. Nevile? Oh, no!

BATTLE. (*Moving and replacing the niblick on the chaise.*) I don't want to pry into your private affairs, Mrs. Strange, but will you explain why you are here? (*He moves to L. of Audrey.*)

AUDREY. (*Surprised.*) Why? I always come here at this time.

BATTLE. But not at the same time as as your ex-husband.

AUDREY. He did ask me if I'd mind.

BATTLE. It was his suggestion?

AUDREY. Oh, yes.

BATTLE. Not yours?

AUDREY. No.

BATTLE. But you agreed?

AUDREY. Yes, I agreed—I didn't feel that I could very well refuse.

BATTLE. Why not? You must have realized that it might be embarrassing?

AUDREY. Yes—I did realize that.

BATTLE. You were the injured party?

AUDREY. I beg your pardon?

BATTLE. It was you who divorced your husband?

AUDREY. Oh, I see—yes.

BATTLE. Do you feel any animosity towards him, Mrs. Strange?

AUDREY. No—none at all.

BATTLE. You have a very forgiving nature. (*Audrey does not reply. He crosses and stands down R.*) Are you on friendly terms with the present Mrs. Strange?

AUDREY. I don't think she likes me very much.

BATTLE. Do *you* like her?

AUDREY. I really don't know her.

BATTLE. (*Moving to R. of the card table.*) You are quite sure it was not your idea—this meeting?

AUDREY. Quite sure.

BATTLE. I think that's all, Mrs. Strange, thank you.

AUDREY. (*Rising, quietly.*) Thank you. (*She crosses to the door L. then hesitates, turns and moves L. C. Treves rises. Nervously and quickly.*) I would just like to say—you think Neville did this—that he killed her because of the money? I'm quite sure that isn't so. Neville never cared much about money. I do know that. I was married to him for several years, you see. It—it—isn't Neville. I know my saying this isn't of any value as evidence—but I do wish you would believe it. (*Audrey turns quickly and exits L. Benson sits on the window-seat.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving R. C.*) It's difficult to know what to make of *her*, sir. I've never seen anyone so devoid of emotion.

TREVES. (*Moving L. C.*) H'm. She didn't show any, Battle, but it's there—some very strong emotion. I thought—but I may have been wrong . . . (*Mary, assisted by Leach, enters L. Mary is wearing a dressing-gown. She sways a little. He moves to Mary.*) Mary! (*He leads her to the easy chair L. C. Mary sits in the easy chair L. C.*)

BATTLE. Miss Aldin! You shouldn't . . .

LEACH. She insisted on seeing you, Uncle. (*He stands above the door L.*)

MARY. (*Faintly.*) I'm all right. I just feel—a little dizzy still. (*Treves crosses to the card table and pours a glass of water.*) I had to come. They told me something about your suspecting Neville. Is that true? Do you suspect Neville? (*Treves crosses with the glass of water to R. of Mary.*)

BATTLE. (*moving down R. C.*) Who told you so?

MARY. The cook. She brought me up some tea. She heard them talking in his room. And then—I came down—and I saw Audrey—and she said it was so. (*She looks from one to the other.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving down R.; evasively.*) We are not contemplating an arrest—at this moment.

MARY. But it *can't* have been Neville. I had to come and tell you. Whoever did it, it wasn't Neville. That I *know*.

BATTLE. (*Crossing to C.*) How do you know?

MARY. Because I saw her—Lady Tressilian—alive after Neville had left the house.

BATTLE. What?

MARY. My bell rang, you see. I was terribly sleepy. I could only just get up. It was a minute or two before half past ten. As I came out of my room Neville was in the hall below. I looked over the banisters and saw him. He went out of the front door and slammed it behind him. Then I went in to Lady Tressilian.

BATTLE. And she was alive and well?

MARY. Yes, of course. She seemed a little upset and said Neville had shouted at her.

BATTLE. (*To Leach.*) Get Mr. Strange. (*Leach crosses and exits by the French windows. Mary takes the glass from Treves and sips the water. He sits on the chair L. of the card table.*) What did Lady Tressilian say exactly?

MARY. She said—(*She thinks.*) Oh, dear, what did she say? She said, "Did I ring for you? I can't remember doing so. Neville has behaved very badly—losing his temper—shouting at me. I feel most upset." I gave her some aspirin and some hot milk from the thermos and she settled down. Then I went back to bed. I was desperately sleepy. Dr. Lazenby asked me if I'd taken any sleeping pills . . .

BATTLE. Yes, we know . . . (*Neville and Leach enter by the French windows. Kay follows them on and stands down R. of the card table. Leach stands up R. He rises and moves L. C.*) You are a very lucky man, Mr. Strange.

NEVILLE. (*Moving above the card table.*) Lucky? Why?

BATTLE. Miss Aldin saw Lady Tressilian alive *after* you left the house, and we've already established you were on the ten-thirty-five ferry.

NEVILLE. (*Bewildered.*) Then—that lets me out? But the blood-stained jacket—(*He moves to R. of the chaise.*) The niblick with my fingerprints on it . . . ? (*Kay sits in the easy chair down R.*)

BATTLE. (*Moving to L. of the chaise.*) Planted. Very ingeniously planted. Blood and hair smeared on the niblick head. *Someone* put on your jacket to commit the crime and then stuffed it away in your wardrobe to incriminate you.

NEVILLE. (*Moving behind the chair L. of the card table.*) But why? I can't believe it.

BATTLE. (*Impressively.*) Who hates you, Mr. Strange? Hates you so much that they wanted you to be hanged for a murder you didn't commit?

NEVILLE. (*After a pause; shaken.*) Nobody—nobody . . . (*Royde enters by the French windows and moves slowly towards the card table as—*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Act Three

Scene I

SCENE: *The same. The next morning.*

Most of the furniture has been replaced in its original position, but the coffee table is now on the rostrum up c. and the work-basket has been removed.

When the curtain rises it is about eleven o'clock. The sun is shining brightly and the bay and French windows are open. Royde is standing on the rostrum, gazing out of the window. Mary enters by the French windows. She looks a little pale and worried. She moves above the chaise and sees Royde.

MARY. Oh, dear!

ROYDE. *(Closing the window and turning.)* Anything the matter?

MARY. *(Laughing with a slight note of hysteria.)* Nobody but you could say a thing like that, Thomas. A murder in the house and you just say "Is anything the matter?" *(She sits on the chaise, at the upstage end.)*

ROYDE. I meant anything fresh.

MARY. Oh, I know what you meant. It's really a wonderful relief to find anyone so gloriously just-the-same-as-usual as you are.

ROYDE. Not much good, is it, getting all het up over things?

MARY. No, you're very sensible, of course. It's how you manage to do it, beats me.

ROYDE. *(Moving down L. c.)* I'm not so—close to things as you are.

MARY. That's true. I don't know what we should have done without you. You've been a tower of strength.

ROYDE. The human buffer, eh?

MARY. The house is still full of policemen.

ROYDE. Yes, I know. Found one in the bathroom this morning. I had to turf him out before I could shave. *(He sits in the armchair L. c.)*

MARY. I know—you come across them in the most unexpected places. *(She rises.)* They're looking for something. *(She shivers and moves up r.)* It was a very near thing for poor Nevile, wasn't it?

ROYDE. Yes, very near. (*Grimly.*) I can't help feeling pleased he's had a bit of a kick in the pants. He's always so damned complacent.

MARY. It's just his manner.

ROYDE. He's had the devil's own luck. If it had been some other poor chap with all that evidence piled against him, he wouldn't have had a hope.

MARY. It *must* have been someone from outside.

ROYDE. It wasn't. They've proved *that*. Everything was fastened up and bolted in the morning. (*Mary moves to the c. bay window and examines the catch.*) Besides, what about your dope? That must have been someone in the house.

MARY. (*Shaking her head.*) I just can't believe it could have been one of —us. (*She moves to the R. end of the rostrum. Latimer enters by the French windows. He carries his jacket.*)

LATIMER. (*Moving to R. of the chaise.*) Hullo, Royde. Good morning, Miss Aldin. I'm looking for Kay. Do you know where she is?

MARY. I think she's up in her room, Mr. Latimer.

LATIMER. (*Putting his jacket over the upstage end of the chaise.*) I thought she might like to come and have lunch at the hotel. Not very cheerful for her here, in the circumstances.

MARY. You can hardly expect us to be very cheerful after what's happened, can you?

LATIMER. (*Moving down R.*) That's what I meant. It's different for Kay, though, you know. The old girl didn't mean so much to her.

MARY. Naturally. She hasn't known Lady Tressilian as long as we have.

LATIMER. Nasty business. I've had the police over at the hotel this morning.

MARY. What did they want?

LATIMER. Checking up on Strange, I suppose. They asked me all sorts of questions. I told them he was with me from after eleven until half past two, and they seemed satisfied. Lucky thing for him that he decided to follow me over to the hotel that night, wasn't it?

ROYDE. (*Rising.*) Very lucky. (*He moves to the door L.*) I'm going upstairs, Latimer. I'll tell Kay you're here, if I can find her.

LATIMER. Thanks. (*Royde exits L. He looks toward the door L. for a moment, then goes to his jacket and takes his cigarettes from the pocket.*) A queer chap. Always seems to be keeping himself bottled up and afraid the cork might come out. Is Audrey going to reward at long last the dog-like devotion of a lifetime? (*He lights a cigarette for himself.*)

MARY. (*Crossing to the door L.; annoyed.*) I don't know, and it's no busi-

ness of ours. (*She hesitates and turns.*) When you saw the police did they say anything—I mean—did you get any idea as to who they suspect now. (*She moves to L. of the armchair L. c.*)

LATIMER. They weren't making any confidences.

MARY. I didn't suppose they were, but I thought, perhaps from the questions they asked . . . (*Kay enters L.*)

KAY. (*Crossing to Latimer.*) Hullo, Ted. It was sweet of you to come over.

LATIMER. I thought you could probably do with a bit of cheering up, Kay.

KAY. My God, how right you were. It was bad enough before in this house, but *now* . . .

LATIMER. What about a run in the car and lunch at the hotel—or anywhere else you like? (*Mary moves down L.*)

KAY. I don't know what Neville's doing . . .

LATIMER. I'm not asking Neville—I'm asking *you*.

KAY. I couldn't come without Neville, Ted. I'm sure it would do him good to get away from here for a bit.

LATIMER. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) All right—bring him along if you want to, Kay. I'm easy.

KAY. Where is Neville, Mary?

MARY. I don't know. I think he's in the garden somewhere.

KAY. (*Crossing to the French windows.*) I'll see if I can find him. I won't be long, Ted. (*Kay exits by the French windows.*)

LATIMER. (*Moving up R.; angrily.*) What she sees in him I can't think. He's treated her like dirt.

MARY. (*Moving up L. of the armchair L. c.*) I think she'll forgive him.

LATIMER. She shouldn't—now she's got her share of the old girl's money—she can go where she pleases, do what she likes. She's got a chance now of having a life of her own.

MARY. (*Sitting in the armchair L. c.; with obscure feeling.*) Can one ever really have a life of one's own? Isn't that just the illusion that lures us on—thinking—planning—for a future that will never really exist?

LATIMER. That wasn't what you were saying the other night.

MARY. I know. But that seems a long time ago. So much has happened since then.

LATIMER. Specifically, one murder.

MARY. You wouldn't talk so flippantly about murder if . . .

LATIMER. If what, Miss Aldin? (*He moves to R. of Mary.*)

MARY. If you had been as close to murder as I have.

LATIMER. This time it is better to be an outsider. (*Kay and Neville enter by the French windows. Kay looks a little annoyed.*)

KAY. (*As she enters.*) It's no good, Ted. (*She goes on to the R. end of the rostrum.*) Neville won't come so we can't go.

NEVILLE. (*Moving down R.*) I don't see very well how we can. It's awfully nice of you, Latimer, but it would hardly be the thing, would it, after what's happened?

LATIMER. (*Moving above the chaise.*) I don't see what harm it would do to go out to lunch—you've got to eat.

NEVILLE. We can eat here. (*He crosses to R. of Kay.*) Hang it all, Kay, we can't go joy-riding about the country. The inquest hasn't been held yet.

LATIMER. If you feel like that about it, Strange, I suppose we'd better call it off. (*He picks up his jacket and moves to the French windows.*)

MARY. (*Rising.*) Perhaps you would care to stay and lunch with us, Mr. Latimer?

LATIMER. Well, that's very nice of you, Miss Aldin . . .

NEVILLE. (*Moving above the chaise.*) Yes, do, Latimer.

KAY. (*Moving to L. of the rostrum.*) Will you, Ted?

LATIMER. (*Moving to R. of the chaise.*) Thanks, I'd like to.

MARY. You'll have to take pot luck. I'm afraid the domestic arrangements are just a little disorganized with the police popping in and out of the kitchen every two minutes.

LATIMER. If it's going to be any trouble . . .

MARY. (*Moving to the door L.*) Oh, no—it'll be no trouble at all. (*Audrey enters L. Kay looks at the magazines on the coffee table.*)

AUDREY. Has anyone seen Mr. Treves this morning?

NEVILLE. I haven't seen him since breakfast. (*Latimer moves down R.*)

MARY. He was talking to the Inspector in the garden about half an hour ago. Do you want him particularly?

AUDREY. (*Crossing to L. C.*) Oh, no—I just wondered where he was.

NEVILLE. (*Looking off R.*) They're coming now. Not Mr. Treves. Superintendent Battle and Inspector Leach.

MARY. (*Nervously.*) What do you think they want now? (*They all wait nervously. Battle and Leach enter by the French windows. Leach carries a long brown-paper parcel. He stands R. of the chaise.*)

BATTLE. (*Crossing to R. C.*) Hope we're not disturbing you all. There are one or two things we'd like to know about.

NEVILLE. I should have thought you'd exhausted everything by now, Superintendent.

BATTLE. Not quite, Mr. Strange. (*He takes a small chamois leather glove from his pocket.*) There's this glove, for instance—who does it belong

to? (*They all stare at the glove without answering. To Audrey.*) Is it yours, Mrs. Strange?

AUDREY. (*Shaking her head.*) No, no, it isn't mine. (*She sits in the armchair L. C.*)

BATTLE. (*Holding the glove out towards Mary.*) Miss Aldin?

MARY. I don't think so. I have none of that color. (*She sits in the easy chair down L.*)

BATTLE. (*To Kay.*) What about you?

KAY. No. I'm sure it doesn't belong to me.

BATTLE. (*Moving to Kay.*) Perhaps you'd just slip it on? It's the left hand glove. (*Kay tries on the glove but it is too small. He crosses to Mary. Will you try, Miss Aldin? (Mary tries on the glove but it is too small. He moves to L. of Audrey.)*) I think you'll find it fits you all right. Your hand is smaller than the other two ladies'. (*Audrey reluctantly takes the glove.*)

NEVILLE. (*Moving R. C. sharply.*) She's already told you that it isn't her glove.

BATTLE. (*Blandly.*) Perhaps she made a mistake—or forgot.

AUDREY. It may be mine—gloves are so alike, aren't they?

BATTLE. Try it on, Mrs. Strange. (*Audrey slips the glove on her left hand. It fits perfectly.*) It seems as if it is yours—at any rate it was found outside your window, pushed down into the ivy—with the other one that goes with it.

AUDREY. (*With difficulty.*) I—I don't know—anything about it. (*She hastily removes the glove and gives it to Battle.*)

NEVILLE. Look here, Superintendent, what are you driving at?

BATTLE. (*Crossing to L. of Neville.*) Perhaps I might have a word with you privately, Mr. Strange?

LATIMER. (*Moving to the French windows.*) Come on, Kay, let's go out in the garden. (*Kay and Latimer exit by the French windows.*)

BATTLE. There's no need to disturb everybody. (*To Neville.*) Isn't there somewhere else we could . . . ?

MARY. (*Rising quickly.*) I was just going, in any case. (*To Audrey.*) You coming with me, Audrey?

AUDREY. (*Almost in a dream.*) Yes—yes. (*She nods in a dazed, frightened manner, and rises slowly. Mary puts her arm around Audrey, and they exit L.*)

NEVILLE. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) Now, Superintendent? What's this absurd story about gloves outside Audrey's window?

BATTLE. It's not absurd, sir. We've found some very curious things in this house.

NEVILLE. Curious? What do you mean by *curious*?

BATTLE. Give us the exhibit, Jim. (*Leach moves to R. of Battle, extracts a heavy, steel-headed poker from his parcel, hands it to Battle, then moves down L. C. He shows the poker to Neville.*) Old-fashioned Victorian fire-iron.

NEVILLE. You think that this—

BATTLE. —was what was really used? Yes, Mr. Strange, I do.

NEVILLE. But why? There's no sign . . .

BATTLE. Oh, it's been cleaned, and put back in the grate of the room where it belonged. But you can't remove bloodstains as easily as all that. We found traces all right. (*He moves up C. and puts the poker on the window-seat.*)

NEVILLE. (*Hoarsely.*) Whose room was it in?

BATTLE. (*With a quick glance at Neville.*) We'll come to that presently. I've got another question to ask you. That dinner jacket you wore last night, it's got fair hairs on the inside of the collar and on the shoulders. Do you know how they got there? (*He moves to the L. end of the rostrum.*)

NEVILLE. No.

BATTLE. (*Crossing and standing up R.*) They're a lady's hairs, sir. Fair hairs. There were several red hairs, as well, on the sleeves.

NEVILLE. These would be my wife's—Kay's. You are suggesting that the others are Audrey's?

BATTLE. Oh, they are, sir. Unquestionably. We've had them compared with hairs from her brush.

NEVILLE. Very likely they are. What about it? I remember I caught my cuff button in her hair the other night on the terrace.

LEACH. In that case the hairs would be on the cuff, sir. Not on the inside of the collar.

NEVILLE. (*Rising.*) What are you insinuating?

BATTLE. There are traces of powder, too, inside the jacket collar. Primavera Naturelle, a very pleasant-scented powder and expensive. It's no good telling me that *you* use it, Mr. Strange, because I shan't believe you. And Mrs. Kay Strange uses Orchid Sun Kiss. Mrs. Audrey Strange uses Primavera Naturelle.

NEVILLE. Supposing she does?

BATTLE. It seems obvious that on some occasion Mrs. Audrey Strange actually wore your dinner jacket. It's the only reasonable way the hairs

and the powder could have got *inside* the collar. You've seen the glove that was found in the ivy outside her window. It's hers all right. It was the left hand glove. Here's the right hand one. (*He takes the glove from his pocket and holds it up. It is crumpled and stained with dried blood.*)

NEVILLE. (*Huskily.*) What—what's that on it?

BATTLE. Blood, Mr. Strange. (*He holds the glove out to Leach. Leach moves on to the rostrum and takes the glove from Battle.*) Blood of the same group as Lady Tressilian's. An unusual blood group.

NEVILLE. (*Moving slowly down R.*) Good God! Are you suggesting that Audrey—Audrey—would make all these elaborate preparations to kill an old lady she had known for years so that she could get hold of that money? (*His voice rises.*) Audrey? (*Royde enters quickly L.*)

ROYDE. (*Crossing to L. of the chaise.*) Sorry to interrupt, but I'd like to be in on this.

NEVILLE. (*Annoyed.*) Do you mind, Thomas? This is all rather private.

ROYDE. I'm afraid I don't care about that. You see, I heard Audrey's name mentioned . . .

NEVILLE. (*Moving to R. of the chaise, angrily.*) What the hell has Audrey's name got to do with you?

ROYDE. What has it to do with you, if it comes to that? I came here meaning to ask her to marry me, and I think she knows it. What's more, I mean to marry her.

NEVILLE. I think you've got a damn nerve . . .

ROYDE. You can think what you like. I'm stopping here. (*Battle coughs.*)

NEVILLE. Oh, all right! Sorry, Superintendent, for the interruption. (*To Royde.*) The Superintendent is suggesting that Audrey—Audrey committed a brutal assault on Camilla and killed her. Motive—money.

BATTLE. (*Moving down L. C.*) I didn't say the motive was money. I don't think it was, though fifty thousand pounds is a very sizeable motive. No, I think that this crime was directed against *you*, Mr. Strange.

NEVILLE. (*Startled.*) Me?

BATTLE. I asked you—yesterday—who hated you. The answer, I think, is Audrey Strange.

NEVILLE. Impossible. Why should she? I don't understand.

BATTLE. Ever since you left her for another woman, Audrey Strange has been brooding over her hatred of you. In my opinion—and strictly off the record—I think she's become mentally unbalanced. I daresay we'll have these high-class doctors saying so with a lot of long words.

Killing you wasn't enough to satisfy her hate. She decided to get you hanged for murder. (*Royde moves up to R.*)

NEVILLE. (*Shaken.*) I'll never believe that. (*He perches on the back of the chaise.*)

BATTLE. She wore your dinner jacket, she planted your niblick, smearing it with Lady Tressilian's blood and hair. The only thing that saved you was something she couldn't foresee. Lady Tressilian rang her bell for Miss Aldin after you'd left . . .

NEVILLE. It isn't true—it can't be true. You've got the whole thing wrong. Audrey's never borne a grudge against me. She's always been gentle-forgiving.

BATTLE. It's not my business to argue with you, Mr. Strange. I asked for a word in private because I wanted to prepare you for what's about to happen. I'm afraid I shall have to caution Mrs. Audrey Strange and ask her to accompany me . . .

NEVILLE. (*Rising.*) You mean—you're going to *arrest* her?

BATTLE. Yes, sir.

NEVILLE. (*Crossing below the chaise to R. of Battle.*) You can't—you can't—it's preposterous. (*Royde moves to L. of Neville.*)

ROYDE. (*Pushing Neville down on to the chaise.*) Pull yourself together, Strange. Don't you see that the only thing that can help Audrey now is for you to forget all your ideas of chivalry and come out with the truth?

NEVILLE. The truth? You mean . . . ?

ROYDE. I mean the truth about Audrey and Adrian. (*He turns to Battle.*) I'm sorry, Superintendent, but you've got your *facts* wrong. Strange didn't leave Audrey for another woman. *She* left him. She ran away with my brother Adrian. Then Adrian was killed in a car accident on his way to meet her. Strange behaved very decently to Audrey. He arranged for her to divorce *him* and agreed to take the blame.

NEVILLE. I didn't want her name dragged through the mud. I didn't know anyone knew.

ROYDE. Adrian wrote to me and told me all about it just before he was killed. (*To Battle.*) You see, that knocks your motive out, doesn't it? (*He moves up R. c.*) Audrey has no *cause* to hate Strange. On the contrary, she has every reason to be grateful to him.

NEVILLE. (*Rising; eagerly.*) Royde's right. He's right. That cuts out the motive. Audrey can't have done it. (*Kay enters quickly by the French windows. Latimer slowly follows Kay on and stands down R.*)

KAY. She did. She did. Of course she did.

NEVILLE. (*Angrily.*) Have you been listening?

KAY. Of course I have. And Audrey did it, I tell you. I've known she did it all the time. (*To Neville.*) Don't you understand? She tried to get you hanged.

NEVILLE. (*Crossing to R. of Battle.*) You won't go through with it—not now?

BATTLE. (*Slowly.*) I seem to have been wrong—about the motive. But there's still the money.

KAY. (*Moving below the chaise.*) What money?

BATTLE. (*Crossing below Neville to L. of Kay.*) Fifty thousand pounds comes to Mrs. Audrey Strange at Lady Tressilian's death.

KAY. (*Dumbfounded.*) To Audrey? To me. The money comes to Neville and his wife. I'm his wife. Half the money comes to me. (*Neville moves slowly down L.*)

BATTLE. I am informed—definitely—that the money was left in trust for Neville Strange and "his wife Audrey Strange." She gets it, not you. (*He makes a sign to Leach. Leach exits quickly L. Royde crosses slowly and stands up L.*)

KAY. (*With a step towards Neville.*) But you told me—you let me think . . .

NEVILLE. (*Mechanically.*) I thought you knew. We—I get fifty thousand. Isn't that enough? (*He moves to L. of the chaise.*)

BATTLE. Apart from all questions of motive, facts are facts. The facts point to her being guilty. (*Kay sits on the chaise.*)

NEVILLE. All the facts showed that I was guilty yesterday.

BATTLE. (*Slightly taken aback.*) That's true. (*He moves a little up C.*) But are you seriously asking me to believe that there's someone who hates *both* of you? Someone who, if the plan failed against you, laid a second trail to Audrey Strange? Can you think of anyone who hates both you *and* your former wife sufficiently for that?

NEVILLE. (*Crushed.*) No—no.

KAY. Of course Audrey did it. She planned it . . . (*Audrey enters L. She moves like a sleepwalker. Leach follows her on.*)

AUDREY. (*Moving up L. C.*) You wanted me, Superintendent? (*Royde moves quietly behind Audrey. Neville faces Audrey, his back to the audience.*)

BATTLE. (*Becoming very official.*) Audrey Strange, I arrest you on the charge of murdering Camilla Tressilian on Thursday last, September the twenty-first. I must caution you that anything you say will be written down and may be used in evidence at your trial. (*Kay rises and*

moves to Latimer. Leach takes a notebook and pencil from his pocket, and stands waiting. Audrey stares straight at Neville as though hypnotized.)

AUDREY. So—it's come at last—it's come.

NEVILLE. *(Turning away.)* Where's Treves? Don't say anything. I'm going to find Treves. *(Neville exits by the French windows. Off. Calling.)* Mr. Treves. *(Audrey sways and Royde holds her.)*

AUDREY. Oh—there's no escape—no escape. *(To Royde.)* Dear Thomas, I'm so glad—it's all over—all over. *(She looks at Battle.)* I'm quite ready. *(Leach writes down Audrey's words. Battle is impassive. The others stare at Audrey, stupefied. Battle makes a sign to Leach, who opens the door L. Audrey turns and exits slowly L., followed by Battle and the others. The lights fade to Black-Out as—)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Scene II

SCENE: *The same. The same evening.*

When the curtain rises the windows and curtains are closed and the room is in darkness. Neville is standing down L. He crosses to the French windows, draws the curtains, opens the windows to get some air, then moves above the chaise. The door L. opens and a shaft of light illuminates Neville. Treves enters down L.

TREVES. Ah, Neville. *(He switches on the lights, closes the door and moves L. C.)*

NEVILLE. *(Quickly and eagerly.)* Did you see Audrey?

TREVES. Yes, I've just left her.

NEVILLE. How is she? Has she got everything she wants? I tried to see her this afternoon, but they wouldn't let me.

TREVES. *(Sitting in the armchair L. C.)* She doesn't wish to see anybody at present.

NEVILLE. Poor darling. She must be feeling awful. We've got to get her out of it.

TREVES. I am doing everything that's possible, Neville.

NEVILLE. *(Moving down R.)* The whole thing's an appalling mistake. Nobody in their right senses would ever believe that Audrey would be

capable—(*He moves R. of the chaise, then stands up R. C.*) of killing anyone—like *that*.

TREVES. (*Warningly.*) The evidence is very strong against her.

NEVILLE. I don't care a damn for the evidence.

TREVES. I'm afraid the police are more practical.

NEVILLE. *You* don't believe it, do you? You don't believe . . .

TREVES. I don't know *what* to believe. Audrey has always been—an enigma.

NEVILLE. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) Oh, nonsense! She's always been sweet and *gentle*.

TREVES. She has always appeared so, certainly.

NEVILLE. Appeared so? She *is*. Audrey and—and violence of any sort just don't go together. Only a muddle-headed fool like Battle would believe otherwise.

TREVES. Battle is far from being a muddle-headed fool, Neville. I have always found him particularly shrewd.

NEVILLE. Well, he hasn't proved himself very shrewd over this. (*He rises and moves up R.*) Good God, you don't *agree* with him, do you? You can't believe this utterly stupid and fantastic story—that Audrey planned all this to—to get back on me for marrying Kay. It's too absurd.

TREVES. Is it? Love turns to hate very easily, you know, Neville.

NEVILLE. But she had no *reason* to hate me. (*He moves R. C.*) That motive was exploded when I told them about—about Adrian.

TREVES. I must confess that *that* was a surprise to me. I was always under the impression that *you* left Audrey.

NEVILLE. I let everybody think so, of course. What else could I do? It's always so much worse for the woman—she'd have had to face the whole wretched business alone—with all the gossip and—and mud-slinging. I couldn't let her do that.

TREVES. It was very—generous of you, Neville.

NEVILLE. (*Sitting on the chaise.*) Anybody would have done the same. Besides, in a way, it was my fault.

TREVES. Why?

NEVILLE. Well—I'd met Kay, you see—while we were at Cannes—and I—I admit I was attracted. I flirted with her—in a harmless sort of way, and Audrey got annoyed.

TREVES. You mean she was jealous?

NEVILLE. Well—yes, I think so.

TREVES. (*Rising.*) If that was the case she couldn't have been—really—in love with Adrian.

NEVILLE. I don't think she was.

TREVES. Then she left you for Adrian in a fit of pique—because she resented your—er—attentions to Kay?

NEVILLE. Something like that.

TREVES. (*Moving to L. of Neville.*) If that was the case, the original motive *still* holds good.

NEVILLE. What do you mean?

TREVES. If Audrey was in love with you—if she only ran away with Adrian in a fit of pique—then she might still have *hated* you for marrying Kay.

NEVILLE. (*Sharply.*) No! She never hated me. She was very understanding about the whole thing.

TREVES. Outwardly—perhaps. What was she like *underneath*?

NEVILLE. (*Rising, almost in a whisper.*) You believe she did it, don't you? You believe she killed Camilla—in that horrible way? (*He pauses and crosses to the armchair L. C.*) It wasn't Audrey. I'll swear it wasn't Audrey. I know her, I tell you. I lived with her for four years—you can't do that and be mistaken in a person. But if *you* think she's guilty, what hope is there?

TREVES. I'll give you my candid opinion, Neville. I don't think there is *any* hope. I shall brief the best possible counsel, of course, but there's very little case for the defence. Except insanity. I doubt if we'll get very far with that. (*Neville drops into the armchair L. C. and covers his face with his hands.*)

NEVILLE. (*Almost inaudibly.*) Oh, God! (*Mary enters L. She is very quiet and clearly under strain.*)

MARY. (*Not realizing that Neville is there.*) Mr. Treves! (*She sees Neville.*) Er—there are sandwiches in the dining-room when anyone wants them. (*She moves to L. of Neville.*)

NEVILLE. (*Turning away.*) Sandwiches!

TREVES. (*Moving up R. C.; mildly.*) Life has to go on, Neville.

NEVILLE. (*To Mary.*) Do you think she did it, Mary?

MARY. (*After a definite pause.*) No. (*She takes Neville's hand.*)

NEVILLE. Thank God somebody besides me believes in her. (*Kay enters by the French windows.*)

KAY. (*Moving to R. of the chaise.*) Ted's just coming. He's running the car round into the drive. I came up through the garden.

NEVILLE. (*Rising and moving above the chaise.*) What's Latimer coming here for? Can't he keep away for five minutes?

TREVES. I sent for him, Neville. Kay very kindly took the message. I also asked Battle to come. I would prefer not to explain in detail. Let us say, Neville, that I am trying out a last forlorn hope.

NEVILLE. To save Audrey?

TREVES. Yes.

KAY. (*To Neville.*) Can't you think of anything else but Audrey?

NEVILLE. No, I can't. (*Kay moves to the easy chair down R. Latimer enters by the French windows and crosses to R. of Treves.*)

LATIMER. I came as quickly as I could, Mr. Treves. Kay didn't say what you wanted me for, only that it was urgent.

KAY. (*Sitting in the easy chair down R.*) I said what I was told to say. I haven't the faintest idea what it's all about.

MARY. (*Crossing to the chaise and sitting.*) We're all in the dark, Kay. As you heard, Mr. Treves is trying to help Audrey.

KAY. Audrey, Audrey, Audrey. It's *always* Audrey. I suppose she'll haunt us for the rest of our lives.

NEVILLE. (*Moving down R. of the chaise.*) That's a beastly thing to say, Kay.

LATIMER. (*Angrily.*) Can't you see that her nerves are all in shreds?

NEVILLE. So are everybody's. (*Latimer moves and stands above Kay. Royde enters L.*)

ROYDE. Superintendent Battle is here. (*To Treves.*) He says he's expected.

TREVES. Bring him in. (*Royde turns and beckons off. Battle enters L.*)

BATTLE. Good evening. (*He looks enquiringly at Treves.*)

TREVES. (*Moving down C.*) Thank you for coming, Superintendent. It is good of you to spare the time.

NEVILLE. (*Bitterly.*) Especially when you've got your victim.

TREVES. I don't think that kind of remark is going to get us anywhere, Neville. Battle has only done his duty as a police officer.

NEVILLE. (*Moving up R.*) I'm—I'm sorry, Battle.

BATTLE. That's all right, sir.

TREVES. (*Indicating the easy chair L. C.*) Sit down, Battle.

BATTLE. (*Sitting in the easy chair L. C.*) Thank you, sir.

TREVES. Mr. Royde said something to me the other day, Battle, that I've thought about a great deal since.

ROYDE. (*Surprised.*) I did?

TREVES. Yes, Thomas. You were talking about a detective story you were

reading. You said that they all begin in the *wrong* place. The murder should not be the *beginning* of the story but the end. And, of course, you were right. A murder is the culmination of a lot of different circumstances, all converging at a given moment at a given point. Rather fancifully you called it *Zero Hour*.

ROYDE. I remember.

NEVILLE. (*Impatiently.*) What's this got to do with Audrey?

TREVES. A great deal—it's *Zero Hour* now. (*There is a rather uncomfortable pause.*)

MARY. But Lady Tressilian was murdered three days ago.

TREVES. It is not exactly Lady Tressilian's murder that I am talking about now. There are different kinds of murder. Superintendent Battle, when I put it to you, will you allow that all the evidence against Audrey Strange *could* have been faked? The weapon taken from her fender. *Her* gloves, stained with blood, and hidden in the ivy outside her window. *Her* face powder, dusted on the inside of Neville's dinner jacket. Hairs from *her* brush placed there as well?

BATTLE. (*Stirring uncomfortably.*) I suppose it *could* have been done, but

. . .

KAY. But she admitted she was guilty—herself—when you arrested her.

ROYDE. (*Moving down L.*) No, she didn't.

KAY. She said that she couldn't escape.

MARY. She said that she was glad it was all over.

KAY. What more do you want? (*Treves holds up a hand. They subside. Neville crosses slowly and stands on the L. end of the rostrum.*)

TREVES. (*Moving to C. of the rostrum.*) Do you remember, Thomas, that when the Superintendent here was questioning you as to what you had heard on the night of the murder, you mentioned rats? Rats in the attic—over your head?

ROYDE. (*Sitting in the easy chair down L.*) Yes.

TREVES. That remark of yours interested me. I went up to the attic floor—I will admit, with no very clear idea in my head. The attic directly over your bedroom, Thomas, is used as a lumber room. It is full of what may be termed junk. Unwanted junk. There was heavy dust over everything except one thing. (*He crosses to the bureau.*) But there was one thing that was *not* covered with dust. (*He takes out a long coil of thin rope which has been concealed in the corner R. of the bureau.*) This. (*He crosses to R. of Battle. Battle takes the rope. His eyebrows rise in surprise.*)

BATTLE. It's damp.

TREVES. Yes, it's still damp. No dust on it—and damp. Thrown into the lumber room where someone thought it would never be noticed.

BATTLE. Are you going to tell us, sir, what it means? (*He returns the rope to Treves.*)

TREVES. (*Moving on to the rostrum*) It means that during the storm on the night of the murder, that rope was hanging from one of the windows of this house. Hanging from a window down to the water below. (*He tosses the rope on to the coffee table.*) You said, Superintendent, that no one could have entered this house to commit murder from outside that night. That isn't quite true. Someone could have entered from outside—(*Latimer moves very slowly above the chaise.*) if this rope was hanging ready for them to climb up from the estuary.

BATTLE. You mean someone came from the other side? The Easterhead side?

TREVES. Yes. (*He turns to Neville.*) You went over on the ten-thirty-five ferry. You must have got to the *Easterhead Bay Hotel* at about a quarter to eleven—but you weren't able to find Mr. Latimer for some time, were you? (*Latimer makes a move as though to speak, then stops himself.*)

NEVILLE. No, that's true. I looked all around, too. He wasn't in his room—they telephoned up.

LATIMER. Actually, I was sitting out on the glass-enclosed terrace with a fat, talkative body from Lancashire. (*Easily.*) She wanted to dance—but I stalled her off. Too painful on the feet.

TREVES. (*Moving c.*) Strange wasn't able to find you until half past eleven. Three-quarters of an hour. Plenty of time . . .

LATIMER. Look here, what do you mean?

NEVILLE. Do you mean that he . . . ? (*Kay shows every sign of violent agitation, rises and moves to Latimer.*)

TREVES. Plenty of time to strip, swim across the estuary—it's narrow just here—swarm up the rope—do what you had to do—swim back, get into your clothes and meet Neville in the lounge of the hotel.

LATIMER. Leaving the rope hanging from the window? You're crazy—the whole thing's crazy.

TREVES. (*With a slight glance towards Kay.*) The same person who arranged the rope for you could have drawn it up again and put it in the attic.

LATIMER. (*Frenzied.*) You can't do this to me. You can't frame me—and

don't you try. I couldn't climb up a rope all that way—and anyway, I can't swim. I tell you, I can't swim.

KAY. No, Ted can't swim. It's true, I tell you, he can't swim.

TREVES. (*Gently.*) No, you can't swim. I have ascertained that fact. (*He moves on to the rostrum. Kay moves down. To Nevile.*) But you're a very fine swimmer, aren't you, Nevile? And you're an expert climber. It would be child's play to you to swim across, climb up the rope you'd left ready—(*Latimer moves R. of the chaise.*) go along to Lady Tressilian's room, kill her, and go back the way you came. Plenty of time to dispose of the rope when you got back at two-thirty. You didn't see Latimer at the hotel between ten-forty-five and eleven-thirty—but he didn't see you either. It cuts both ways. (*Battle rises and stands in front of the door L.*)

NEVILE. I never heard such rubbish! Swim across—kill Camilla. Why ever should I do such a fantastic thing?

TREVES. Because you wanted to hang the woman who had left you for another man. (*Kay collapses in the easy chair down R. Mary rises, moves to Kay and comforts her. Royde rises and moves to L. of the armchair L. c.*) She had to be punished—your ego has been swelling for a long time—nobody must dare to oppose you.

NEVILE. Is it likely I'd fake all those clues against myself?

TREVES. (*Crossing to L. of Nevile.*) It's exactly what you did do—and took the precaution of ringing Lady Tressilian's bell by pulling the old-fashioned bell wire outside her room, to make sure that Mary would see you leaving the house. Lady Tressilian didn't remember ringing that bell. *You rang it.*

NEVILE. (*Moving to the French windows.*) What an absurd pack of lies. (*Leach appears at the French windows.*)

TREVES. *You murdered Lady Tressilian—but the real murder, the murder that you gloated over secretly, was the murder of Audrey Strange. You wanted her not only to die—but to suffer. You wanted her to be afraid—she was afraid—of you. You enjoyed the idea of her suffering, didn't you?*

NEVILE. (*Sitting on the chaise, thickly.*) All—a tissue of lies.

BATTLE. (*Crossing to L. of Nevile.*) Is it? I've met people like you before—people with a mental kink. Your vanity was hurt when Audrey Strange left you, wasn't it? You loved her and she had the colossal impertinence to prefer another man. (*Nevile's face shows momentary agreement. He watches Nevile narrowly.*) You wanted to think of

something special—something clever, something quite out of the way. The fact that it entailed the killing of a woman who had been almost a mother to you didn't worry you.

NEVILLE. (*With resentment.*) She shouldn't have ticked me off like a child. But it's lies—all lies. And I haven't got a mental kink.

BATTLE. (*Watching Neville.*) Oh, yes, you have. Your wife flicked you on the raw, didn't she, when she left you? You—the wonderful Neville Strange. You saved your pride by pretending that *you'd left her*—and you married another girl just to bolster up that story.

KAY. Oh. (*She turns to Mary. Mary puts her arm around Kay.*)

BATTLE. But all the time you were planning what you'd do to Audrey. Pity you didn't have the brains to carry it out better.

NEVILLE. (*Almost whimpering.*) It's not true.

BATTLE. (*Inexorably breaking him down.*) Audrey's been laughing at you—while you've been preening yourself and thinking how clever you were. (*He raises his voice and calls.*) Come in, Mrs. Strange. (*Audrey enters L. Neville gives a strangled cry and rises. Royde moves to Audrey and puts an arm around her.*) She's never been really under arrest, you know. We just wanted to keep her out of your crazy reach. There was no knowing what you might do if you thought your silly childish plan was going wrong. (*Benson appears at the French windows. Leach moves above the chaise.*)

NEVILLE. (*Breaking down and screaming with rage.*) It wasn't silly. It was clever—it *was* clever. I thought out every detail. How was I to know that Royde knew the truth about Audrey and Adrian? Audrey and Adrian . . . (*He suddenly loses control and screams at Audrey.*) How dare you prefer Adrian to me? God damn and blast your soul, you shall hang. They've got to hang you. They've got to. (*He makes a dash towards Audrey. Battle makes a sign to Leach and Benson, who move one each side of Neville. Audrey clings to Royde. Half sobbing.*) Leave me alone. I want her to die *afraid*—to die afraid. I hate her. (*Audrey and Royde turn away from Neville and move up L.*)

MARY. (*Moving to the chaise and sitting, almost inaudibly.*) Oh, God!

BATTLE. Take him away, Jim. (*Leach and Benson close in on Neville.*)

NEVILLE. (*Suddenly quite calm.*) You're making a great mistake, you know. I can . . . (*Leach and Benson lead Neville to the door L. Neville suddenly kicks Benson on the shin, pushes him into Leach, and dashes off L. Leach and Benson dash off after Neville.*)

BATTLE. (*In alarm.*) Look out! Stop him. (*Battle dashes off L. Off. Shout-*

ing.) After him—don't let him get away. (*Treves and Royde run out L. Audrey moves slowly to C. of rostrum.*)

ROYDE. (*Off; shouting.*) He's locked himself in the dining-room.

BATTLE. (*Off; shouting.*) Break the door open. (*The sound of heavy blows on wood is heard off. Kay rises.*)

KAY. (*Burying her face in Latimer's shoulder.*) Ted—oh, Ted . . . (*She sobs. There is a crash of breaking glass off, followed by the sound of the door breaking open.*)

BATTLE. (*Off; shouting.*) Jim—you go down by the road. I'll take the cliff path. (*Battle enters quickly L., and crosses quickly to the French windows. He looks worried. Breathlessly.*) He flung himself through the dining-room window. It's a sheer drop to the rocks below. I shouldn't think there was a chance. (*Battle exits by the French windows. Benson enters L., crosses, exits by the French windows, and is heard to give three shrill blasts on his whistle.*)

KAY. (*Hysterically.*) I want to get away. I can't . . .

MARY. (*Rising and moving C.*) Why don't you take her back to the hotel with you, Mr. Latimer?

KAY. (*Eagerly.*) Yes. Ted, please—anything to get away from here.

MARY. Take her. I'll have her things packed and sent over.

LATIMER. (*Gently.*) Come along. (*Kay exits with Latimer by the French windows. Mary nods and exits L. Audrey moves to the chaise, sits on it, with her back to the bay window, and sobs. There is a slight pause, then the curtains of the bay window are parted a little. Nevile enters quietly over the sill of the bay window. His hair is dishevelled and there are streaks of dirt on his face and hands. There is a cruel and devilish smile on his face as he looks at Audrey. He moves silently towards her.*)

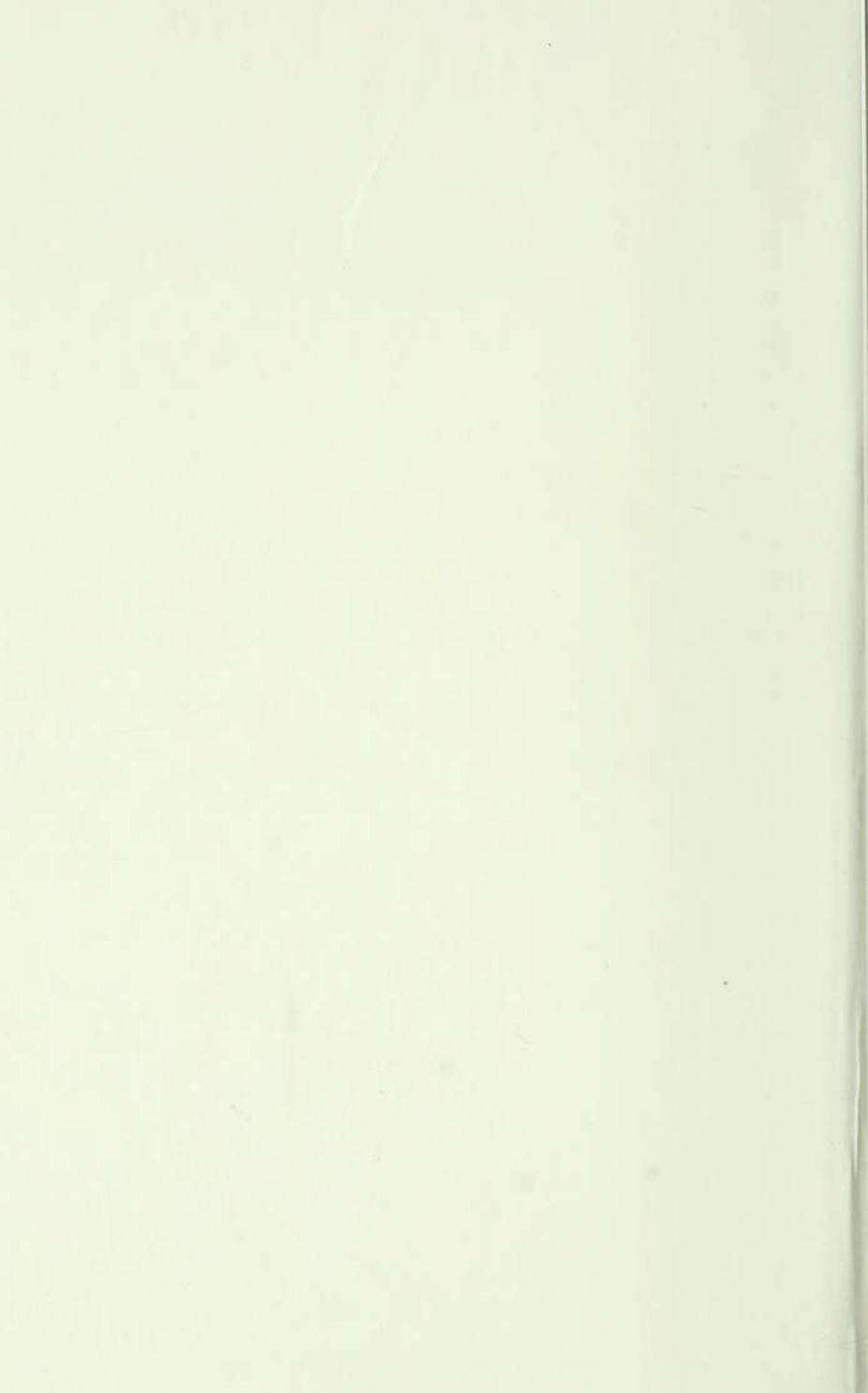
NEVILE. Audrey! (*Audrey turns quickly and sees Nevile. In a low, tense voice.*) You didn't think I'd come back, did you? I was too clever for them, Audrey. While they were breaking open the door I flung a stool through the window and climbed out on to the stone ledge. Only a man who is used to mountain climbing could have done it—a man with strong fingers—like mine. (*He moves slowly nearer and nearer to Audrey.*) Strong fingers, Audrey—and a soft throat. They wouldn't hang you as I wanted them to, would they? But you're going to die just the same. (*His fingers close on her throat.*) You'll never belong to anyone but me. (*Leach dashes in L. Benson dashes in by the French windows. Leach and Benson drag Nevile from Audrey and exit with him by the French windows. Audrey is left gasping for breath on the*

chaise. Royde enters L. He stares in a puzzled way towards the French windows and crosses towards them. He has almost passed the upstage end of the chaise when he realizes Audrey is there.)

ROYDE. (*Stopping and turning to Audrey.*) I say, are you all right?

AUDREY. Am I all right? Oh, Thomas! (*She laughs. Royde, with his arms outstretched, moves towards Audrey as—*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS



(continued from front flap)

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