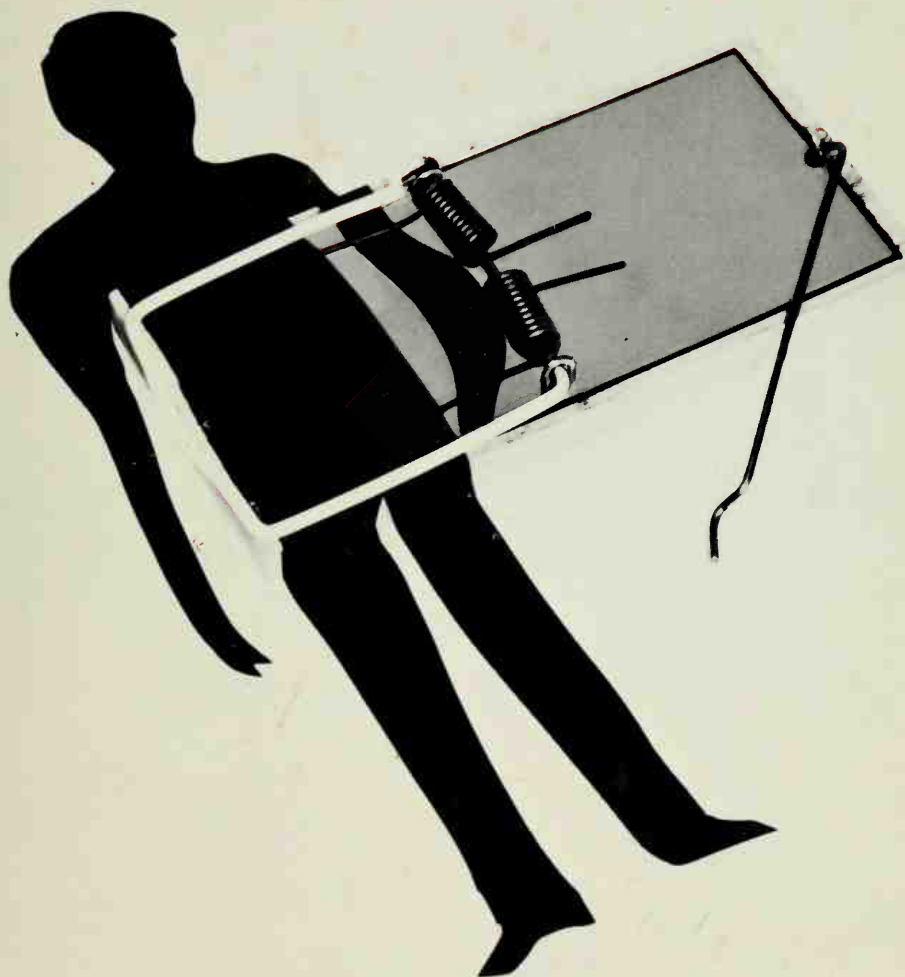


# *The Mousetrap* *and Other Plays*



*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.

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*(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**



# **THE MOUSETRAP & OTHER PLAYS**

**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

## GO BACK FOR MURDER

THE NEW YORK TIMES

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

1934

Presented by Peter Saunders at the Duchess Theatre, London, on the 23rd March, 1960, with the following cast of characters:

*(in the order of their appearance)*

JUSTIN FOGG	Robert Urquhart
TURNBALL	Peter Hutton
CARLA	Ann Firbank
JEFF ROGERS	Mark Eden
PHILIP BLAKE	Anthony Marlowe
MEREDITH BLAKE	Laurence Hardy
LADY MELKSHAM	Lisa Daniely
MISS WILLIAMS	Margot Boyd
ANGELA WARREN	Dorothy Bromiley
CAROLINE CRALE	Ann Firbank
AMYAS CRALE	Nigel Green

Directed by HUBERT GREGG

Décor by MICHAEL WEIGHT

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT I

London

SCENE 1 A lawyer's office

SCENE 2 A City office

SCENE 3 A room in an hotel suite

SCENE 4 A bed-sitting-room

SCENE 5 A table in a restaurant

### ACT II

Alderbury, a house in the West of England

*Time—the present. Autumn*



## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Carla and her mother, Caroline Crale, are played by the same actress.

As regards the characters in Act II, PHILIP is not greatly changed, but his hair is not grey at the temples, and he is more slender, his manner is less pompous. MEREDITH is less vague, and more alert, his face is less red, and there is no grey in his hair. There is very little change in Miss WILLIAMS, except that she is also not so grey. ANGELA can have plaits, or long hair. ELSA must present the greatest change from LADY MELKSHAM, young, and eager, with her hair on her neck. CAROLINE is distinguishable from CARLA by a different hair style, as well as by an older make-up. Her voice, too, must be different, deeper in tone, and her manner more impulsive and intense.

Each scene of Act I represents a small portion of a room. In the original production the scenes were on trucks, but the whole of this Act can be quite simply staged by lighting up different parts of the stage in turn, or by cut-outs.



## Act One

### Scene I

SCENE—Justin Fogg's room in the offices of Fogg, Fogg, Bamfylde and Fogg, Solicitors. An early autumn afternoon in London.

The room is rather old-fashioned and cramped for space. The walls are lined with books. An arch up *LC* leads to the rest of the building and there is a sash window across the corner up *R*. A large desk and swivel chair stand in front of the window. There is a chair *C* for visitors, and a table covered with files is against the wall *L*. There is a telephone on the desk.

When the CURTAIN rises, the stage is in darkness, then the LIGHTS come up. JUSTIN FOGG is seated at the desk, speaking into the telephone. The window is half-open. JUSTIN is a young man in the early thirties, sober, staid, but likeable.

JUSTIN. (*into the telephone*) I quite see your point, Mrs Ross, but the Law can't be hurried, you know—

(TURNBALL, an elderly clerk appears in the archway. He is carrying a file)  
—we have to wait for their solicitors to reply to our letter . . .

(TURNBALL coughs)

(*To Turnball*) Come in, Turnball. (*Into the telephone*) No, it would be most inadvisable for you to take any steps yourself . . . Yes, we will keep you informed. (*He replaces the receiver*) Women!

(TURNBALL places the file on the desk in front of Justin)

Miss Le Marchant?

TURNBALL. She's here now, sir.

JUSTIN. Show her in, Turnball. I don't want any interruptions at all. Put anything urgent through to Mr Grimes.

TURNBALL. Very good, sir.

(TURNBALL exits. JUSTIN rises, crosses to the table *L*, selects a file, returns

to his desk, sits, and puts Turnbull's file in the desk drawer. TURNBALL re-enters and stands to one side)

(He announces) Miss Le Marchant.

(CARLA enters. She is aged twenty-one, pretty, and determined. She wears a coat and carries bag and gloves. She speaks with a Canadian accent. TURNBALL exits)

JUSTIN. (rising, moving to Carla and offering his hand) How do you do?

CARLA. How do you do, Mr Fogg? (She looks at him in dismay, ignoring his outstretched hand) But you're young!

(JUSTIN looks at Carla for a moment, amused, although still formal)

JUSTIN. Thank you. But I can assure you I'm a fully qualified solicitor.

CARLA. I'm sorry—it's just—that I expected you to be—rather old.

JUSTIN. Oh, you expected my father? He died two years ago.

CARLA. I see. I'm sorry. It was stupid of me. (She offers him her hand)

(JUSTIN shakes hands with Carla)

JUSTIN. (indicating the chair c) Do sit down.

(CARLA sits c)

(He returns to his desk and sits at it) Now, tell me what I can do for you.

(There is a pause whilst CARLA looks at Justin, a little uncertain how to begin)

CARLA. Do you know who I am?

JUSTIN. Miss Carla Le Marchant of Montreal.

CARLA. (looking away) My name isn't really Le Marchant.

JUSTIN. Oh, yes, it is. Legally.

CARLA. (leaning forward) So—you *do* know all about me?

JUSTIN. We have acted for Mr Robert Le Marchant over a number of years.

CARLA. All right, then, let's get down to it. My name may be legally Le Marchant by adoption—or deed poll—or habeas corpus—or whatever the legal jargon is. (She removes her gloves) But I was born—(she pauses) Caroline Crale. Caroline was my mother's name, too. My father was Amyas Crale. Sixteen years ago my mother stood her trial for poisoning my father. They found her—guilty. (She takes a deep breath. Defiantly) That's right, isn't it?

JUSTIN. Yes, those are the facts.

CARLA. I only learned them six months ago.

JUSTIN. When you came of age?

CARLA. Yes. I don't think they wanted me to know. Uncle Robert and Aunt Bess, I mean. They brought me up believing my parents were killed in an accident when I was five years old. But my mother left a letter for me—to be given me when I was twenty-one, so they had to tell me all about it.

JUSTIN. Unfortunate.

CARLA. Do you mean you think they ought not to have told me?

JUSTIN. No, no, I don't mean that at all. I meant it was unfortunate for *you*—it must have been a bad shock.

CARLA. Finding out that my father was murdered and that my mother did it?

JUSTIN. *(after a pause; kindly)* There were—extenuating circumstances, you know.

CARLA. *(firmly)* It's not extenuating circumstances I'm interested in. It's facts.

JUSTIN. Yes, facts. Well, you've got your facts. Now—you can put the whole thing behind you. *(He smiles encouragingly)* It's your future that matters now, you know, not the past. *(He rises and crosses above the desk of the table L)*

CARLA. I think, before I can go forward—I've got to—go back.

*(JUSTIN, arrested and puzzled, turns to Carla)*

JUSTIN. I beg your pardon?

CARLA. It's not as simple as you make it sound. *(She pauses)* I'm engaged—or I was engaged—to be married.

*(JUSTIN picks up the cigarette box from the table L and offers it to CARLA who takes a cigarette)*

JUSTIN. I see. And your fiancé found out about all this?

CARLA. Of course, I told him.

JUSTIN. And he—er—reacted unfavourably? *(He replaces the box on the table)*

CARLA. *(without enthusiasm)* Not at all. He was perfectly splendid. Said it didn't matter at all.

JUSTIN. *(puzzled)* Well, then?

CARLA. *(looking up at Justin)* It isn't what a person says . . . *(She leaves it at that)*

JUSTIN. *(after a moment)* Yes, I see. *(He lights Carla's cigarette with the lighter from the table L)* At least, I think I do.

CARLA. Anyone can say things. It's what they *feel* that matters.

JUSTIN. Don't you think that perhaps you're super-sensitive?

CARLA. *(firmly)* No.

JUSTIN. But, my dear girl . . .

CARLA. Would you like to marry the daughter of a murderess? *(She looks at Justin)*

*(JUSTIN looks down)*

*(Quietly)* You see, you wouldn't.

JUSTIN. You didn't give me time to answer. I wouldn't particularly *want* to marry the daughter of a murderer, or of a drunkard or of a dope-fiend or of anything else unpleasant. *(He picks up the cigarette box, crosses above Carla to the desk and puts the lighter and cigarette box on it)* But what the hell, if I loved a girl, she could be the daughter of Jack the Ripper for all I cared.

CARLA. *(looking around the room)* I don't believe you would mind as much as Jeff does. *(She shivers)*

JUSTIN. Do you find it cold?

CARLA. I think your central heating's kind of low.

JUSTIN. It's kind of non-existent, I'm afraid. *(He smiles)* I mean, we haven't any. Shall I get them to light the fire for you?

CARLA. No, please.

*(JUSTIN looks at the window, sees it is open, quickly closes it, then leans over the desk to Carla)*

JUSTIN. This Mr—er . . . This Jeff . . . ?

CARLA. You'll see him. He's coming to call for me, if you don't mind. *(She looks at her wrist-watch)* Hell, I'm wasting time. I didn't come to consult you about my love life. *(Struck)* At least, I suppose I did. I've got to find out the truth, you see.

JUSTIN. I told you just now that there were extenuating circumstances. Your mother was found guilty, but the jury made a strong recommendation to mercy. Her sentence was commuted to imprisonment.

CARLA. And she died in prison three years later.

JUSTIN. *(sitting at the desk)* Yes.

CARLA. In her letter, my mother wrote that she wanted me to know definitely that she was innocent. *(She looks defiantly at Justin)*

JUSTIN. *(unimpressed)* Yes.

CARLA. You don't believe it?

JUSTIN. (*carefully finding his words*) I think—a devoted mother—might want to do the best she could for her daughter's peace of mind.

CARLA. No, no, no! She wasn't like that. She never told lies.

JUSTIN. How can you know? You were a child of five when you saw her last.

CARLA. (*passionately*) I do know. My mother didn't tell lies. When she took a thorn out of my finger once, she said it would hurt. And going to the dentist. All those things. She was never one to sugar the pill. What she said was always *true*. (*She rises quickly, and turns up L*) And if she says she was innocent then she *was* innocent. You don't believe me—but it's so. (*She takes a handkerchief from her bag and dabs her eyes*)

JUSTIN. (*rising*) It's better, always, to face the truth.

CARLA. (*turning to him*) That is the truth.

JUSTIN. (*shaking his head; quietly*) It isn't the truth.

CARLA. How can you be so sure? Does a jury never make a mistake?

JUSTIN. There are probably several guilty people walking around free, yes, because they've been given the benefit of the doubt. But in your mother's case—there wasn't any doubt.

CARLA. You weren't there. It was your father who attended the case . . .

JUSTIN. (*interrupting*) My father was the solicitor in charge of the defence, yes.

CARLA. Well—he thought her innocent, didn't he?

JUSTIN. Yes. (*Embarrassed*) Yes, of course. You don't quite understand these things . . .

CARLA. (*cynically*) You mean that it was *technical* only?

(JUSTIN is slightly at a loss how to explain)

(*She moves c, in front of her chair*) But he himself, personally—what did he think?

JUSTIN. (*stiffly*) Really, I've no idea.

CARLA. Yes, you have. He thought she was guilty. (*She turns and faces L*) And you think so, too. (*She pauses, then turns to Justin*) But how is it that you remember it all so well?

JUSTIN. (*looking steadily at her*) I was eighteen—just going up to Oxford—not in the firm, yet—but—interested. (*Remembering*) I was in court every day.

CARLA. What did you think? Tell me. (*She sits c. Eagerly*) I have to know.



JUSTIN. Your mother loved your father desperately—but he gave her a raw deal—he brought his mistress into the house—subjected your mother to humiliation and insult. Mrs Crale endured more than any woman could be expected to endure. He drove her too far. The means were to hand—try and understand. Understand and forgive. *(He crosses above the desk and stands down L)*

CARLA. I don't need to forgive. She didn't do it.

JUSTIN. *(turning to her)* Then who the devil did?

*(CARLA, taken aback, looks up at Justin)*

*(He crosses below Carla to R)* Well, that's the point, isn't it? Nobody else had the slightest motive. If you were to read up the reports of the case . . .

CARLA. I have. I've gone to the files. I've read up every single detail of the trial.

*(JUSTIN crosses behind the desk and goes through the file he put on it)*

JUSTIN. Well, then, take the facts. Aside from your mother and father, there were five people in the house that day. There were the Blakes—Philip and Meredith, two brothers, two of your father's closest friends. There was a girl of fourteen, your mother's half-sister—Angela Warren, and her governess—Miss—something or other, and there was Elsa Greer, your father's mistress—and there wasn't the least suspicion against any of them—and besides, if you'd seen . . . *(He breaks off)*

CARLA. *(eagerly)* Yes—go on . . .

JUSTIN. *(turning to the window; with feeling)* If you'd seen her standing there in the witness-box. So brave, so polite—bearing it all so patiently, but never—for one moment—fighting. *(He looks at Carla)* You're like her, you know, to look at. It might be her sitting there. There's only one difference. You're a fighter. *(He looks in the file)*

CARLA. *(looking out front; puzzled)* She didn't fight—why?

JUSTIN. *(crossing down L)* Montagu Depleach led for the defence. I think now that may have been a mistake. He had an enormous reputation, but he was—theatrical. His client had to play up. But your mother didn't play up.

CARLA. Why?

JUSTIN. She answered his questions with all the right answers—but it was like a docile child repeating a lesson—it didn't give old Monty his chance. He built up to the last question—"I ask you, Mrs Crale, *did*



you kill your husband?" And she said: "No—er—no, really I d-didn't." She stammered. It was a complete anti-climax, utterly unconvincing.

CARLA. And then what happened?

JUSTIN. (*crossing above Carla to the desk*) Then it was Asprey's turn. He was Attorney-General, later. Quiet, but quite deadly. Logic—after old Monty's fireworks. He made mincemeat of her. Brought out every damning detail. I—I could hardly bear it . . .

CARLA. (*studying him*) You remember it all very well.

JUSTIN. Yes.

CARLA. Why?

JUSTIN. (*taken aback*) I suppose . . .

CARLA. Yes?

JUSTIN. I was young, impressionable.

CARLA. You fell in love with my mother.

(JUSTIN *forces a laugh and sits at the desk*)

JUSTIN. Something of the kind—she was so lovely—so helpless—she'd been through so much—I—I'd have died for her. (*He smiles*) Romantic age—eighteen.

CARLA. (*frowning*) You'd have died for her—but you thought her guilty.

JUSTIN. (*firmly*) Yes, I did.

(CARLA *is really shaken. She bends her head, fighting back her tears.*  
TURNBALL *enters and moves to L of the desk*)

TURNBALL. A Mr Rogers is here, sir, asking for Miss Le Marchant. (*He looks at Carla*)

CARLA. Jeff. (*To Turnball*) Please—ask him to wait.

TURNBALL. Certainly, Miss Le Marchant.

(TURNBALL *looks closely at Carla for a moment, then exits*)

CARLA. (*looking after Turnball*) He looked at me . . . (*She breaks off*)

JUSTIN. Turnball was at your mother's trial. He's been with us for nearly forty years.

CARLA. Please, ask him back.

(JUSTIN *rises and moves to the arch*)

JUSTIN. (*calling*) Turnball. (*He returns to R of the desk*)

(TURNBALL *enters*)

TURNBALL. Yes, sir?

(JUSTIN motions to Carla. TURNBALL moves down L of Carla)

CARLA. Mr Turnbull—I'm Carla Crale. I believe you were at my mother's trial.

TURNBALL. Yes, Miss Crale, I was. Er—I knew at once who you were.

CARLA. Because I'm so like my mother?

TURNBALL. The dead spit of her, if I may put it so.

CARLA. What did you think—at the trial? Did you think she was guilty?

(TURNBALL looks at Justin. JUSTIN nods for Turnbull to answer)

TURNBALL. (kindly) You don't want to put it that way. She was a sweet, gentle lady—but she'd been pushed too far. As I've always seen it, she didn't rightly know what she was doing.

CARLA. (to herself; ironically) Extenuating circumstances. (She looks at Justin)

(JUSTIN sits at the desk. After a while, CARLA looks back at Turnbull)

TURNBALL. (after a pause) That's right. The other woman—that Elsa Greer—she was a hussy if ever there was one. Sexy, if you'll excuse the word. And your father was an artist—a really great painter; I understand some of his pictures are in the Tate Gallery—and you know what artists are. That Greer girl got her hooks into him good and proper—a kind of madness it must have been. Got him so he was going to leave his wife and child for her. Don't ever blame your mother, Miss Crale. Even the gentlest lady can be pushed too far.

JUSTIN. Thank you, Turnbull.

(TURNBALL looks from Carla to Justin, then exits)

CARLA. He thinks as you do—guilty.

JUSTIN. A gentle creature—pushed too far.

CARLA. (acquiescing) I—suppose so—yes. (With sudden energy) No! I don't believe it. I won't believe it. You—you've got to help me.

JUSTIN. To do what?

CARLA. Go back into the past and find out the truth.

JUSTIN. You won't believe the truth when you hear it.

CARLA. Because it *isn't* the truth. The defence was suicide, wasn't it?

JUSTIN. Yes.

CARLA. It *could* have been suicide. My father *could* have felt that he'd messed up everything, and that he'd be better out of it all.

JUSTIN. It was the only defence possible—but it wasn't convincing. Your father was the last man in the world to take his own life.

CARLA. (*doubtfully*) Accident?

JUSTIN. Conine—a deadly poison, introduced into a glass of beer by accident?

CARLA. All right, then. There's only one answer. Someone else.

(JUSTIN begins to thumb through the file on his desk, which contains separate sheafs of notes on each person connected with the case)

JUSTIN. One of the five people there in the house. Hardly Elsa Greer. She'd got your father besotted about her, and he was going to get a divorce from his wife and marry her. Philip Blake? He was devoted to your father and always had been.

CARLA. (*weakly*) Perhaps *he* was in love with Elsa Greer, too.

JUSTIN. He certainly was not. Meredith Blake? He was your father's friend, too, one of the most amiable men that ever lived. Imagination boggles at the thought of his murdering anyone.

CARLA. All right. All right. Who else do we have?

JUSTIN. Angela Warren, a schoolgirl of fourteen? And the governess, Miss Whoever her name is.

CARLA. (*quickly*) Well, what about Miss Whoever her name was?

JUSTIN. (*after a slight pause*) I see the way your mind is working. Frustration, lonely spinster, repressed love for your father. Let me tell you that Miss—Williams—(*he looks in the file*) yes, that was her name—Williams—wasn't like that, at all. She was a tartar, a woman of strong character, and sound commonsense. (*He closes the file*) Go and see her for yourself if you don't believe me.

CARLA. That's what I'm going to do.

JUSTIN. (*looking up*) What?

CARLA. (*sticking out her cigarette in the ashtray on the desk*) I'm going to see them *all*. (*She rises*) That's what I want you to do for me. Find out where they all are. Make appointments for me with them.

JUSTIN. With what reason?

CARLA. (*crossing to L*) So that I can ask them questions, make them remember.

JUSTIN. What can they remember that could be useful after sixteen years?

CARLA. (*putting on her gloves*) Something, perhaps, that they never thought of at the time. Something that wasn't evidence—not the sort of thing that would come out in court. It will be like patchwork—a

little piece of this and a little piece of that. And in the end, who knows, it might add up to something.

JUSTIN. Wishful thinking. You'll only give yourself more pain in the end.

(*He puts the file in the desk drawer*)

CARLA. (*defiantly*) My mother was innocent. I'm starting from there. And you're going to help me.

JUSTIN. (*stubbornly*) That's where you're wrong. (*He rises*) I'm not going to help you to chase a will-o'-the-wisp.

(CARLA and JUSTIN stare at each other.)

JEFF ROGERS suddenly strides in. TURNBALL, indignantly protesting, follows him on. JEFF is a big, slick, self-satisfied man of thirty-five, good-looking and insensitive to others. He wears an overcoat and carries a hat, which he throws on to the desk

JEFF. (*standing above the desk*) Sorry to bust in, but all this sitting around in waiting-rooms gives me claustrophobia. (*To Carla*) Time means nothing to you, honey. (*To Justin*) I take it you're Mr Fogg? Pleased to meet you.

(JEFF and JUSTIN shake hands)

TURNBALL. (*in the archway; to Justin*) I'm extremely sorry, sir. I was—er—quite unable to restrain this—gentleman.

JEFF. (*cheerily*) Forget it, Pop. (*He slaps Turnball on the back*)

(TURNBALL winces)

JUSTIN. It's quite all right, Turnball.

(TURNBALL exits)

JEFF. (*calling*) No hard feelings, Turnball. (*To Carla*) Well, I suppose you haven't finished your business, Carla?

CARLA. But I have. I came to ask Mr Fogg something—(*coldly*) and he's answered me.

JUSTIN. I'm sorry.

CARLA. All right, Jeff. Let's go. (*She moves to the arch*)

JEFF. Oh, Carla—

(CARLA stops and turns)

—I rather wanted to have a word with Mr Fogg, myself—about some

affairs of mine here. Would you mind? I'll only be a few minutes.

(CARLA *hesitates*)

CARLA. I'll go and soothe Mr Turnball's feelings. He was absolutely horrified by your behaviour.

(CARLA *exits*)

JEFF. (*moving to the arch and calling*) That's right, darling. Tell him I'm an overseas hick who knows no better. (*He laughs loudly and turns*) That old boy's like something out of Dickens.

JUSTIN. (*dryly*) Come in, Mr—er . . . (*He looks unsuccessfully for Jeff's name on the band inside his hat*)

JEFF. (*not listening*) I wanted to have a word with you, Mr Fogg. (*He moves down c*) It's this business about Carla's mother. The whole thing's given her a bit of a jolt.

JUSTIN. (*very cold and legal*) Not unnaturally.

JEFF. It's a shock to learn suddenly that your mother was a cold-blooded poisoner. I don't mind telling you that it was a bit of a jolt to *me*, too.

JUSTIN. Indeed!

(JEFF *moves and sits on the upstage end of the desk*)

JEFF. There I was, all set to marry a nice girl, uncle and aunt some of the nicest people in Montreal, a well-bred girl, money of her own, everything a man could want. And then—out of the blue—*this*.

JUSTIN. It must have upset you.

JEFF. (*with feeling*) Oh, it did.

JUSTIN. (*quietly*) Sit down, Mr—er . . .

JEFF. What?

JUSTIN. (*nodding towards the chair c*) On the chair.

(JEFF *looks at the chair c, then rises, moves to the chair and sits on it*)

JEFF. Oh, I'll admit that, just at first, I thought of backing out—you know, kids—things like that?

JUSTIN. You have strong views about heredity?

JEFF. You can't do any cattle breeding without realizing that certain strains repeat themselves. "Still", I said to myself, "it isn't the girl's fault. She's a fine girl. You can't let her down. You've just got to go through with it."

(JUSTIN picks up the box of cigarettes and lighter and crosses above Jeff to L of him)

JUSTIN. Cattle breeding.

JEFF. So I told her it made no difference at all. (He takes a packet of American cigarettes and a lighter from his pocket)

JUSTIN. But it does?

JEFF. (taking a cigarette from his packet) No, no, I've put it behind me. But Carla's got some morbid idea in her head of raking the whole thing up. That's got to be stopped. (He offers Justin a cigarette)

JUSTIN. Yes? No. (He puts the cigarette box quickly on the table L)

JEFF. She'll only upset herself. Let her down lightly—but let your answer be "No". See?

(JEFF lights his cigarette. At the same moment, JUSTIN flicks the lighter he holds, sees Jeff has his own, so extinguishes it quickly, and puts it on the table L)

JUSTIN. I see.

JEFF. Of course—I suppose making all these enquiries would be quite—er—good business for your firm. You know, fees, expenses, all that . . .

JUSTIN. (crossing below Jeff to R) We are a firm of solicitors, you know, not inquiry agents.

JEFF. Sorry, must have explained myself clumsily.

JUSTIN. Yes.

JEFF. What I want to say is—I'll stump up the necessary—but drop it.

JUSTIN. (moving behind the desk) You will excuse me, Mr—er . . . but Miss Le Marchant is my client.

JEFF. (rising) Yep, well, if you're acting for Carla, you must agree that it's best for her not to go harrowing herself raking up the past. Make her give it up. Once we're married, she'll never think of it again.

JUSTIN. And will you never think of it again?

JEFF. That's a good question. Yes, I dare say I'll have one or two nasty moments.

JUSTIN. If the coffee should taste bitter . . . ?

JEFF. That sort of thing.

JUSTIN. Which won't be very pleasant for her.

JEFF. (cheerily) Well, what can a man do? You can't undo the past. Glad to have met you, Fogg. (He offers his hand)

(JUSTIN looks at Jeff's hand, then picks up Jeff's hat from the desk and



*puts it in the outstretched hand. JEFF exits. JUSTIN turns to the window, opens it wide, then lifts the telephone receiver)*

JUSTIN. (*into the telephone*) Has Miss Le Marchant left yet? . . . Well, ask her to come back for a minute. I shan't keep her long. (*He replaces the receiver, crosses to the table L, takes a cigarette from the box, lights it, then returns to R of the desk*)

(CARLA enters)

CARLA. (*looking coldly at Justin*) Yes?

JUSTIN. I've changed my mind.

CARLA. (*startled*) What?

JUSTIN. That's all. I've changed my mind. I will fix up an appointment for you to see Mr Philip Blake here. I will let you know when.

(CARLA smiles)

Go on. Don't keep Mr—er . . . don't keep him waiting. He wouldn't be pleased. You'll be hearing from me. (*He ushers Carla to the arch*)

(CARLA exits)

(*He goes to the desk and lifts the receiver. Into the telephone*) Get me Kellway, Blake and Leverstein, will you? I want to speak to Mr Philip Blake personally. (*He replaces the receiver*) Cattle breeding!

*The lights dim to BLACK-OUT*

## Scene II

SCENE—Justin Fogg's room.

*It is a very handsome room. A door up R leads to the outer office. Up L is a cupboard for drinks, let into the wall. A large and ornate desk is L with a damask-covered swivel chair behind it. A chair, to match, for visitors is down R. There are shaded, electric wall-brackets R and L. On the desk there is an intercom in addition to the telephone.*

*When the LIGHTS come up, PHILIP BLAKE is sitting at the desk, smoking and reading the "Financial Times". He is a good-looking man of*

*fifty odd, grey at the temples, with a slight paunch. He is self-important, with traces of nervous irritability. He is very sure of himself. The intercom buzzes. PHILIP presses the switch.*

PHILIP. (*into the intercom*) Yes?

VOICE. (*through the intercom*) Miss Le Marchant's here, Mr Blake.

PHILIP. Ask her to come in.

VOICE. Yes, Mr Blake.

(*PHILIP releases the switch, frowns, folds his newspaper and lays it on the desk, rises, moves down L of the desk, turns and faces the door. He shows slight traces of uneasiness while he waits. CARLA enters. She wears a different coat, and carries different gloves and handbag*)

PHILIP. Good Lord.

(*PHILIP and CARLA look at each other for a moment, then CARLA closes the door and moves down C*)

Well, so it's Carla. (*He recovers himself and shakes hands with her*) Little Carla! (*With rather forced geniality*) You were—what—five years old when I saw you last.

CARLA. Yes. I must have been just about. (*She screws up her eyes*) I don't think I remember you . . .

PHILIP. I was never much of a children's man. Never knew what to say to them. Sit down, Carla.

(*CARLA sits on the chair down R and places her handbag on the floor beside the chair*)

*He offers the box of cigarettes from the desk*) Cigarette?

(*CARLA declines*)

(*He replaces the box on the desk, moves behind the desk and looks at his watch*) I haven't much time, but . . . (*He sits at the desk*)

CARLA. I know you're a terribly busy person. It's good of you to see me.

PHILIP. Not at all. You're the daughter of one of my oldest and closest friends. You remember your father?

CARLA. Yes. Not very clearly.

PHILIP. You should. Amyas Crale oughtn't to be forgotten. (*He pauses*) Now, what's this all about? This lawyer chap—Fogg—son of old Andrew Fogg, I suppose—



(CARLA nods)

—wasn't very clear about why you wanted to see me. (*There is a trace of sarcasm in his voice during the following sentence*) But I gathered that it wasn't just a case of looking up your father's old friends?

CARLA. No.

PHILIP. He told me that you'd only recently learnt the facts about your father's death. Is that right?

CARLA. Yes.

PHILIP. Pity, really, you ever had to hear about it at all.

CARLA. (*after a pause; firmly*) Mr Blake, when I came in just now you were startled. You said "Good Lord!" Why?

PHILIP. Well, I . . .

CARLA. Did you think, just for the moment, that it was my mother standing there?

PHILIP. There is an amazing resemblance. It startled me.

CARLA. You—you didn't like her?

PHILIP. (*dryly*) Could you expect me to? She killed my best friend.

CARLA. (*stung*) It *could* have been suicide.

PHILIP. Don't run away with that idea. Amyas would never have killed himself. He enjoyed life far too much.

CARLA. He was an artist, he could have had temperamental ups and downs.

PHILIP. He didn't have that kind of temperament. Nothing morbid or neurotic about Amyas. He had his faults, yes—he chased women, I'll admit—but most of his affairs were quite short lived. He always went back to Caroline.

CARLA. What fun that must have been for her!

PHILIP. She'd known him since she was twelve years old. We were all brought up together.

CARLA. I know so little. Tell me.

PHILIP (*sitting back comfortably in his chair*) She used to come and stay at Alderbury for the holidays with the Crales. My family had the big house next door. We all ran wild together. Meredith, my elder brother, and Amyas were much of an age. I was a year or two younger. Caroline had no money of her own, you know. I was a younger son, out of the running, but both Meredith and Amyas were quite good catches.

CARLA. How cold-blooded you make her sound.

PHILIP. She *was* cold-blooded. Oh, she appeared impulsive, but behind it

there was a cold calculating devil. And she had a wicked temper. You know what she did to her baby half-sister?

CARLA. (*quickly*) No?

PHILIP. Her mother had married again, and all the attention went to the new baby—Angela. Caroline was jealous as hell. She tried to kill the baby.

CARLA. No!

PHILIP. Went for her with a pair of scissors, I believe. Ghastly business. The child was marked for life.

CARLA. (*outraged*) You make her sound a—a monster!

PHILIP. (*shrugging*) Jealousy is the devil.

CARLA. (*studying him*) You hated her—didn't you?

PHILIP. (*startled*) That's putting it rather strongly.

CARLA. No, it's true.

PHILIP. (*stutting out his cigarette*) I suppose I'm bitter. (*He rises, moves to R of the desk and sits on the downstage corner of it*) But it seems to me that you've come over here with the idea in your head that your mother was an injured innocent. That isn't so. There's Amyas's side of it, too. He was your father, girl, and he loved life . . .

CARLA. I know. I know all that.

PHILIP. You've got to see this thing as it was. Caroline was no good. (*He pauses*) She poisoned her husband. And what I can't forget, and never will forget, is that I could have saved him.

CARLA. How?

PHILIP. My brother Meredith had a strange hobby. He used to fiddle about with herbs and hemlock and stuff and Caroline had stolen one of his patent brews.

CARLA. How did you know that it was *she* who had taken it?

PHILIP. (*grimly*) I knew all right. And I was fool enough to hang about waiting to talk it over with Meredith. Why I hadn't the sense to realize that *Caroline* wouldn't wait, I can't think. She'd pinched the stuff to use—and by God, she used it at the first opportunity.

CARLA. You *can't* be sure it was she who took it.

PHILIP. My dear girl, she *admitted* taking it. Said she'd taken it to do away with herself.

CARLA. That's possible, isn't it?

PHILIP. Is it? (*Caustically*) Well, she *didn't* do away with herself.

(CARLA shakes her head. There is a silence)

(*He rises and makes an effort to resume a normal manner*) Have a glass of sherry? (*He moves below and L of the desk to the cupboard up L, takes out a decanter of sherry and a glass and puts them on the desk*) Now, I suppose I've upset you? (*He pours a glass of sherry*)

CARLA. I've got to find out about things.

PHILIP. (*crossing and handing the glass to Carla*) There was a lot of sympathy for her at the trial, of course. (*He moves behind the desk*) Amyas behaved badly, I'll admit, bringing the Greer girl down to Al-derbury. (*He replaces the decanter in the cupboard*) And she was pretty insolent to Caroline.

CARLA. Did you like her?

PHILIP. (*guardedly*) Young Elsa? Not particularly. (*He turns to the cupboard, takes out a bottle of whisky and a glass and puts them on the desk*) She wasn't my type, damnably attractive, of course. Predatory. Grasping at everything she wanted. (*He pours whisky for himself*) All the same, I think she'd have suited Amyas better than Caroline did. (*He replaces the bottle in the cupboard*)

CARLA. Weren't my mother and father happy together?

PHILIP. (*with a laugh*) They never stopped having rows. His married life would have been one long hell if it hadn't been for the way of escape his painting gave him. (*He squirts soda into his drink and sits at the desk*)

CARLA. How did he meet Elsa?

PHILIP. (*vaguely*) Some Chelsea party or other. (*He smiles*) Came along to me—told me he'd met a marvellous girl—absolutely different from any girl he'd met before. Well, I'd heard *that* often enough. He'd fall for a girl like a ton of bricks, and a month later, when you mentioned her, he'd stare at you and wonder who the hell you were talking about. But it didn't turn out that way with Elsa. (*He raises his glass*) Good luck, m'dear. (*He drinks*)

(*CARLA sips her sherry*)

CARLA. She's married now, isn't she?

PHILIP. (*dryly*) She's run through three husbands. A test pilot who crashed himself, some explorer chap whom she got bored with. She's married now to old Lord Melksham, a dreamy peer who writes mystical poetry. I should say she's about had *him* by now. (*He drinks*)

CARLA. Would she have gotten tired of my father, I wonder?

PHILIP. Who knows?

CARLA. I must meet her.

PHILIP. Can't you let things go?

CARLA. (*rising and putting her glass on the desk*) No, I've got to understand.

PHILIP. (*rising*) Determined, aren't you?

CARLA. Yes, I'm a fighter. But my mother—wasn't.

(*The intercom buzzes. CARLA turns and picks up her bag*)

PHILIP. Where did you get that idea? Caroline was a terrific fighter. (*He presses the switch. Into the intercom*) Yes?

VOICE. (*through the intercom*) Mr Foster's here, Mr Blake.

PHILIP. Tell him I won't keep him a moment.

VOICE. Yes, sir.

(*PHILIP releases the switch*)

CARLA. (*struck*) Was she? Was she really? But—she didn't fight at her trial.

PHILIP. No.

CARLA. Why didn't she?

PHILIP. Well, since she knew she was guilty . . . (*He rises*)

CARLA. (*angrily*) She wasn't guilty!

PHILIP. (*angrily*) You're obstinate, aren't you? After all I've told you!

CARLA. You still hate her. Although she's been dead for years. Why?

PHILIP. I've told you . . .

CARLA. Not the real reason. There's something else.

PHILIP. I don't think so.

CARLA. You hate her—now why? I shall have to find out. Goodbye, Mr Blake. Thank you.

PHILIP. Good-bye.

(*CARLA moves to the door and exits, leaving the door open*)

(*He stares after her for a moment, slightly perplexed, then he closes the door, sits at the desk and presses the intercom switch. Into the intercom*) Ask Mr Foster to come in.

VOICE. (*through the intercom*) Yes, sir.

PHILIP sits back in his chair and picks up his drink as

*the lights dim to BLACK-OUT*

## Scene III

SCENE—*The sitting-room of an hotel suite.*

*There is an arch back C leading to a small entrance hall with a door L. There is a long window R. A french settee stands L with an armchair to match R. In front of the settee there is a long stool, and a small table with a house telephone stands under the window. There are electric wall-brackets R and L of the arch. In the hall there is a console table and a row of coathooks on the wall R.*

*When the LIGHTS come up, JUSTIN is by the armchair, placing some files in his brief-case. His coat is on the settee. CARLA enters the hall from L, puts her gloves and handbag on the hall table, removes her coat and hangs it on the hooks.*

CARLA. Oh, I'm so glad you're here.

JUSTIN. (*surprised and pleased*) Really? (*He puts his brief-case on the armchair and moves down R*) Meredith Blake will be here at three o'clock.

CARLA. Good! What about Lady Melksham?

JUSTIN. She didn't answer my letter.

CARLA. Perhaps she's away?

JUSTIN. (*crossing to L of the arch*) No, she's not away. I took steps to ascertain that she's at home.

CARLA. I suppose that means that she's going to ignore the whole thing.

JUSTIN. Oh, I wouldn't say that. She'll come all right.

CARLA. (*moving C*) What makes you so sure?

JUSTIN. Well, women usually . . .

CARLA. (*with a touch of mischief*) I see—you're an authority on women.

JUSTIN. (*stiffly*) Only in the legal sense.

CARLA. And—strictly in the legal sense . . . ?

JUSTIN. Women usually want to satisfy their curiosity.

(CARLA sees Justin's coat on the settee, crosses and picks it up)

CARLA. I really do like you—you make me feel much better. (*She moves towards the hooks*)

*(The telephone rings)*

*(She thrusts the coat at Justin, crosses and lifts the telephone receiver. Into the telephone)* Hello? . . .

*(JUSTIN hangs his coat in the hall)*

Oh, ask him to come up, will you? *(She replaces the receiver and turns to Justin)* It's Meredith Blake. Is he like his hateful brother?

JUSTIN. *(moving c)* A very different temperament, I should say. Do you need to feel better?

CARLA. What?

JUSTIN. You said just now I made you feel better. Do you need to feel better?

CARLA. Sometimes I do. *(She gestures to him to sit on the settee)*

*(JUSTIN sits on the settee)*

I didn't realize what I was letting myself in for.

JUSTIN. I was afraid of that.

CARLA. I could still—give it all up—go back to Canada—forget. Shall I?

JUSTIN. *(quickly)* No! No—er—not now. You've got to go on.

CARLA. *(sitting in the armchair)* That's not what you advised in the first place.

JUSTIN. You hadn't started then.

CARLA. You still think—that my mother was guilty, don't you?

JUSTIN. I can't see any other solution.

CARLA. And yet you want me to go on?

JUSTIN. I want you to go on until *you* are satisfied.

*(There is a knock on the hall door. CARLA and JUSTIN rise. CARLA goes to the hall, opens the door and steps back. JUSTIN crosses to R of the armchair and faces the hall. MEREDITH BLAKE enters the hall from L. He is a pleasant, rather vague man with a thatch of grey hair. He gives the impression of being rather ineffectual and irresolute. He wears country tweeds with hat, coat and muffler)*

MEREDITH. Carla. My dear Carla. *(He takes her hands)* How time flies. May I? *(He kisses her)* It seems incredible that the little girl I knew should have grown up into a young lady. How like your mother you are, my dear. My word!

CARLA. *(slightly embarrassed; gesturing to Justin)* Do you know Mr Fogg?

MEREDITH. My word, my word! *(He pulls himself together)* What? *(To*



*Justin*) Ah, yes, I knew your father, didn't I? (*He steps into the room*)

(*CARLA closes the door then moves into the room and stands L of the arch*)

JUSTIN. (*moving to R of Meredith*) Yes, sir. (*He shakes hands*) May I take your coat?

MEREDITH. (*unbuttoning his coat; to Carla*) And now—tell me all about yourself. You're over from the States—

(*JUSTIN takes Meredith's hat*)

—thank you—no, Canada. For how long?

CARLA. I'm not quite sure—yet.

(*JUSTIN eyes Carla*)

MEREDITH. But you are definitely making your home overseas?

CARLA. Well—I'm thinking of getting married.

MEREDITH. (*removing his coat*) Oh, to a Canadian?

CARLA. Yes.

(*MEREDITH hands his coat and muffler to JUSTIN who hangs them with the hat, in the hall*)

MEREDITH. Well, I hope he's a nice fellow and good enough for you, my dear.

CARLA. Naturally I think so. (*She gestures to Meredith to sit in the armchair*)

(*MEREDITH goes to sit in the armchair, sees Justin's brief-case and picks it up. JUSTIN moves above the armchair*)

MEREDITH. Good. If you're happy, then I'm very happy for you. And so would your mother have been.

CARLA. (*sitting on the settee at the upstage end*) Do you know that my mother left a letter for me in which she said she was innocent?

MEREDITH. (*turning and looking at Carla; sharply*) Your mother wrote that?

CARLA. Does it surprise you so much?

(*JUSTIN sees MEREDITH is uncertain what to do with the brief-case and offers to take it*)

MEREDITH. Well, I shouldn't have thought Caroline . . . (*He hands the brief-case to Justin*)

(JUSTIN puts the brief-case on the table R)

I don't know—I suppose she felt—(he sits in the armchair) it would distress you less . . .

CARLA. (*passionately*) It doesn't occur to you that what she wrote me might be true?

MEREDITH. Well, yes—of course. If she solemnly wrote that when she was dying—well, it stands to reason that it must be true—doesn't it? (*He looks up at Justin for support*)

(*There is a pause*)

CARLA. What a rotten liar you are. (*She rises*)

MEREDITH. (*shocked*) Carla!

(CARLA goes into the hall and picks up her handbag)

CARLA. Oh, I know it was meant to be kind. But kindness doesn't really help. I want you to tell me all about it. (*She steps into the room and searches in her bag*)

MEREDITH. You know the facts—(to Justin) doesn't she?

JUSTIN. (*crossing down L*) Yes, sir, she does.

MEREDITH. Going over them will be painful—and quite unprofitable. Better let the whole thing rest. You're young and pretty and engaged to be married and that's all that really matters.

(JUSTIN sees CARLA searching in her bag, takes out his cigarette case and offers it to her. MEREDITH takes a snuff-box from his waistcoat pocket)

JUSTIN. (to Carla) You looking for one of these?

MEREDITH. (*offering the snuff-box to Carla*) Have a pinch of . . . No, I don't suppose you do, but I'll . . . (*He offers the box to Justin*) Oh, will you?

(JUSTIN declines. CARLA takes a cigarette from JUSTIN who also takes one)

CARLA. I've asked your brother Philip, you know. (*She puts her bag on the stool*)

(JUSTIN lights the cigarettes with his lighter)

MEREDITH. Oh—Philip! You wouldn't get much from him. Philip's a busy man. So busy making money, that he hasn't time for anything else. If he did remember anything, he'd remember it all wrong. (*He sniffs the snuff*)



CARLA. (*sitting on the settee at the upstage end*) Then you tell me.

(JUSTIN sits on the settee at the downstage end)

MEREDITH. (*guardedly*) Well—you'd have to understand a bit about your father—first.

CARLA. (*matter-of-fact*) He had affairs with other women and made my mother very unhappy.

MEREDITH. Well—er—yes—(*he sniffs*) but these affairs of his weren't really important until Elsa came along.

CARLA. He was painting her?

MEREDITH. Yes, my word—(*he sniffs*) I can see her now. Sitting on the terrace where she posed. Dark—er—shorts and a yellow shirt. "Portrait of a girl in a yellow shirt", that's what he was going to call it. It was one of the best things Amyas ever did. (*He puts his snuff-box in his pocket*)

CARLA. What happened to the picture?

MEREDITH. I've got it. I bought it with the furniture. I bought the house, too. Alderbury. It adjoins my property, you know. I didn't want it turned into a building estate. Everything was sold by the executors and the proceeds put in trust for you. But you know that, I expect.

CARLA. I didn't know you'd bought the house.

MEREDITH. Well, I did. It's let to a Youth Hostel. But I keep one wing just as it was, for myself. I sold off most of the furniture . . .

CARLA. But you kept the picture. Why?

MEREDITH. (*as though defending himself*) I tell you, it was the best thing Amyas ever did. My word, yes! It goes to the nation when I die. (*He pauses*)

(CARLA stares at Meredith)

Well, I'll try to tell you what you want to know. Amyas brought Elsa down there—ostensibly because he was painting her. She hated the pretence. She—she was so wildly in love with him and wanted to have it out with Caroline then and there. She felt in a false position. I—I understood her point of view.

CARLA. (*coldly*) You sound most sympathetic towards her.

MEREDITH. (*horrified*) Not at all. My sympathies were all with Caroline. I'd always been—well, in love with Caroline. I asked her to marry me—but she married Amyas instead. Oh, I can understand it—he was a brilliant person and very attractive to women, but he didn't look after her the way I'd have looked after her. I remained her friend.

CARLA. And yet you believe she committed murder?

MEREDITH. She didn't really know what she was doing. There was a terrific scene—she was overwrought . . .

CARLA. Yes?

MEREDITH. And that same afternoon she took the conine from my laboratory. But I swear there was no thought of murder in her mind when she took it—she had some idea of—of—doing away with herself.

CARLA. But as your brother Philip said, "She *didn't* do away with herself."

MEREDITH. Things always look better the next morning. And there was a lot of fuss going on, getting Angela's things ready for school—that was Angela Warren, Caroline's half-sister. She was a real little devil, always scrapping with someone, or playing tricks. She and Amyas were forever fighting, but he was very fond of her—and Caroline adored her.

CARLA. (*quickly*) After once trying to kill her?

MEREDITH. (*looking at Carla; quickly*) I've always been sure that that story was grossly exaggerated. Most children are jealous of the new baby.

CARLA. (*after puffing at her cigarette*) My father was found dead—after lunch, wasn't he?

MEREDITH. Yes. We left him on the terrace, painting. He often wouldn't go into lunch. The glass of beer that Caroline had brought him was there by his side—empty. I suppose the stuff was already beginning to work. There's no pain—just a slow—paralysis. Yes. When we came out after lunch—he was dead. The whole thing was a nightmare.

CARLA. (*rising; upset*) A nightmare . . .

MEREDITH. (*rising*) I'm sorry, my dear. I didn't want to talk about it to you. (*He looks at Justin*)

CARLA. If I could go down there—to where it happened. Could I?

MEREDITH. Of course, my dear. You're only to say the word.

CARLA. (*moving c and turning to face Justin*) If we could go over it there—all of us . . .

MEREDITH. What do you mean by all of us?

CARLA. (*turning to face Meredith*) Your brother Philip and you, and the governess, and Angela Warren, and—yes—even Elsa.

MEREDITH. I hardly think Elsa would come. She's married, you know.

CARLA. (*wryly*) Several times, I hear.

MEREDITH. She's changed very much. Philip saw her at a theatre one night.

CARLA. Nothing lasts. You loved my mother once—but *that* didn't last, did it? (*She stubs out her cigarette in the ashtray on the stool*)

MEREDITH. What?

CARLA. (*crossing down L*) Everything's different from what I thought it would be. I can't seem to find my way.

(JUSTIN rises)

If I could go down to Alderbury . . .

MEREDITH. You're welcome at any time, my dear. Now, I'm afraid I must . . .

(CARLA gazes out front)

JUSTIN. (*moving to the hall*) I'll get your coat, sir. (*He sees Carla is in a brown study*) Carla's most grateful to you, sir. (*He takes Meredith's coat, hat and muffler from the hooks*)

CARLA. (*recollecting herself*) Oh, yes. Yes, thank you for coming.

(MEREDITH goes to the hall where JUSTIN helps him on with his coat)

MEREDITH. Carla, the more I think of it all . . .

CARLA. Yes?

MEREDITH. (*moving c*) I believe, you know, that it's quite possible Amyas did commit suicide. He may have felt more remorseful than we know. (*He looks hopefully at Carla*)

CARLA. (*unconvinced*) It's a nice thought.

MEREDITH. Yes, yes—well, good-bye, my dear.

CARLA. Good-bye.

MEREDITH. (*taking his hat from Justin*) Good-bye, Mr Fogg.

JUSTIN. (*opening the door*) Good-bye, sir.

MEREDITH. (*mumbling*) Good-bye. Good-bye.

(MEREDITH exits. JUSTIN closes the door and moves c)

CARLA. Well!

JUSTIN. Well!

CARLA. What a fool!

JUSTIN. Quite a nice kindly fool.

(The telephone rings)

CARLA. (*crossing to the telephone*) He doesn't believe anything of the sort. (*She lifts the receiver*) Why does he say so? (*Into the telephone*)

Yes? . . . Yes. I see. (*She replaces the receiver. Disappointed*) She's not coming.

JUSTIN. Lady Melksham?

CARLA. Yes. Unavoidably prevented.

(*JUSTIN goes into the hall and collects his coat*)

JUSTIN. Don't worry, we'll think of something.

CARLA. (*looking out of the window*) I've got to see her, she's the hub of it all.

JUSTIN. (*moving c and putting on his coat*) You're going to take tea with Miss Williams, aren't you?

CARLA. (*flatly*) Yes.

JUSTIN. (*rather eagerly*) Want me to come with you?

CARLA. (*without interest*) No, there's no need.

JUSTIN. Maybe there'll be a letter from Angela Warren in tomorrow's post. I'll phone you if I may?

CARLA. (*still looking through the window*) Please.

JUSTIN. (*after a pause*) What a fool your father was.

(*CARLA turns*)

Not to recognize quality when he had it.

CARLA. What do you mean?

JUSTIN. Elsa Greer was pretty brash, you know, crude allure, crude sex, crude hero worship.

CARLA. Hero worship?

JUSTIN. Yes. Would she have made a dead set at your father if he hadn't been a celebrated painter? Look at her subsequent husbands. Always attracted by a somebody—a big noise in the world—never the man himself. But Caroline, your mother, would have recognized quality in a—(*he pauses and self-consciously gives a boyish smile*) well—even in a solicitor.

(*CARLA picks up Justin's brief-case and looks at him with interest*)

CARLA. I believe you're still in love with my mother. (*She holds out the brief-case*)

JUSTIN. Oh, no. (*He takes the brief-case and smiles*) I move with the times, you know.

(*CARLA is taken aback, but is pleased and smiles*)

Good-bye.

(JUSTIN exits. CARLA looks after him, taking in what he has said. The telephone rings. CARLA lifts the receiver. The light starts to dim as twilight falls)

CARLA. (into the telephone) Hullo? . . . Yes . . . Oh, it's you, Jeff . . . (She takes the whole instrument and sits in the armchair with it, tucking one leg under her) It may be a silly waste of time, but it's my time and if I . . . (She straightens the seam of her stocking) What? . . . (Crossly) You're quite wrong about Justin. He's a good friend—which is more than you are . . . All right, so I'm quarrelling . . . No, I don't want to dine with you . . . I don't want to dine with you anywhere.

(ELSA MELKSHAM enters the hall from L, quietly closes the door and stands in the hall, looking at Carla. ELSA is tall, beautiful, very made-up and extremely smart. She wears hat and gloves, and a red velvet coat over a black dress, and carries her handbag)

At the moment your stock is pretty low with me. (She bangs the receiver down, rises and puts the instrument on the table R)

ELSA. Miss Le Marchant—or do I say “Miss Crale”?

(CARLA, startled, turns quickly)

CARLA. So you've come after all?

ELSA. I always meant to come. I just waited until your legal adviser had faded.

CARLA. You don't like lawyers?

ELSA. I prefer, occasionally, to talk woman to woman. Let's have some light. (She switches on the wall-brackets by the switch L of the arch then moves down c and looks hard at Carla) Well, you don't look very much like the child I remember.

CARLA. (simply) I'm like my mother.

ELSA. (coldly) Yes. That doesn't particularly prejudice me in your favour. Your mother was one of the most loathsome women I've ever known.

CARLA. (hoily) I've no doubt she felt the same about you.

ELSA. (smiling) Oh, yes, the feeling was mutual. (She sits on the settee at the upstage end) The trouble with Caroline was that she wasn't a very good loser.

CARLA. Did you expect her to be?

ELSA. (removing her gloves; amused) Really, you know, I believe I did. I must have been incredibly young, and naïve. Because I myself couldn't understand clinging on to a man who didn't want me, I was

quite shocked that she didn't feel the same. But I never dreamt that she'd *kill* Amyas rather than let me have him.

CARLA. She didn't kill him.

ELSA. (*without interest*) She killed him all right. She poisoned him more or less in front of my eyes—in a glass of iced beer. And I never dreamed—never guessed . . . (*With a complete change of manner*) You think at the time that you will never forget—that the pain will always be there. And then—it's all gone—gone—like that. (*She snaps her fingers*)

CARLA. (*sitting in the armchair*) How old were you?

ELSA. Nineteen. But I was no injured innocent. Amyas Crale didn't seduce a trusting young girl. It wasn't like that at all. I met him at a party and I fell for him right away. I knew he was the only man in the world for me. (*She smiles*) I think he felt the same.

CARLA. Yes.

ELSA. I asked him to paint me. He said he didn't do portraits. I said what about the portrait he'd done of Marna Vadaz, the dancer. He said special circumstances had led to that. I knew they'd had an affair together. I said, "I *want* you to paint me." He said, "You know what'll happen? I shall make love to you." I said, "Why not?" And he said, "I'm a married man, and I'm very fond of my wife." I said that now we'd got that settled, when should we start the sittings? He took me by the shoulders and turned me towards the light and looked me over in a considering sort of way. Then he said, "I've often thought of painting a flight of outrageously coloured Australian macaws alighting on St. Paul's Cathedral. If I painted you in your flamboyant youth against a background of nice traditional English scenery, I believe I'd get the same effect." (*She pauses. Quickly*) So it was settled.

CARLA. And you went down to Alderbury.

(*ELSA rises, removes her coat, puts it on the downstage end of the settee and moves c*)

ELSA. Yes. Caroline was charming. She could be, you know. Amyas was very circumspect. (*She smiles*) Never said a word to me his wife couldn't have overheard. I was polite and formal. Underneath, though, we both knew . . . (*She breaks off*)

CARLA. Go on.

ELSA. (*putting her hands on her hips*) After ten days he told me I was to go back to London.



CARLA. Yes?

ELSA. I said, "The picture isn't finished." He said, "It's barely begun. The truth is I can't paint you, Elsa." I asked him why, and he said that I knew very well "why" and that's why I'd got to clear out.

CARLA. So—you went back to London?

ELSA. Yes, I went. (*She moves up c and turns*) I didn't write to him. I didn't answer his letters. He held out for a week. And then—he came. I told him that it was fate and it was no use struggling against it, and he said, "You haven't struggled much, have you, Elsa?" I said I hadn't struggled at all. It was wonderful and more frightening than mere happiness. (*She frowns*) If only we'd kept away—if only we hadn't gone back.

CARLA. Why did you?

ELSA. The unfinished picture. It haunted Amyas. (*She sits on the settee at the upstage end*) But things were different this time—Caroline had caught on. I wanted to have the whole thing on an honest basis. All Amyas would say was, "To hell with honesty. I'm painting a picture."

(CARLA laughs)

Why do you laugh?

CARLA. (*rising and turning to the window*) Because I know just how he felt.

ELSA. (*angrily*) How should you know?

CARLA. (*simply*) Because I'm his daughter, I suppose.

ELSA. (*distantly*) Amyas's daughter. (*She looks at Carla with a new appraisement*)

CARLA. (*turning and crossing above the armchair to c*) I've just begun to know that. I hadn't thought about it before. I came over because I wanted to find out just what happened sixteen years ago. I am finding out. I'm beginning to know the people—what they felt, what they are like. The whole thing's coming alive, bit by bit.

ELSA. Coming alive? (*Bitterly*) I wish it would.

CARLA. My father—you—Philip Blake—Meredith Blake. (*She crosses down L*) And there are two more. Angela Warren . . .

ELSA. Angela? Oh, yes. She's quite a celebrity in her way—one of those tough women who travel to inaccessible places and write books about it. She was only a tiresome teenager then.

CARLA. (*turning*) How did she feel about it all?

ELSA. (*uninterested*) I don't know. They hustled her away, I think. Some



idea of Caroline's that contact with murder would damage her adolescent mind—though I don't know why Caroline should have bothered about damage to her mind when she had already damaged her face for her. When I heard that story I ought to have realized what Caroline was capable of, and when I actually *saw* her take the poison . . .

CARLA. (*quickly*) You *saw* her?

ELSA. Yes. Meredith was waiting to lock up his laboratory. Caroline was the last to come out. I was just before her. I looked over my shoulder and saw her standing in front of a shelf with a small bottle in her hand. Of course, she might only have been looking at it. How was I to know?

CARLA. (*crossing to c*) But you suspected?

ELSA. I thought she meant it for herself.

CARLA. Suicide? And you didn't *care*?

ELSA. (*calmly*) I thought it might be the best way out.

CARLA. (*crossing above the armchair to the window*) Oh, no . . .

ELSA. Her marriage to Amyas had been a failure from the start—if she'd really cared for him as much as she pretended, she'd have given him a divorce. There was plenty of money—and she'd probably have married someone else who would have suited her better.

CARLA. How easily you arrange other people's lives. (*She moves down R*) Meredith Blake says I may come down to Alderbury. I want to get everyone there. Will you come?

ELSA. (*arrested, but attracted by the idea*) Come down to Alderbury?

CARLA. (*eagerly*) I want to go over the whole thing on the spot. I want to see it as though it were happening all over again.

ELSA. Happening all over again . . .

CARLA. (*politely*) If it's too painful for you . . .

ELSA. There are worse things than pain. (*Harshly*) It's forgetting that's so horrible—it's as though you were dead yourself. (*Angrily*) You—stand there so damned young and innocent—what do you know about loving a man? I loved Amyas. (*With fire*) He was so alive, so full of life and vigour, such a man. And she put an end to all that—your mother. (*She rises*) She put an end to Amyas so that I shouldn't have him. And they didn't even hang her. (*She pauses. In an ordinary tone*) I'll come to Alderbury. I'll join your circus. (*She picks up her coat and holds it out to Carla*)

(CARLA crosses to Elsa and helps her on with her coat)

Philip, Meredith—Angela Warren—all four of us.

CARLA. Five.

ELSA. Five?

CARLA. There was a governess.

ELSA. (*collecting her bag and gloves from the settee*) Oh, yes, the governess. Very disapproving me and Amyas. Devoted to Caroline.

CARLA. Devoted to my mother—she'll tell me. I'm going to see her next. (*She goes into the hall and opens the door*)

ELSA. (*moving to the hall*) Perhaps you'll get your legal friend to telephone me, will you?

(ELSA exits. CARLA closes the door and moves C)

CARLA. The governess!

*The LIGHTS dim to BLACK-OUT*

## Scene IV

SCENE—Miss Williams' bed-sitting-room.

*It is an attic room with a small window in the sloping roof L. The door is presumed to be in the "fourth wall". There is a fireplace, fitted with a gas fire, back C. There is a divan with cover and cushions R. A gate-legged table stands under the window. A small table with a table-lamp on it is R of the fireplace. Upright chairs stand L of the fireplace and down L and there is an old-fashioned armchair with a footstool under it, C. An electric kettle is plugged into the skirting, R of the fireplace.*

*When the LIGHTS come up, the lamp is on, but the window curtains are not yet closed. A tray of tea for two is on the table L. The kettle is steaming and the teapot is beside it. The gas fire is lit. MISS WILLIAMS is seated in the armchair C. She is sixty odd, intelligent, with clear enunciation and a pedagogic manner. She wears a tweed skirt and blouse, with a cardigan and a scarf round her shoulders. CARLA is seated on the divan, looking through a photograph album. She wears a brown dress.*

CARLA. I *do* remember you. It's all coming back. I didn't think I did.

MISS WILLIAMS. You were only five years old.

CARLA. You looked after me?

MISS WILLIAMS. No, you were not my responsibility. I was in charge of Angela. Ah, the kettle's boiling. (*She rises, picks up the teapot and makes the tea*) Now, are you going to be happy there, dear?

CARLA. I'm fine, thanks.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*pointing to the album*) That's Angela—you were only a baby when that was taken.

CARLA. What was she like?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*putting down the kettle*) One of the most interesting pupils I ever had. Undisciplined, but a first-class brain. She took a first at Somerville and you may have read her book on the rock paintings of the Hazelpa?

CARLA. Um?

MISS WILLIAMS. It was very well reviewed. Yes, I'm very proud of Angela. (*She puts the teapot on the tray* L) Now, we'll just let that stand a minute, shall we?

CARLA. (*putting the album on the upstage end of the divan*) Miss Williams, you know why I've come?

MISS WILLIAMS. Roughly, yes. (*She moves to the fireplace*) You have just learnt the facts about the tragedy that ended your father's life, and you want fuller information about the whole matter. (*She switches off the kettle*)

CARLA. And, I suppose, like everybody else, you think I ought to forget the whole thing?

MISS WILLIAMS. Not at all. It appears to be perfectly natural that you should want to understand. Then, and only then, can you forget about it.

CARLA. Will you tell me everything?

MISS WILLIAMS. Any questions you like to put to me I will answer to the full extent of my knowledge. Now, where's my little footstool? I have a little footstool somewhere. (*She turns the armchair to face the divan and looks around for the footstool*)

CARLA. (*rising and drawing the footstool out from under the armchair*) Here we are.

MISS WILLIAMS. Thank you, dear. (*She seats herself comfortably in the armchair and puts her feet on the footstool*) I like to keep my feet off the ground.

CARLA. I think—first—that I'd like to know just what my father and mother were like—what *you* thought they were like, I mean. (*She sits on the divan*)

MISS WILLIAMS. Your father, as you know, has been acclaimed as a great painter. I, of course, am not competent to judge. I do not, myself, admire his paintings. The drawing seems to me faulty and the colouring exaggerated. However, that may be, I have never seen why the possession of what is called the artistic temperament should excuse a man from ordinary decent behaviour. Your mother had a great deal to put up with where he was concerned.

CARLA. And she minded?

MISS WILLIAMS. She minded very much. Mr Crale was not a faithful husband. She put up with his infidelities and forgave him for them—but she did not take them meekly. She remonstrated—and with spirit.

CARLA. You mean they gave each other hell?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*quietly*) That would not be my description. (*She rises and crosses below the armchair to the table L*) There were quarrels, yes, but your mother had dignity, and your father was in the wrong. (*She pours the tea*)

CARLA. Always?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*firmly*) Always. I was—very fond of Mrs Crale. And very sorry for her. She had a lot to bear. If I had been Mr Crale's wife, I should have left him. No woman should submit to humiliation at her husband's hands.

CARLA. You didn't like my father?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*tight-lipped*) I disliked him—very much.

CARLA. But he was really fond of my mother?

(MISS WILLIAMS *picks up a cup of tea and the sugar bowl and crosses to Carla*)

MISS WILLIAMS. I believe honestly that he cared for her—but men . . . !  
(*She sniffs, then hands the cup of tea to Carla*)

CARLA. (*slightly amused*) You don't think much of men?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*with slight fanaticism*) Men still have the best of this world. I hope it will not always be so. (*She thrusts the sugar bowl at Carla*) Sugar?

CARLA. I don't take it, thanks. And then Elsa Greer came along?

(MISS WILLIAMS *crosses to the table, puts down the sugar bowl and picks up her cup of tea*)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*with distaste*) Yes. Ostensibly to have her portrait painted; they made poor progress with the picture. (*She crosses to c*) Doubtless they had other things to talk about. It was obvious that Mr Crale was infatuated with the girl and that she was doing nothing to discourage him. (*She sniffs, then sits in the armchair*)

CARLA. What did *you* think of her?

MISS WILLIAMS. I thought she was good-looking, but stupid. She had had, presumably, an adequate education, but she never opened a book, and was quite unable to converse on any intellectual subject. All she ever thought about was her own personal appearance—and men, of course.

CARLA. Go on.

MISS WILLIAMS. Miss Greer went back to London, and very pleased we were to see her go. (*She pauses and sips her tea*) Then Mr Crale went away and I knew, and so did Mrs Crale, that he had gone after the girl. They reappeared together. The *sittings* were to be continued, and we all knew what that meant. The girl's manner became increasingly insolent, and she finally came out into the open with some outrageous remarks about what *she* would do at Alderbury when she was mistress there.

CARLA. (*horrified*) Oh, no!

MISS WILLIAMS. Yes, yes, yes. (*She pauses and sips her tea*) Mr Crale came in, and his wife asked him outright if it was true that he planned to marry Elsa. There he stood, a great giant of a man, looking like a naughty schoolboy. (*She rises, goes to the table L, puts down her cup, picks up a plate of biscuits and crosses to Carla*) My blood boiled. I really could have killed him. Do have one of these biscuits, they're Peek Frean's.

CARLA. (*taking a biscuit*) Thank you. What did my mother do?

MISS WILLIAMS. I think she just went out of the room. I know I—I tried to say something to her of what I felt, but she stopped me. "We must all behave as usual," she said. (*She crosses and puts the plate on the table L*) They were all going over to tea with Mr Meredith Blake that afternoon. Just as she was going, I remember she came back and kissed me. She said, "You're such a comfort to me." (*Her voice breaks a little*)

CARLA. (*sweetly*) I'm sure you were.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*crossing to the fireplace, picking up the kettle and unplugging it*) Never blame her for what she did, Carla. It is for you, her daughter to understand and forgive.



CARLA. (*slowly*) So even you think she did it.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*sadly*) I *know* she did it.

CARLA. Did she *tell* you she did it?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*taking the kettle to the table L*) Of course not. (*She refills the teapot*)

CARLA. What *did* she say?

MISS WILLIAMS. She took pains to impress upon me that it must be suicide.

CARLA. You didn't—believe her?

MISS WILLIAMS. I said, "Certainly, Mrs Crale, it *must* have been suicide."

CARLA. But you didn't believe what you were saying.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*crossing to the fireplace and replacing the kettle*) You have got to understand, Carla, that I was entirely on your mother's side. My sympathies were with *her*—not with the police. (*She sits in the armchair*)

CARLA. But murder . . . (*She pauses*) When she was charged, you wanted her acquitted?

MISS WILLIAMS. Certainly.

CARLA. On any pretext?

MISS WILLIAMS. On any pretext.

CARLA. (*pleading*) She *might* have been innocent.

MISS WILLIAMS. No.

CARLA. (*defiantly*) She *was* innocent.

MISS WILLIAMS. No, my dear.

CARLA. She was—she *was*. She wrote it to me. In a letter she wrote when she was dying. She said I could be *sure* of that.

(*There is a stunned silence*)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*in a low voice*) That was wrong—very wrong of her. To write a lie—and at such a solemn moment. I should not have thought that Caroline Crale would have done a thing like that. She was a truthful woman.

CARLA. (*rising*) It could be the truth.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*definitely*) No.

CARLA. You can't be positive. You *can't*!

MISS WILLIAMS. I *can* be positive. Of all the people connected with the case, I *alone* can be *sure* that Caroline Crale was guilty. Because of something I saw. I withheld it from the police—I have never told anyone. (*She rises*) But you must take it from me, Carla, quite definitely,

that your mother *was* guilty. Now, can I get you some more tea, dear? We'll both have some, shall we? It sometimes gets rather chilly in this room. (*She takes Carla's cup and crosses to the table L*)

CARLA *looks distracted and bewildered as—*

*the LIGHTS dim to BLACK-OUT*

## Scene V

SCENE—*A table in a restaurant.*

*The table is in an alcove decorated in delicate Oriental style, equipped with three banquettes.*

*When the LIGHTS come up, CARLA is seated R of the table and ANGELA WARREN is seated above and C of it. They are just finishing lunch. CARLA is wearing a mink-trimmed coat. ANGELA is a tall woman of thirty, of distinguished appearance, well-dressed in a plain suit with a mannish hat. There is a not too noticeable scar on her left cheek.*

ANGELA. (*putting down her brandy glass*) Well, now that we've finished our meal, Carla, I'm prepared to talk. I should have been sorry if you'd gone back to Canada without our being able to meet. (*She offers Carla a cigarette from a leather case*)

(CARLA declines and takes a cigarette from an American pack on the table)

(*She takes one of her own cigarettes*) I wanted to fix it before, but I've had a hundred and one things to do before leaving tomorrow. (*She lights Carla's cigarette and then her own with a lighter which matches her case*)

CARLA. I know how it is. You're going by sea?

ANGELA. Yes, much easier when you're carting out a lot of equipment.

CARLA. I told you I saw Miss Williams?

ANGELA. (*smiling*) Dear Miss Williams. What a life I used to lead her. Climbing trees and playing truant, and plaguing the life out of everyone all round me. I was jealous, of course.

CARLA. (*startled*) Jealous?

ANGELA. Yes—of Amyas. I'd always come first with Caroline and I



couldn't bear her to be absorbed in him. I played all sorts of tricks on him—put—what was it, now—some filthy stuff—valerian, I think, in his beer, and once I put a hedgehog in his bed. (*She laughs*) I must have been an absolute menace. How right they were to pack me off to school. Though, of course, I was furious at the time.

CARLA. How much do you remember of it all?

ANGELA. Of the actual happening? Curiously little. We'd had lunch—and then Caroline and Miss Williams went into the garden room, and then we all came in and Amyas was dead and there was telephoning, and I heard Elsa screaming somewhere—on the terrace, I think with Caroline. I just wandered about, getting in everyone's way.

CARLA. I can't think why *I* don't remember anything. After all, I was five. Old enough to remember *something*.

ANGELA. Oh, you weren't there. You'd gone away to stay with your god-mother, old Lady Thorpe, about a week before.

CARLA. Ah!

ANGELA. Miss Williams took me into Caroline's room. She was lying down, looking very white and ill. I was frightened. She said I wasn't to think about it—I was to go to Miss Williams' sister in London, and then on to school in Zurich as planned. I said I didn't want to leave her—and then Miss Williams chipped in and said in that authoritative way of hers—(*she mimics Miss Williams*) "The best way you can help your sister, Angela, is to do what she wants you to do without making any fuss." (*She sips her brandy*)

CARLA. (*amused*) I know just what you mean. There's something about Miss Williams which makes you feel you've just got to go along with her.

ANGELA. The police asked me a few questions, but I didn't know why. I just thought there had been some kind of accident, and that Amyas had taken poison by mistake. I was abroad when they arrested Caroline, and they kept it from me as long as they could. Caroline wouldn't let me go and see her in prison. She did everything she could to keep me out of it all. That was just like Caroline. She always tried to stand between me and the world.

CARLA. She must have been very fond of you.

ANGELA. It wasn't that. (*She touches her scar*) It was because of this.

CARLA. That happened when you were a baby.

ANGELA. Yes. You've heard about it. It's the sort of thing that happens—an older child gets mad with jealousy and chucks something. To a sensitive person, like Caroline, the horror of what she had done never quite

left her. Her whole life was one long effort to make up to me for the way she had injured me. Very bad for *me*, of course.

CARLA. Did you ever feel vindictive about it?

ANGELA. Towards Caroline? Because she had spoiled my beauty? (*She laughs*) I never had much to spoil. No, I never gave it a second thought.

(CARLA picks up her bag from the seat beside her, takes out a letter and hands it to Angela)

CARLA. She left a letter for me—I'd like you to read it.

(There is a pause as ANGELA reads the letter. CARLA stubs out her cigarette)

I'm so confused about her. Everyone seems to have seen her differently.

ANGELA. She had a lot of contradictions in her nature. (*She turns a page and reads*) ". . . want you to know that I did not kill your father." Sensible of her. You might have wondered. (*She folds the letter and puts it on the table*)

CARLA. You mean—you believe she *wasn't* guilty?

ANGELA. Of course she wasn't guilty. Nobody who knew Caroline could have thought for one moment that she was guilty.

CARLA. (*slightly hysterical*) But they do—they all do—except you.

ANGELA. More fool they. Oh, the evidence was damning enough, I grant you, but anybody who knew Caroline well should know that she couldn't commit murder. She hadn't got it in her.

CARLA. What about . . . ?

ANGELA. (*pointing to her scar*) This? How can I explain? (*She stubs out her cigarette*) Because of what she did to me, Caroline was always watching herself for violence. I think she decided that if she was violent in speech she would have no temptation to violence in action. She'd say things like, "I'd like to cut So-and-so in pieces and boil him in oil." Or she'd say to Amyas, "If you go on like this, I shall *murder* you." Amyas and she had the most fantastic quarrels, they said the most outrageous things to each other. They both loved it.

CARLA. They *liked* quarrelling?

ANGELA. Yes. They were that kind of couple. Living that way, with continual rows and makings up, was their idea of fun.

CARLA. (*sitting back*) You make everything sound different. (*She picks up the letter and puts it in her bag*)

ANGELA. If only I could have given evidence. But I suppose the sort of

thing I could have said wouldn't count as evidence. But you needn't worry, Carla. You can go back to Canada and be quite sure that Caroline *didn't* murder Amyas.

CARLA. (*sadly*) But then—who did?

ANGELA. Does it matter?

CARLA. Of course it matters.

ANGELA. (*in a hard voice*) It must have been some kind of accident. Can't you leave it at that?

CARLA. No, I can't.

ANGELA. Why not?

(CARLA does not answer)

Is it a man? (*She sips her brandy*)

CARLA. Well—there is a man, yes.

ANGELA. Are you engaged?

(CARLA, *slightly embarrassed, takes a cigarette from her packet*)

CARLA. I don't know.

ANGELA. He minds about this?

CARLA. (*frowning*) He's very magnanimous.

ANGELA. (*appreciatively*) How bloody! I shouldn't marry him.

CARLA. I'm not sure that I want to.

ANGELA. Another man? (*She lights Carla's cigarette*)

CARLA. (*irritably*) Must everything be a man?

ANGELA. Usually seems to be. I prefer rock paintings.

CARLA. (*suddenly*) I'm going down to Alderbury tomorrow. I want all the people concerned to be there. I wanted you as well.

ANGELA. Not me. I'm sailing tomorrow.

CARLA. I want to re-live it—as though I were my mother and not myself.

(*Strongly*) Why didn't she fight for her life? Why was she so defeatist at her trial?

ANGELA. I don't know.

CARLA. It wasn't like her, was it?

ANGELA. (*slowly*) No, it wasn't like her.

CARLA. It *must* have been one of those four other people.

ANGELA. How persistent you are, Carla.

CARLA. I'll find out the truth in the end.

ANGELA. (*struck by Carla's sincerity*) I almost believe you will. (*She pauses*) I'll come to Alderbury with you. (*She picks up her brandy glass*)

CARLA. (*delighted*) You will? But your boat sails tomorrow.

ANGELA. I'll take a plane instead. Now, are you sure you won't have some brandy? I'm going to have some more if I can catch his eye. (*She calls*) Waiter!

CARLA. I'm so glad you're coming.

ANGELA. (*sombrely*) Are you? Don't hope for too much. Sixteen years. It's a long time ago.

ANGELA *drains her glass as the LIGHTS dim to BLACK-OUT and—*

*the CURTAIN falls*

## Act Two

SCENE—Alderbury, a house in the West of England.

The scene shows a section of the house, with the Garden Room R and the terrace L with communicating french windows between them. The room is at an angle, so that the terrace extends and tapers off below it to R. Doors back C, in the room, and at the upstage end of the terrace, lead to the house. An exit, at the upstage end of a vine-covered pergola L, leads to the garden. There is another door down R in the room. Above this door is a small alcove with shelves for decorative plates and ornaments. A console table stands under the shelves. There is a table L of the door C, on which there is a telephone and a carved wooden head. On the wall above the table is the portrait of Elsa, painted by Amyas. There is a sofa R of the door C, with a long stool in front of it. Armchairs stand R and L, and there is an occasional table L of the armchair R. There is a stone bench C of the terrace.

When the CURTAIN rises, the stage is in darkness, then the LIGHTS come up to show the house shrouded in darkness and the terrace bathed in moonlight. The long stool is on the sofa and both are covered with a dust sheet. The armchairs are also covered with dust sheets. The window curtains are closed. After a few moments, voices are heard off up C.

CARLA. (off) Which way do we go?

MEREDITH. (off) This way, mind that little step. (He is heard to stumble)  
I always used to fall over it.

JUSTIN. (off; stumbling) Good heavens! Shall I leave the door?

MEREDITH. (off) Few things as depressing as an unlived-in house. I do apologize.

(MEREDITH enters up C and the LIGHTS on the room snap up. He wears an overcoat, and has an old fishing hat, pulled down. He moves down R. CARLA follows Meredith on. She wears a loose coat and a head scarf. She moves L. JUSTIN enters last. He carries his bowler hat. He moves down C, turns and looks around the room)

This is what we call the garden room. Cold as a morgue. Looks like a morgue, too, doesn't it? *(He laughs and rubs his hands)* Not that I've ever seen the inside of a—hum . . . I'll just remove these. *(He goes to the sofa and removes the dust sheet)*

JUSTIN. Let me help you. *(He moves to L of the sofa and takes the dust sheet from Meredith)*

*(CARLA moves to the armchair L and removes the dust sheet which she gives to Justin)*

MEREDITH. This bit of the house has been shut up, you see, ever since . . . *(He indicates the long stool on the sofa)* Ah, that's an old friend. *(He takes the stool from the sofa)* Let me see, I think it went somewhere there. *(He places the stool RC)* It's sad, somehow. It was so alive, once, and now it's dead.

*(CARLA sits on the left end of the stool and looks at the portrait)*

CARLA. Is that the picture?

MEREDITH. What? Yes. Girl in a yellow shirt.

CARLA. You left it here?

MEREDITH. Yes. I—somehow couldn't bear to look at it. It reminded me too much . . . *(He recollects himself, crosses to the french windows and opens the curtains)*

CARLA. How she's changed.

MEREDITH. *(turning)* You've seen her?

CARLA. Yes.

MEREDITH. *(crossing to the armchair R and removing the dust sheet)* I haven't seen her for years.

CARLA. She's beautiful still. But not like that. So alive and triumphant—and young. *(She draws a breath and faces front)* It's a wonderful portrait.

MEREDITH. Yes—*(he points L)* and that is where he painted her—out there on the terrace. Well, I'll just dispose of these—*(he takes the dust sheets from Justin)* in the next room, I think.

*(MEREDITH exits R. CARLA rises, goes to the french windows, unlocks them and moves onto the terrace. JUSTIN looks her, then follows and stands on the step just outside the windows)*

CARLA. Justin—do you think this scheme of mine is quite crazy? Jeff thinks I'm mad.



JUSTIN. (*crossing to the exit above the pergola and looking off*) I shouldn't let that worry you.

(MEREDITH enters down R and crosses to the french windows)

CARLA. (*sitting on the bench*) I don't.

MEREDITH. I'll just go and meet the others.

(MEREDITH exits up C)

CARLA. You understand, don't you, just what I want done?

JUSTIN. (*crossing to R*) You want to reconstruct in your mind's eye what happened here sixteen years ago. You want each witness in turn to describe the scene in which they participated. Much of it may be trivial and irrelevant, but you want it in full. (*He moves to her*) Their recollections, of course, will not be exact. In a scene where more than one witness was present, the two accounts may not agree.

CARLA. That might be helpful.

JUSTIN. (*doubtfully*) It might—but you must not build too much on it. People do recollect things differently. (*He moves up stage and looks around*)

CARLA. What I'm going to do is to make believe I see it all happening. I shall imagine my mother and my father . . . (*She suddenly breaks off*) You know, I think my father must have been great fun.

JUSTIN. (*moving behind Carla*) What?

CARLA. I think I should have liked him a lot.

JUSTIN. (*turning and peering off down L; dryly*) Women usually did.

CARLA. It's odd—I feel sorry for Elsa. In that picture in there she looks so young and alive—and now—there's no life left in her. I think it died when my father died.

JUSTIN. (*sitting below Carla on the bench*) Are you casting her as Juliet?

CARLA. You don't?

JUSTIN. No. (*He smiles*) I'm your mother's man.

CARLA. You're very faithful, aren't you? Too faithful, maybe.

(JUSTIN looks at Carla)

JUSTIN. (*after a pause*) I don't really quite know what we're talking about.

CARLA. (*rising; matter-of-fact*) Let's get back to business. Your part is to look hard for discrepancies—flaws—you've got to be very legal and astute.

JUSTIN. Yes, ma'am.



*(Voices of the others arriving can be heard off up C, with MEREDITH greeting them)*

*(He rises)* Here they are.

CARLA. I'll go and meet them.

*(CARLA goes into the room and exits C. The lights slowly dim to BLACK-OUT, JUSTIN moves down L, then a spotlight comes up revealing his face. He acts as compere)*

JUSTIN. Now, are we all ready? I will just impress on you once more why we are all here. We want to reconstruct, as far as we can, the happenings of sixteen years ago. We shall endeavour to do this, by asking each person or persons to recount in turn their own part in what went on, and what they saw, or overheard. This should make an almost continuous picture. Sixteen years ago. We shall start on the afternoon of the sixteenth of August, the day before the tragedy took place, with a conversation that Mr Meredith Blake had with Caroline Crale in the garden room. Out here on the terrace, Elsa Greer was posing for Amyas Crale who was painting her. From that we shall go on to Elsa Greer's narrative, to the arrival of Philip Blake, and so on. Mr Meredith Blake, will you begin?

*(The spotlight fades. MEREDITH's voice can be heard in the darkness)*

MEREDITH. It was the afternoon of the sixteenth of August, did you say? Yes, yes, it was. I came over to Alderbury. Stopped in on my way to Framley Abbott. Really to see if I could pick any of them up later to give them a lift—they were coming over to me for tea. Caroline had been cutting roses, and when I opened the door into the garden room . . .

*(The LIGHTS come up. It is a glorious, hot summer's day. CAROLINE CRALE is standing in the french windows looking on to the terrace. She carries a trug with roses, etc., and wears gardening gloves. On the terrace, ELSA poses on the bench, facing C. She wears a yellow shirt and black shorts. AMYAS CRALE is seated on a stool C, facing L, before his easel, painting Elsa. His paintbox is on the ground below him. He is a big, handsome man, wearing an old shirt and paint-stained slacks. There is a trolley L of the terrace with various bottles and glasses, including a bottle of beer in an ice-bucket. In the room, a landscape now hangs in place of the portrait. MEREDITH enters up C)*

Hullo, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*turning*) Merry! (*She crosses to the stool, puts the trug on it, removes her gloves and puts them in the trug*)

MEREDITH. (*closing the door*) How's the picture going? (*He crosses to the french windows and looks out*) It's a nice pose. (*He moves to L of the stool and takes a rose from the trug*) What have we here? "Ena Harkness." (*He smells the rose*) My word, what a beauty.

CAROLINE. Merry, do you think Amyas really cares for that girl?

MEREDITH. No, no, he's just interested in painting her. You know what Amyas is.

CAROLINE. (*sitting in the armchair R*) This time I'm afraid, Merry. I'm nearly thirty, you know. We've been married over six years, and in looks, I can't hold a candle to Elsa.

MEREDITH. (*replacing the rose in the trug and moving above the stool to L of Caroline*) That's absurd, Caroline. You know that Amyas is really devoted to you and always will be.

CAROLINE. Does one ever know with men?

MEREDITH. (*close to her and bending over her*) I'm still devoted to you, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*affectionately*) Dear Merry. (*She touches his cheek*) You're so sweet.

(*There is a pause*)

I long to take a hatchet to that girl. She's just helping herself to my husband in the coolest manner in the world.

MEREDITH. My dear Caroline, the child probably doesn't realize in the least what she's doing. She's got an enormous admiration and hero worship for Amyas and she probably doesn't understand at all that he's maybe falling in love with her.

(*CAROLINE looks pityingly at him*)

CAROLINE. So there really are people who can believe six impossible things before breakfast.

MEREDITH. I don't understand.

CAROLINE. (*rising and crossing to L of the stool*) You live in a nice world all your own, Merry, where everybody is just as nice as you are. (*She looks at the roses. Cheerfully*) My "Erythina Christo Galli" is in wonderful bloom this year. (*She crosses to the french windows and goes on to the terrace*)

(MEREDITH follows Caroline on to the terrace)

Come and see it before you go into Framley Abbott. (*She crosses to the upstage end of the pergola*)

MEREDITH. Just you wait till you see my "Tecoma Grandiflora". (*He moves to Caroline*) It's magnificent.

(CAROLINE puts her fingers to her lips to quieten Meredith)

CAROLINE. Ssh!

MEREDITH. What? (*He looks through one of the arches of the pergola at Elsa and Amyas*) Oh, man at work.

(CAROLINE and MEREDITH exit by the upstage end of the pergola)

ELSA. (*stretching herself*) I must have a break.

AMYAS. No—no, wait. There—oh, well, if you must.

(ELSA rises)

(*He takes a cigarette from a packet in the paintbox, and lights it*)  
Can't you stay still for more than five minutes?

ELSA. Five minutes! Half an hour. (*She moves down L*) Anyway, I've got to change.

AMYAS. Change? Change what?

ELSA. Change out of this. (*She crosses above Amyas and stands behind him*) We're going out to tea, don't you remember? With Meredith Blake.

AMYAS. (*irritably*) What a damned nuisance. Always something.

ELSA. (*leaning over Amyas and putting her arms around his neck*) Aren't you sociable!

AMYAS. (*looking up at her*) My tastes are simple. (*As though quoting*) A pot of paint, a brush and thou beside me, not able to sit still for five minutes . . .

(*They both laugh. ELSA snatches Amyas' cigarette and straightens up*)

ELSA. (*drawing on the cigarette*) Have you thought about what I said?

AMYAS. (*resuming painting*) What did you say?

ELSA. About Caroline. Telling her about us.

AMYAS. (*easily*) Oh, I shouldn't worry your head about that just yet.

ELSA. But, Amyas . . .

(CAROLINE enters down L)

CAROLINE. Merry's gone into Framley Abbott for something, but he's coming back here. (*She crosses below the bench towards the french windows*) I must change.

AMYAS. (*without looking at her*) You look all right.

CAROLINE. I must do something about my hands, they're filthy. I've been gardening. Are you going to change, Elsa?

(*ELSA returns the cigarette to Amyas*)

ELSA. (*insolently*) Yes. (*She moves to the french windows*)

(*PHILIP enters up c*)

CAROLINE. (*moving into the room*) Philip! The train must have been on time for once.

(*ELSA comes into the room*)

This is Meredith's brother Philip—Miss Greer.

ELSA. Hullo. I'm off to change.

(*ELSA crosses and exits up c*)

CAROLINE. Well, Philip, good journey? (*She kisses him*)

PHILIP. Not too bad. How are you all?

CAROLINE. Oh—fine. (*She gestures towards the terrace*) Amyas is out there on the terrace. I must clean up, forgive me. We're going over to Merry's to tea.

(*CAROLINE smiles and exits up c. PHILIP closes the door after her, then wanders on to the terrace and stands in front of the bench*)

AMYAS. (*looking up and smiling*) Hullo, Phil. Good to see you. What a summer. Best we've had for years.

PHILIP. (*crossing below Amyas to r*) Can I look?

AMYAS. Yes. I'm on the last lap.

PHILIP. (*looking at the painting*) Wow!

AMYAS. (*stutting out his cigarette*) Like it? Not that you're any judge, you old Philistine.

PHILIP. I buy pictures quite often.

AMYAS. (*looking up at him*) As an investment? To get in on the ground floor? Because somebody tells you So-and-so is an up-and-coming man? (*He grins*) I know you, you old money hog. Anyway, you can't buy this. It's not for sale.

PHILIP. She's quite something.

AMYAS. (*looking at the portrait*) She certainly is. (*Suddenly serious*) Sometimes I wish I'd never seen her.

PHILIP. (*taking a cigarette from his case*) D'you remember when you first told me you were painting her? "No personal interest in her," you said. Remember what I said? (*He grins*) "Tell that to the Marines."

AMYAS. (*overlapping*) "Tell that to the Marines." All right—all right. So you were clever, you cold-blooded old fish. (*He rises, crosses to the trolley, takes the bottle of beer from the ice-bucket, and opens it*) Why don't you get yourself a woman? (*He pours the beer*)

PHILIP. No time for 'em. (*He lights his cigarette*) And if I were you, Amyas, I wouldn't get tied up with any more.

AMYAS. It's all very well for you to talk. I just can't leave women alone. (*He grins suddenly*)

PHILIP. How about Caroline? Is she cutting up rough?

AMYAS. What do you think? (*He takes his glass, crosses to the bench and sits on the downstage end*) Thank the Lord you've turned up, Phil. Living in this house with four women on your neck is enough to drive any man to the loony bin.

PHILIP. Four?

AMYAS. There's Caroline being bloody to Elsa in a well-bred, polite sort of way. Elsa, being just plain bloody to Caroline.

(*PHILIP sits on the easel stool*)

There's Angela, hating my guts because at last I've persuaded Caroline to send her to boarding-school. She ought to have gone years ago. She's a nice kid, really, but Caroline spoils her, and she's inclined to run wild. She put a hedgehog in my bed last week.

(*PHILIP laughs*)

Oh, yes, very funny—but you wait till you ram your feet down on a lot of ruddy prickles. And then lastly, but not leastly, there's the governess. Hates me like poison. Sits there at meals with her lips set together, oozing disapproval.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*off; down L*) Angela, you must get changed.

ANGELA. (*off*) Oh, I'm all right.

PHILIP. They seem to have got you down a bit.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*off*) You're not all right. You can't go out to tea with Mr Blake in those jeans.

AMYAS. *Nil desperandum!* (*He drinks*)

(ANGELA enters down L)

ANGELA (*as she enters*) Merry wouldn't mind. (*She crosses to Philip and pulls him to his feet*) Hullo, Philip.

(MISS WILLIAMS enters down L and crosses above the bench to the french windows)

MISS WILLIAMS. Good afternoon, Mr Blake. I hope you had a good journey down from London?

PHILIP. Quite good, thank you.

(MISS WILLIAMS goes into the room, sees the trug on the stool, picks it up, returns to the terrace and exits by the garden door up L)

ANGELA. (*crossing to L of Amyas*) You've got paint on your ear.

AMYAS. (*rubbing a painty hand on his other ear*) Eh?

ANGELA. (*delighted*) Now you've got paint on both ears. He can't go out to tea like that, can he?

AMYAS. I'll go out to tea with ass's ears if I like.

ANGELA. (*putting her arms around Amyas's neck from behind and mocking him*) Amyas is an ass! Amyas is an ass!

AMYAS. (*chanting*) Amyas is an ass.

(MISS WILLIAMS enters up L and moves to the french windows)

MISS WILLIAMS. Come along, Angela.

(ANGELA jumps over the bench and runs to the easel)

ANGELA. You and your stupid painting. (*Vindictively*) I'm going to write "Amyas is an ass" all over your picture in scarlet paint. (*She bends down, grabs a brush and proceeds to rub it in the red paint on the palette*)

(AMYAS rises quickly, puts his glass downstage of the bench, crosses to ANGELA and grabs her hand before she has time to damage the picture)

AMYAS. If you ever tamper with any picture of mine—(*seriously*) I'll kill you. Remember that. (*He picks up a piece of rag and cleans the brush*)

ANGELA. You're just like Caroline—she's always saying, "I'll kill you" to people—but she never does, why, she won't even kill wasps. (*Sulkily*) I wish you'd hurry up and finish painting Elsa—then she'd go away.

PHILIP. Don't you like her?



ANGELA. (*snappily*) No. I think she's a terrible bore. (*She crosses to L and turns*) I can't imagine why Amyas has her here.

(*PHILIP and AMYAS exchange looks. AMYAS crosses to Angela*)

I suppose she's paying you a terrible lot of money for painting her, is she, Amyas?

AMYAS. (*putting his arm around Angela's shoulders and guiding her towards the french windows*) Go and finish your packing. Four-fifteen train tomorrow, and good riddance. (*He gives her a playful shove and turns down stage*)

(*ANGELA hits AMYAS on the back. He turns and collapses on the bench, and she pommels his chest*)

ANGELA. I hate you—I hate you. Caroline would never have sent me away to school if it wasn't for you.

PHILIP. Mind the beer. (*He crosses to the bench, picks up the glass and puts it on the trolley*)

ANGELA. You just want to get rid of me. You wait—I'll get even with you—I'll—I'll . . .

MISS WILLIAMS. (*with sharp authority*) Angela! Angela, come along.

ANGELA. (*near to tears; sulkily*) Oh, all right. (*She runs into the room*)

(*MISS WILLIAMS follows Angela into the room. ELSA enters up c. She has changed into a dress and looks ravishing. ANGELA gives Elsa a venomous look and runs out up c. MISS WILLIAMS follows Angela off, and closes the door*)

AMYAS. (*sitting up*) Wham! Why didn't you stand up for me? I'm black and blue.

PHILIP. (*leaning against the downstage end of the pergola*) Black and blue? You're all the colours of the rainbow.

(*ELSA wanders on to the terrace and moves down c, beside the easel*)

You've got enough paint on you to . . . (*He breaks off as he sees Elsa*)

AMYAS. Hullo, Elsa. All dolled up? You'll knock poor old Merry all of a heap.

PHILIP. (*dryly*) Yes—I—I've been admiring the picture. (*He crosses below the easel to R of it and looks at the portrait*)

ELSA. I shall be glad when it's finished. I loathe having to sit still. Amyas



grunts and sweats and bites his brushes and doesn't hear you when you speak to him.

AMYAS. (*playfully*) All models should have their tongues cut out.

(*ELSA crosses and sits below Amyas on the bench*)

(*He looks appraisingly at her*) Anyway, you can't walk across the fields to Merry's in those shoes.

ELSA. (*turning her foot this way and that; demurely*) I shan't need to. He's coming to fetch me in his car.

AMYAS. Preferential treatment, eh? (*He grins*) You've certainly got old Merry going. How do you do it, you little devil?

ELSA. (*playfully*) I don't know what you mean.

(*AMYAS and ELSA are immersed in each other. PHILIP crosses to the french windows*)

PHILIP. (*as he passes them*) I'll go and have a wash.

AMYAS. (*not hearing Philip; to Elsa*) Yes, you do. You know damn well what I mean. (*He moves to kiss Elsa's ear, realizes Philip has said something and turns to him*) What?

PHILIP. (*quietly*) A wash.

(*PHILIP goes into the room and exits up C, closing the door behind him*)

AMYAS. (*laughing*) Good old Phil.

ELSA. (*rising and crossing below the easel to R*) You're very fond of him, aren't you?

AMYAS. Known him all my life. He's a great guy.

ELSA. (*turning and looking at the portrait*) I don't think it's a bit like me.

AMYAS. Don't pretend you've any artistic judgement, Elsa. (*He rises*) You know nothing at all.

ELSA. (*quite pleased*) How rude you are. Are you going out to tea with all that paint on your face?

(*AMYAS crosses to the paintbox, takes up a piece of rag and moves to Elsa*)

AMYAS. Here, clean me off a bit.

(*ELSA takes the rag and rubs his face*)

Don't put the turps in my eye.

ELSA. Well, hold still. (*After a second she puts both her arms around his waist*) Who do you love?

AMYAS. (*not moving; quietly*) Caroline's room faces this way—so does Angela's.

ELSA. I want to talk to you about Caroline.

AMYAS. (*taking the rag and sitting on the stool*) Not now. I'm not in the mood.

ELSA. It's no good putting it off. She's got to know *sometime*, hasn't she?

AMYAS. (*grinning*) We could go off Victorian fashion and leave a note on her pin-cushion.

ELSA. (*moving between Amyas and the easel*) I believe that's just what you'd like to do. But we've got to be absolutely fair and aboveboard about the whole thing.

AMYAS. Hoity-toity!

ELSA. Oh, do be serious.

AMYAS. I *am* serious. I don't want a lot of fuss and scenes and hysterics. Now, mind yourself. (*He pushes her gently aside*)

ELSA. (*moving R*) I don't see why there should be scenes and hysterics. Caroline should have too much dignity and pride for that. (*She pivots around*)

AMYAS. (*absorbed in painting*) Should she? You don't know Caroline.

ELSA. When a marriage has gone wrong, it's only sensible to face the fact calmly.

AMYAS. (*turning to look at her*) Advice from our marriage counsellor. Caroline loves me and she'll kick up the hell of a row.

ELSA. (*moving down R*) If she *really* loved you, she'd want you to be happy.

AMYAS. (*grinning*) With somebody else? She'll probably poison you and stick a knife into me.

ELSA. Don't be ridiculous!

AMYAS. (*wiping his hands and nodding at the picture*) Well, that's that. Nothing doing until tomorrow morning. (*He drops the rag, rises and moves to Elsa*) Lovely, lovely Elsa. (*He takes her face in his hands*) What a lot of bloody nonsense you talk. (*He kisses her*)

(ANGELA rushes in up C, runs on to the terrace and exits down L. ELSA and AMYAS break apart. MISS WILLIAMS enters up C, goes on to the terrace and looks off L)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*calling*) Angela!

AMYAS. (*crossing down L*) She went this-a-way. Shall I catch her for you?

MISS WILLIAMS. (*moving down LC*) No, it's all right. She'll come back of

her own accord as soon as she sees nobody is paying any attention to her.

(ELSA goes into the room, picks up a magazine from the sofa and sits in the armchair R)

AMYAS. There's something in that.

MISS WILLIAMS. She's young for her age, you know. Growing up is a difficult business. Angela is at the prickly stage.

AMYAS. (*moving up L*) Don't talk to me of prickles. Reminds me too much of that ruddy hedgehog.

MISS WILLIAMS. That was very naughty of Angela.

AMYAS. (*moving to the french windows*) Sometimes I wonder how you can stick her.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*turning to face Amyas*) I can see ahead. Angela will be a fine woman one day, and a distinguished one.

AMYAS. I still say Caroline spoils her. (*He goes into the room and crosses to C of it*)

(MISS WILLIAMS moves to the french windows and listens)

ELSA. (*in a whisper*) Did she see us?

AMYAS. Who can say? I suppose I've got lipstick on my face now as well as paint.

(AMYAS glances off L and exits quickly up C. MISS WILLIAMS comes into the room and moves above the stool, uncertain whether to go or not. She decides to stay)

MISS WILLIAMS. You haven't been over to Mr Blake's house yet, have you, Miss Greer?

ELSA. (*flatly*) No.

MISS WILLIAMS. It's a delightful walk there. You can go by the shore or through the woods.

(CAROLINE and PHILIP enter up C. CAROLINE glances around the room, then goes to the french windows and looks on to the terrace. PHILIP closes the door and looks at the carved head on the table up LC)

CAROLINE. Are we all ready? Amyas has gone to clean the paint off himself.

ELSA. He needn't. Artists aren't like other people.

(CAROLINE pays no attention to Elsa)

CAROLINE. (*moving to the armchair L; to Philip*) You haven't been down here since Merry started on his lily pond, have you, Phil? (*She sits*)

PHILIP. Don't think so.

ELSA. People in the country talk of nothing but their gardens.

(*There is a pause. CAROLINE takes her spectacles from her handbag and puts them on. PHILIP looks at Elsa, and then sits on the stool facing the head*)

CAROLINE. (*to Miss Williams*) Did you ring up the vet about Toby?

MISS WILLIAMS. Yes, Mrs Crale. He'll come first thing tomorrow.

CAROLINE. (*to Philip*) Do you like that head, Phil? Amyas bought it last month.

PHILIP. Yes. It's good.

CAROLINE. (*searching in her handbag for her cigarettes*) It's the work of a young Norwegian sculptor, Amyas thinks very highly of him. We're thinking of going over to Norway next year to visit him.

ELSA. That doesn't seem to me very likely.

CAROLINE. Doesn't it, Elsa? Why?

ELSA. You know very well.

CAROLINE. (*lightly*) How very cryptic. Miss Williams, would you mind—my cigarette case—(*she indicates the table RC*) it's on that little table.

(*MISS WILLIAMS goes to the table RC, picks up the cigarette case, opens it and offers a cigarette to Caroline. PHILIP takes out his cigarettes, rises and offers them to Caroline*)

(*She takes a cigarette from her own case*) I prefer these—do you mind?

(*MISS WILLIAMS moves to the table up LC and puts the case on it. PHILIP lights Caroline's cigarette, then takes one of his own and lights it*)

ELSA. (*rising and moving below the stool*) This would be quite a good room if it was properly fixed. All this litter of old-fashioned stuff cleared out.

(*There is a pause. PHILIP looks at Elsa*)

CAROLINE. We like it as it is. It holds a lot of memories.

ELSA. (*loudly and aggressively*) When I'm living here I shall throw all this rubbish out.

(*PHILIP crosses to Elsa and offers her a cigarette*)

No, thank you.

(*PHILIP crosses to R*)

Flame-coloured curtains, I think—and one of those French wall-papers. (*To Philip*) Don't you think that would be rather striking?

CAROLINE. (*evenly*) Are you thinking of buying Alderbury, Elsa?

ELSA. It won't be necessary for me to buy it.

CAROLINE. What do you mean?

ELSA. Must we pretend? (*She moves C*) Come now, Caroline, you know perfectly well what I mean.

CAROLINE. I assure you I've no idea.

ELSA. (*aggressively*) Oh, don't be such an ostrich, burying your head in the sand and pretending you don't know all about it. (*She turns, moves to R of the stool, tosses the magazine on to the armchair R and moves up R*) Amyas and I love each other. It's his house, not yours.

(*ANGELA runs on down L, crosses to the french windows, stops outside and listens. PHILIP and MISS WILLIAMS are frozen*)

And after we're married I shall live here with him.

CAROLINE. (*angrily*) I think you must be crazy.

ELSA. Oh, no, I'm not. (*She sits on the sofa at the left end*) It will be much simpler if we're honest about it. There's only one decent thing for you to do—give him his freedom.

CAROLINE. Don't talk nonsense!

ELSA. Nonsense, is it? Ask *him*.

(*AMYAS enters up C. ANGELA, unseen, exits by the door up L*)

CAROLINE. I will. Amyas, Elsa says you want to marry her. Is it true?

AMYAS. (*after a slight pause; to Elsa*) Why the devil couldn't you hold your tongue?

CAROLINE. Is it true?

(*AMYAS, leaving the door open, crosses to the armchair R, picks up the magazine and sits*)

AMYAS. We don't have to talk about it now. (*He looks at the magazine*)

CAROLINE. But we are going to talk about it now.

ELSA. It's only fair to Caroline to tell her the truth.

CAROLINE. (*icily*) I don't think you need bother about being fair to me. (*She rises and crosses to Amyas*) Is it true, Amyas?

(AMYAS looks hunted and glances from Elsa to Caroline)

AMYAS. (to Philip) Women.

CAROLINE. (furiously) Is it true?

AMYAS. (defiantly) All right. It's true enough.

(ELSA rises, triumphant)

But I don't want to talk about it now.

ELSA. You see? It's no good your adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude. These things happen. It's nobody's fault. One just has to be rational about it. (She sits on the stool, facing up stage) You and Amyas will always be good friends, I hope.

CAROLINE. (crossing to the door up c) Good friends! Over his dead body.

ELSA. What do you mean?

CAROLINE. (turning in the open doorway) I mean that I'd kill Amyas before I'd give him up to you.

(CAROLINE exits up c. There is a frozen silence. MISS WILLIAMS sees Caroline's bag on the armchair L, picks it up and exits hurriedly up c)

AMYAS. (rising and crossing to the french windows) Now you've done it. We'll have scenes and ructions and God knows what.

ELSA. (rising) She had to know some time.

AMYAS. (moving on to the terrace) She needn't have known till the picture was finished.

(ELSA moves to the french windows)

(He stands behind the bench) How the hell can a man paint with a lot of women buzzing about his ears like wasps.

ELSA. You think nothing's important but your painting.

AMYAS. (shouting) Nothing is to me.

ELSA. Well, I think it matters to be honest about things.

(ELSA rushes angrily out up c. AMYAS comes into the room)

AMYAS. Give me a cigarette, Phil.

(PHILIP offers his cigarettes and AMYAS takes one)

(He sits astride the stool) Women are all alike. Revel in scenes. Why the devil couldn't she hold her tongue? I've got to finish that picture, Phil. It's the best thing I've ever done. And a couple of damn women



want to muck it up between them. (*He takes out his matches and lights his cigarette*)

PHILIP. Suppose she refuses to give you a divorce?

AMYAS. (*abstracted*) What?

PHILIP. I said—suppose Caroline refuses to divorce you. Suppose she digs her toes in.

AMYAS. Oh, that. Caroline would never be vindictive. (*He tosses the spent match out of the french windows*) You don't understand, old boy.

PHILIP. And the child. There's the child to consider.

AMYAS. Look, Phil, I know you mean well, but don't go on croaking like a raven, I can manage my own affairs. Everything will turn out all right, you'll see.

PHILIP. Optimist!

(*MEREDITH enters up C, closing the door behind him*)

MEREDITH. (*cheerily*) Hullo, Phil. Just got down from London? (*To Amyas*) Hope you haven't forgotten you're all coming over to me this afternoon. I've got the car here. I thought Caroline and Elsa might prefer it to walking this hot weather. (*He crosses to LC*)

AMYAS. (*rising*) Not Caroline and Elsa. If Caroline drives Elsa will walk, and if Elsa rides, Caroline will walk. Take your pick. (*He goes on to the terrace, sits on the stool and busies himself with painting*)

MEREDITH. (*startled*) What's the matter with him? Something happened?

PHILIP. It's just come out.

MEREDITH. What?

PHILIP. Elsa broke the news to Caroline that she and Amyas planned to marry. (*Maliciously*) Quite a shock for Caroline.

MEREDITH. No! You're joking!

(*PHILIP shrugs, moves to the armchair R, picks up the magazine, sits and reads*)

(*He goes on to the terrace and turns to Amyas*) Amyas! You—this—it can't be true?

AMYAS. I don't know yet what you're talking about. What can't be true?

MEREDITH. You and Elsa. Caroline . . .

AMYAS. (*cleaning his brush*) Oh, that.

MEREDITH. Look here, Amyas, you can't just for the sake of a sudden infatuation, break up your whole married life. I know Elsa's very attractive . . .

AMYAS. (*grinning*) So you've noticed that, have you?

MEREDITH. (*crossing below Amyas to R; much concerned*) I can quite understand a girl like Elsa bowling any man over, yes, but think of *her*—she's very young, you know. She might regret it bitterly later on. Can't you pull yourself together? For little Carla's sake? Make a clean break here and now, and go back to your wife.

(AMYAS *looks up thoughtfully*)

(*He crosses to the bench and turns*) Believe me, it's the right thing. I know it.

AMYAS. (*after a pause; quietly*) You're a good chap, Merry. But you're too sentimental.

MEREDITH. Look at the position you've put Caroline in by having the girl down here.

AMYAS. Well, I wanted to paint her.

MEREDITH. (*angrily*) Oh, damn your pictures!

AMYAS. (*hotly*) All the neurotic women in England can't do that.

MEREDITH. (*sitting on the bench*) It's disgraceful the way you've always treated Caroline. She's had a miserable life with you.

AMYAS. I know—I know. I've given Caroline one hell of a life—and she's been a saint about it. (*He rises and moves down R*) But she always knew what she was letting herself in for. Right from the start I told her what an egotistic loose-living bastard I was. (*He turns*) But this is different.

MEREDITH. (*quickly*) This is the first time you've brought a woman into the house and flaunted her in Caroline's face.

AMYAS. (*crossing to the trolley*) What you don't seem to understand, Meredith, is that when I'm painting, nothing else matters—least of all a pair of jealous, quarrelling women. (*He turns to the trolley and picks up the glass of beer*)

(ANGELA *enters by the door up L and moves slowly to easel. She is now clean and tidy, in a cotton frock*)

Don't worry, Merry, everything's going to be all right, you'll see. (*He sips the beer*) Oh, it's warm. (*He turns and sees Angela*) Hullo, Angy, you're looking remarkably clean and tidy.

ANGELA. (*abstracted*) Oh—yes. (*She crosses to Amyas*) Amyas, why does Elsa say she's going to marry you? She couldn't. People can't have two wives. It's bigamy. (*Confidentially*) You can go to prison for it.

(AMYAS glances at Meredith, puts his glass on the trolley, puts an arm around Angela's shoulder and leads her to RC)

AMYAS. Now, where did you hear that?

ANGELA. I was out here. I heard it through the window.

AMYAS. (*sitting on the stool by the easel*) Then it's time you got out of the habit of eavesdropping.

(ELSA enters up C with her bag and gloves, which she puts on the table up LC)

ANGELA. (*hurt and indignant*) I wasn't—I couldn't help hearing. Why did Elsa say that?

AMYAS. It was a kind of joke, darling.

(CAROLINE enters by the door up L and moves down L)

CAROLINE. It's time we started. Those of us who are going to walk.

MEREDITH. (*rising*) I'll drive you.

CAROLINE. I'd rather walk.

(ELSA comes on to the terrace)

Take Elsa in the car. (*She crosses below Amyas to Angela*)

ELSA. (*moving to R of Meredith*) Don't you grow herbs and all sorts of exciting things?

CAROLINE. (*to Angela*) That's better. You won't be able to wear jeans at school, you know.

ANGELA. (*crossing angrily down L*) School! I wish you wouldn't keep on about school.

MEREDITH. (*continuing to Elsa*) I make cordials and potions. I have my own little laboratory.

ELSA. It sounds fascinating. You must show me.

(CAROLINE crosses to Angela, looking at Elsa on the way. She straightens Angela's pig-tails)

MEREDITH. I shall probably deliver a lecture. I'm terribly enthusiastic about my hobby.

ELSA. Doesn't one pick certain herbs by the light of the moon?

CAROLINE. (*to Angela*) You'll like school, you know, once you get there.

MEREDITH. (*to Elsa*) That was the old-fashioned superstition.

ELSA. You don't go as far as that?

MEREDITH. No.

ELSA. Are they *dangerous*?

MEREDITH. Some of them are.

CAROLINE. (*turning*) Sudden death in a little bottle. Belladonna. Hemlock.

(ANGELA runs between Elsa and Meredith and puts her arms around his waist)

ANGELA. You read us something once—about Socrates—and how he died.

MEREDITH. Yes, conine—the active principle of hemlock.

ANGELA. It was wonderful. It made me want to learn Greek.

(*They all laugh. AMYAS rises and picks up his paintbox*)

AMYAS. We've talked enough. Let's get started. (*He moves towards the door up L*) Where's Phil? (*He glances in the french windows and calls*) Phil.

PHILIP. Coming.

(AMYAS exits by the door up L. PHILIP rises and puts down the magazine. ELSA goes into the room and collects her gloves and bag)

ANGELA. (*moving to R of Caroline*) Caroline—(*she whispers anxiously*) it isn't possible, is it, for Elsa to marry Amyas?

(CAROLINE replies calmly, overheard only by MEREDITH)

CAROLINE. Amyas will only marry Elsa after I am dead.

ANGELA. Good. It was a joke.

(ANGELA runs off down L)

MEREDITH. (*moving to R of Caroline*) Caroline—my dear—I can't tell you

. . .

CAROLINE. Don't . . . Everything's finished—I'm finished . . .

(PHILIP comes on to the terrace)

PHILIP. The lady's waiting to be driven.

MEREDITH. (*slightly at a loss*) Oh.

(MEREDITH goes into the room and escorts ELSA off up C. MISS WILLIAMS enters up C and looks off after Meredith and Elsa. She stands in the room, uncertain for a moment, then goes to the french windows and overhears the last of the conversation between Philip and Caroline)

CAROLINE. (*to Philip; brightly*) We'll go by the wood path, shall we?

PHILIP. (*moving to R of CAROLINE*) Caroline—is it in order for me to offer my condolences?

CAROLINE. Don't.

PHILIP. Perhaps you realize, now, that you made a mistake.

CAROLINE. When I married him?

PHILIP. Yes.

CAROLINE. (*looking Philip straight in the eye*) However it may turn out—I made no mistake. (*She resumes her light manner*) Let's go.

(CAROLINE exits down L. PHILIP follows her off. MISS WILLIAMS comes on to the terrace)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*calling*) Mrs Crale. (*She moves below the bench*) Mrs Crale.

(CAROLINE re-enters down L)

CAROLINE. Yes, Miss Williams?

MISS WILLIAMS. I'm going into the village. Shall I post the letters that are on your desk?

CAROLINE. (*turning to go*) Oh, yes, please. I forgot them.

MISS WILLIAMS. Mrs Crale---

(CAROLINE turns)

—if I could do anything—anything at all to help . . .

CAROLINE. (*quickly*) Please. We must go on as usual—just behave as usual.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*fervently*) I think you're wonderful.

CAROLINE. Oh, no, I'm not. (*She moves to L. of Miss Williams*) Dear Miss Williams. (*She kisses her*) You've been such a comfort to me.

(CAROLINE exits quickly down L. MISS WILLIAMS looks after her, then sees the empty beer bottle and glass on the trolley. She picks up the bottle, looks at it for a moment, and then looks off after Caroline. She puts the bottle in the ice-bucket, picks up the ice-bucket and glass and crosses below the bench to the french windows. As she does do, the lights slowly dim to BLACK-OUT. A spotlight comes up on Justin down L)

JUSTIN. We come now to the next morning, the morning of the seventeenth. Miss Williams?

(*The spotlight fades, MISS WILLIAMS' voice can be heard in the darkness*)

MISS WILLIAMS. I'd been going through Angela's school list with Mrs Crale. She looked tired and unhappy but she was very composed. The telephone rang, and I went into the garden room to answer it.

*(The LIGHTS come up. A clean glass and a fresh bottle of beer, not in an ice-bucket, is on the trolley. PHILIP is seated on the bench on the terrace reading a Sunday paper. The telephone rings. MISS WILLIAMS enters up C, goes to the telephone and lifts the receiver. She carries a school list. CAROLINE follows Miss Williams on, with her spectacles in her hand. She looks towards the telephone, then crosses wearily above the stool to the armchair R and sits)*

*(Into the telephone)* Yes? . . . Oh, good morning, Mr Blake . . . Yes, he's here. *(She looks through the french windows to Philip and calls)* Mr Blake, it's your brother, he'd like to have a word with you. *(She holds out the receiver)*

*(PHILIP rises, folds his paper, tucks it under his arm, comes into the room and takes the receiver)*

PHILIP. *(into the telephone)* Hullo, Philip here . . .

MISS WILLIAMS. *(crossing above the stool to R of it; to Caroline)* That completes the school list, Mrs Crale. I wonder if you would like to give it a final check? *(She sits on the right end of the stool)*

CAROLINE. *(taking the list)* Let me see. *(She puts on her spectacles and studies the list)*

PHILIP. *(into the telephone)* What? . . . What do you say? . . . Good Lord—are you sure? . . . *(He looks round at Caroline and Miss Williams)* Well, I can't talk now . . . Yes, better come along here. I'll meet you . . . Yes—we'll talk it over—discuss what's best to be done . . .

CAROLINE. *(to Miss Williams)* What about these?

MISS WILLIAMS. *(looking at the list)* Those items are optional.

PHILIP. *(into the telephone)* No, I can't, now—it's difficult . . . You are sure? Yes, but you're a bit vague sometimes. It could have got mislaid . . . All right—if you're sure . . . Be seeing you. *(He replaces the receiver, gives a worried look at the others, goes on to the terrace and paces up and down)*

CAROLINE. *(giving the list to Miss Williams)* I do hope I'm doing the right thing about Angela. *(She removes her spectacles)*

MISS WILLIAMS. I think you can be quite certain of that, Mrs Crale.

CAROLINE. I want so terribly to do what's best for her. You know why.



MISS WILLIAMS. Believe me, you have nothing to reproach yourself with where Angela is concerned.

CAROLINE. I—disfigured her for life. She'll always have that scar.

(PHILIP looks off L through the pergola)

MISS WILLIAMS. One cannot alter the past.

(PHILIP exits up L, above the pergola)

CAROLINE. No. It taught me what a wicked temper I have. I've been on my guard ever since. But you *do* see, don't you, why I've always spoilt her a little?

MISS WILLIAMS. School life will suit her. She needs the contacts of other minds—minds of her own age. (*She rises*) You're doing the right thing—I'm sure of that. (*In a business-like way*) I'd better get on with her packing—I don't know whether she wants to take any books with her.

(MISS WILLIAMS exits up C, closing the door behind her. CAROLINE sinks wearily back into her chair. PHILIP enters down L and stands looking off L. AMYAS enters by the door up L, carrying his paintbox)

AMYAS. (*to Philip; irritably*) Where is that girl? (*He moves to his stool*) Why can't she get up in the morning.

(PHILIP, looking off L, does not answer)

(*He sits, puts his paintbox on the ground beside him and arranges his gear*) Have you seen her, Phil? What's the matter with you? Has nobody given you any breakfast?

PHILIP. (*turning*) Eh? Oh, yes, of course. I—I'm waiting for Merry. He's coming over. (*He looks at his watch*) I wonder which way he'll come—I forgot to ask him. Upper or lower path. I could go along and meet him.

AMYAS. Lower path's the shorter one. (*He rises and goes into the room*) Where the devil is that girl? (*To Caroline*) Have you seen Elsa? (*He goes to the door up C*)

CAROLINE. I don't think she's up yet.

(AMYAS is about to open the door)

Amyas, come here, I want to talk to you.

AMYAS. (*opening the door*) Not now.

CAROLINE. (*firmly*) Yes, now.

(AMYAS looks sheepish, but closes the door. PHILIP moves below the bench.  
ELSA enters down L, dressed in shorts and shirt)

PHILIP. (to Elsa) You're late on parade. You look on top of the world this morning.

ELSA. (radiant) Do I? I feel it.

(PHILIP exits down L. ELSA goes to the bench and sits facing the pergola, basking in the sun)

AMYAS. (moving above the stool) Caroline, I've told you I don't want to discuss this. I'm sorry Elsa blew her top. I told her not to.

CAROLINE. You didn't want a scene until you'd finished your picture, is that it?

AMYAS. (moving to Caroline) Thank the Lord you understand.

CAROLINE. I understand you very well.

(ELSA swings her legs over the bench and faces front. After a moment she hears raised voices, rises and goes to the french windows to listen)

AMYAS. Good. (He bends down to kiss Caroline)

(CAROLINE ducks aside, rises and crosses below Amyas to the stool)

CAROLINE. I may understand, but that doesn't mean that I'm taking this lying down. (She turns to him) Do you really mean you want to marry this girl?

AMYAS. (moving to her) Darling, I'm very fond of you—and of the child. You know that. I always shall be. (Roughly) But you've got to understand this. I'm damned well going to marry Elsa and nothing shall stop me.

CAROLINE. (facing front) I wonder.

AMYAS. (moving up R of the stool) If you won't divorce me, we'll live together and she can take the name of Crale by deed poll.

(PHILIP enters down L, sees ELSA listening, and unseen, lounges against the downstage pillar of the pergola)

CAROLINE. You've thought it all out, haven't you?

AMYAS. (moving R) I love Elsa—and I mean to have her.

CAROLINE. (trembling) Do as you please—I'm warning you.

AMYAS. (turning) What do you mean by that?

CAROLINE. (turning suddenly on him) I mean you're mine—and I don't mean to let you go.

(AMYAS moves to Caroline)

Sooner than let you go to that girl, I'll . . .

AMYAS. Caroline, don't be a fool.

CAROLINE. (*near to tears*) You and your women! You don't deserve to live.

AMYAS. (*trying to embrace her*) Caroline . . .

CAROLINE. I mean it. (*She pushes him away*) Don't touch me. (*She crosses to the door down R in tears*) It's too cruel—it's too cruel.

AMYAS. Caroline . . .

(CAROLINE exits down R. AMYAS gives a hopeless gesture, turns and crosses towards the french windows. ELSA turns quickly away, sees Philip and quickly looks nonchalant)

(*He goes on the terrace*) Oh, there you are at last. (*He moves to his stool and sits*) What do you mean by wasting half the morning? Get into the pose.

ELSA. (*looking at Amyas over the top of the easel*) I'll have to get a pullover. It's quite a chilly wind.

AMYAS. Oh, no, you don't. It'll change all the tones of the skin.

ELSA. I've got a yellow one like this shirt—and, anyway, you're painting my hands this morning, you said so.

(ELSA pouts and runs off by the door up L)

AMYAS. (*shouting after Elsa*) You don't know what I'm painting. Only I know that. Oh, hell! (*He squeezes paint from a tube on to his palette and mixes the paint*)

PHILIP. Trouble with Caroline?

AMYAS. (*looking up*) Heard some of it, did you?

(PHILIP crosses below Amyas to R)

I knew just what would happen. Elsa had to open her big mouth. Caroline gets hysterical and won't listen to reason.

PHILIP. (*turning*) Poor Caroline! (*He does not say it with pity, instead there is trace of satisfaction in his tone*)

(AMYAS looks sharply at Philip)

AMYAS. Caroline is all right. Don't waste your pity on her.

PHILIP. (*crossing to LC*) Amyas, you're incredible. I don't know that I'd really blame Caroline if she took a hatchet to you.

AMYAS. (*irritably*) Do stop pacing, Phil. You're putting me off. I thought you were going to meet Merry.

PHILIP. (*moving to the upstage end of the pergola*) I was afraid of missing him.

AMYAS. What's the big hurry? You saw him yesterday.

PHILIP. (*crossly*) Since I seem to annoy you, I'll take myself off.

(*PHILIP exits up L, above the pergola. ELSA enters by the door up L, with a pullover draped over her arm*)

AMYAS. (*looking up*) At last! Now, get me some beer, will you, I'm thirsty. What on earth you want with a pullover on a day like this I don't know. I'm boiling. You'll be wanting snow boots next, and a hot-water bottle to sit on.

(*ELSA drops her pullover on the bench, goes to the trolley and pours a glass of beer*)

(*He rises, goes down R, turns and looks at his painting*) This is the best thing I've ever done. (*He moves to the painting and bends down to it*) Do you think Da Vinci knew what he'd done when he'd finished La Giaconda?

(*ELSA crosses with the glass of beer and holds it out over the easel*)

ELSA. La—what?

AMYAS. (*taking the glass*) La Gia—the Mona Lisa, you ignorant bitch—oh, never mind. (*He drinks*) Pah! It's warm. Isn't there a bucket of ice?

ELSA. (*sitting on the bench*) No. (*She takes up her pose*)

AMYAS. Somebody's always forgetting something. (*He crosses above the bench and looks off L*) I loathe hot beer. (*He calls*) Hi, Angela!

ANGELA. (*off L; calling*) What?

AMYAS. Go and get me a bottle of beer from the refrigerator.

(*ANGELA enters down L*)

ANGELA. Why should I?

AMYAS. Common humanity. (*He crosses to his stool*) Come on, now, be a sport.

ANGELA. Oh, all right.

(*ANGELA sticks her tongue out at Amyas and runs off by the door up L*)

AMYAS. Charming little girl. (*He sits on his stool*) Your left hand's wrong—up a bit.

(ELSA moves her left hand)

That's better. (He sips some beer)

(MISS WILLIAMS enters up C and goes on to the terrace)

MISS WILLIAMS. (to Amyas) Have you seen Angela?

AMYAS. She's just gone into the house to get me some beer. (He paints)

MISS WILLIAMS. Oh.

(MISS WILLIAMS seems surprised. She turns and exits quickly by the door up L. AMYAS whistles as he works)

ELSA. (after a few moments) Must you whistle?

AMYAS. Why not?

ELSA. That particular tune?

AMYAS. (not understanding) What? (He sings) "When we are married, why what shall we do?" (He grins) Not very tactful.

(CAROLINE enters by the door up L, carrying a bottle of beer)

CAROLINE. (moving down C; coldly) Here's your beer. I'm sorry the ice was forgotten.

AMYAS. Oh, thank you, Caroline. Open it for me, will you? (He holds out his glass)

(CAROLINE takes the glass, crosses to the trolley, and with her back to the audience, opens the bottle and pours the beer. AMYAS begins to whistle the same time, realizes this, and checks himself. CAROLINE takes the bottle and the glass of beer to AMYAS)

CAROLINE. Here's your beer.

AMYAS. (taking the glass) And you hope it chokes me. (He grins) Here's to hoping! (He drinks) Phew, this tastes worse than the other. Still, it is cold.

(CAROLINE places the bottle beside the paintbox, goes into the room and exits up C. AMYAS resumes painting. MEREDITH enters breathlessly down L)

MEREDITH. Is Phil about?

AMYAS. He went to meet you.

MEREDITH. Which path?

AMYAS. Lower one.

MEREDITH. I came by the other.

AMYAS. Well, you can't go on chasing each other. Better hang on and wait.

MEREDITH. (*taking out his handkerchief and wiping his brow*) I'm hot. I'll go inside. It's cooler. (*He crosses to the french windows*)

AMYAS. Get yourself a cold drink. Get one of the women to get it for you.

(*MEREDITH goes into the room, and hesitates, uncertain what to do*)

(*He looks at Elsa*) You've wonderful eyes, Elsa. (*He pauses*) I'll leave the hands—concentrate on the eyes. I haven't quite got them.

(*MEREDITH moves to the french windows and looks out to the terrace*)

Move your hands as much as you like—I'm getting it. Now for God's sake don't move or talk.

(*MEREDITH turns and crosses in the room to RC*)

ELSA. I don't want to talk.

AMYAS. That's a change.

(*ANGELA enters up C, carrying a tray with a jug of iced lemonade and two glasses, which she places on the table R*)

ANGELA. Refreshments!

MEREDITH. Oh, thank you, Angela. (*He moves to the tray and pours a glass of lemonade*)

ANGELA. (*crossing to the french windows*) We aim to please. (*She goes on to the terrace. To Amyas*) Did you get your beer all right?

AMYAS. Sure I did. You're a great gal.

ANGELA. (*laughing*) Very kind, aren't I? Ha, ha. You wait and see.

(*ANGELA runs into the room and exits up C, closing the door behind her.*  
*MEREDITH sips his lemonade*)

AMYAS. (*suspicious*) That kid's up to something. (*He rubs his right shoulder*) That's funny.

ELSA. What's the matter?

AMYAS. I'm very stiff this morning. Rheumatism, I suppose.

ELSA. (*mocking*) Poor creaking old man.

(*PHILIP enters down L*)

AMYAS. (*chuckling*) Creaking with age. Hullo, Phil. Merry's inside waiting for you.

PHILIP. Good (*He crosses and goes into the room*)



(MEREDITH puts his glass on the tray and meets PHILIP at C. AMYAS resumes painting)

MEREDITH. Thank goodness you've come. I didn't know what to do.

PHILIP. What is all this? Caroline and the governess were in the room when you rang up.

MEREDITH. (*in a low voice*) There's a bottle missing from my lab.

PHILIP. So you told me. But what's in it?

MEREDITH. Conine.

PHILIP. Hemlock?

MEREDITH. Yes, conine's the pure alkaloid.

PHILIP. Dangerous?

MEREDITH. Very.

PHILIP. And you've no idea whatsoever who could have taken it?

MEREDITH. No. I always keep the door locked.

PHILIP. You locked it yesterday?

MEREDITH. You know I did. You saw me.

PHILIP. You're sure about this—you haven't just mislaid the bottle—shoved it away somewhere? (*He crosses to R*)

MEREDITH. I showed it them all yesterday. And then I put it back in its place on the shelf.

PHILIP. (*turning; sharply*) Who came out of the room last?

MEREDITH. (*unwillingly*) Caroline—I waited for her.

PHILIP. But you weren't watching her?

MEREDITH. No.

PHILIP. (*with decision*) Well, then Caroline took it.

MEREDITH. You really think so?

PHILIP. (*crossing above Meredith to L*) So do you, or you wouldn't be in such a state.

MEREDITH. That's what she had in mind yesterday—when she said everything was finished for her. She meant to do away with herself. (*He sinks on to the stool, and faces up stage*)

PHILIP. Well, cheer up, she hasn't done any with herself yet.

MEREDITH. You've seen her this morning. Is she all right?

PHILIP. Seems just the same as usual to me.

MEREDITH. What are we going to do?

PHILIP. You'd better tackle her.

MEREDITH. I don't know—how shall I go about it?

PHILIP. I should just stay straight out—"You pinched my conine yesterday. Hand it back, please."

MEREDITH. (*doubtfully*) Like that?

PHILIP. (*crossing above Meredith to R*) Well, what do you want to say?

MEREDITH. I don't know. (*He brightens*) We've got plenty of time, I imagine. She wouldn't take the stuff until she goes to bed, would she?

PHILIP. (*dryly*) Probably not. If she means to take it at all.

MEREDITH. You think she doesn't?

PHILIP. (*crossing below Meredith to L*) She may want it to make a theatrical scene with Amyas. Give up that girl or I'll swallow this and kill myself.

MEREDITH. That wouldn't be like Caroline.

PHILIP. Well—you know her best. (*He moves up LC*)

MEREDITH. You're always bitter about Caroline. You used to be crazy about her once—don't you remember? (*He rises*)

PHILIP. (*turning; annoyed*) A brief attack of calf love. It wasn't serious.

MEREDITH. And then—you turned against her.

PHILIP. (*exasperated*) Let's stick to the present, shall we?

MEREDITH. Yes. Yes, of course.

(CAROLINE enters up C)

CAROLINE. Hullo, Merry, stay to lunch, won't you? It'll be ready in a moment. (*She moves to the french windows*)

MEREDITH. Well, thanks.

(CAROLINE goes on to the terrace and stands by the easel, looking at Amyas)

ELSA. (*to Amyas; as Caroline comes out*) I shall have a break.

AMYAS. (*rather indistinctly*) Stop where you are, damn you.

MEREDITH. (*to Philip*) After lunch, I'll take Caroline out in the garden and tackle her. All right?

(PHILIP nods, closes the door up C and moves to the french windows. ELSA rises and stretches. MEREDITH moves to the table R and picks up his half-finished lemonade)

CAROLINE. (*urgently*) Amyas . . .

PHILIP. (*moving on to the terrace*) You seem very preoccupied this morning, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*to Philip; over her shoulder*) I? Oh, yes, I'm very busy getting Angela off. (*To Amyas. Very urgently*) You will do it, Amyas. You must. This afternoon.

(PHILIP moves above the bench. AMYAS passes his hand over his forehead. He has lost control of clear speech)

AMYAS. All ri-right. I'll see—her packing . . .

CAROLINE. (turning to the french windows) We—we do want Angela to get off without too much fuss. (She goes into the room and stands above the stool)

(PHILIP crosses to the french windows. ELSA sits on the bench. AMYAS shakes his head to try and clear his brain)

PHILIP. (to Caroline) You spoil that brat.

CAROLINE. (plumping cushions on the sofa) We shall miss her terribly when she's gone.

PHILIP. (stepping into the room) Where's little Carla?

(MEREDITH crosses to the armchair L with his drink, and sits)

CAROLINE. She's gone to stay with her godmother for a week. She'll be home the day after tomorrow.

MEREDITH. What's Miss Williams going to do with herself when Angela's gone?

CAROLINE. She's got a post at the Belgian Embassy. I shall miss her.

(A dinner gong sounds off in the hall)

Lunch.

(ANGELA bursts in up c)

ANGELA. (as she enters) I'm starving. (She runs on to the terrace. To Elsa and Amyas) Lunch, you two.

(MISS WILLIAMS appears in the doorway up c. CAROLINE crosses to the table RC and picks up her cigarette case)

ELSA. (rising and picking up her pullover) Coming.

(ANGELA goes into the room)

(To Amyas) Lunch?

AMYAS. I—ah!

MISS WILLIAMS. Do try not to shout so, Angela, it really isn't necessary.

ANGELA. I'm not shouting.

(ANGELA exits up c. MISS WILLIAMS follows her off)

CAROLINE (moving to the door up c; to Meredith) I should bring that in with you.

(MEREDITH rises)

PHILIP. (*looking at Meredith*) What—lemonade?CAROLINE. (*to Philip*) For you, we've got a lovely bottle of . . .

PHILIP. Château Neuf du Pape? Good! Hasn't Amyas finished it yet?

CAROLINE. (*to Meredith*) What a nice surprise to see you.

MEREDITH. I really came over to see Philip, but I'm always happy to stay to lunch.

(CAROLINE and PHILIP exit up C. ELSA comes into the room)

(He turns to Elsa) Amyas?

ELSA. (*crossing to the door up c*) There's something he wants to finish.

(ELSA exits up C. MEREDITH follows her off)

ANGELA. (*off*) He hates stopping for lunch.(*The paintbrush drops from AMYAS' hand. The LIGHTS slowly dim to BLACK-OUT. A spotlight comes up on Justin down L*)

JUSTIN. They all went in to lunch, leaving Amyas painting on the terrace. After lunch, Miss Williams and Mrs Crale went out with coffee. Miss Williams?

(*The spotlight fades. MISS WILLIAMS' voice can be heard in the darkness*)

MISS WILLIAMS. Mr Crale often refused lunch and went on painting. It was nothing out of the ordinary. He liked a cup of coffee brought to him, though. I poured it and Mrs Crale took it out to him, and I followed. At the trial I told what we found. But there was something else—something I have not told anyone. I think it right that I should tell it now.

(*The LIGHTS come up. AMYAS lies prostrate on the ground below the easel. CAROLINE and MISS WILLIAMS are in the room, standing at the stool, on which there is a tray of coffee. MISS WILLIAMS is R of the stool, pouring out a cup of coffee, which she gives to Caroline. CAROLINE takes the coffee on to the terrace*)CAROLINE. (*as she goes on to the terrace*) Amyas. (*She sees Amyas on the ground. Horrified*) Amyas! (*She stands for a moment, puts the coffee-cup on the bench, rushes to Amyas, kneels beside him and picks up his hand*)

(MISS WILLIAMS comes quickly on to the terrace and moves to L of Caroline)

He's—I think he's dead. (*She is distracted*) Well, go on. Quick. Telephone for a doctor or something.

(MISS WILLIAMS goes quickly into the room. As soon as Miss Williams reaches the french windows, CAROLINE gives a furtive look round, takes out her handkerchief, picks up the beer bottle, wipes it, then presses Amyas' hand round it. MEREDITH enters up c)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*to Meredith*) Get Dr Fawcett, quickly. It's Mr Crale. He's been taken ill.

(MEREDITH stares at Miss Williams for a moment, then moves to the telephone and lifts the receiver. MISS WILLIAMS goes on to the terrace in time to see Caroline pressing Amyas' fingers round the bottle. MISS WILLIAMS freezes. CAROLINE rises, crosses quickly to the trolley, puts the bottle on it, then stands facing L. MISS WILLIAMS turns slowly and goes into the room)

MEREDITH. (*into the telephone*) Four-two, please . . . Dr Fawcett? . . . This is Alderbury . . . Can you come at once? Mr Crale has been taken seriously ill . . .

MISS WILLIAMS. He's . . .

MEREDITH. (*to Miss Williams*) What? (*Into the telephone*) Just a moment. (*To Miss Williams*) What did you say?

(ELSA enters up c. PHILIP follows her on. They are laughing and joking)

MISS WILLIAMS. (*in a clear voice*) I said he's dead.

(MEREDITH replaces the receiver)

ELSA. (*staring at Miss Williams*) What did you say? Dead? Amyas? (*She rushes on to the terrace and stares down at Amyas*) Amyas! (*She draws in her breath, runs and kneels above Amyas and touches his head*)

(CAROLINE turns. The others are motionless)

(*Quietly Amyas!*)

(*There is a pause. PHILIP runs on to the terrace and stands below the bench. MISS WILLIAMS comes on to the terrace and stands below the french windows. MEREDITH follows her on and stands up L of the bench*)

(*She looks up at Caroline*) You've killed him. You said you'd kill him, and you've done it. Sooner than let me have him, you've killed him. (*She jumps up and goes to throw herself at Caroline*)

(*PHILIP moves quickly, stops Elsa and propels her round to Miss Williams. ELSA is hysterical and screams. ANGELA enters up C and stands beside the sofa*)

MISS WILLIAMS. Be quiet. Control yourself.

ELSA. (*in a frenzy*) She killed him. She killed him.

PHILIP. Take her inside—get her to lie down.

(*MEREDITH takes Elsa into the room*)

CAROLINE. Miss Williams, don't let Angela come—don't let her see.

(*MEREDITH takes ELSA off up C. MISS WILLIAMS looks at Caroline for a moment, then sets her lips firmly and goes into the room. PHILIP kneels beside Amyas and feels his pulse*)

ANGELA. Miss Williams, what is it? What's happened?

MISS WILLIAMS. Come to your room, Angela. There's been an accident.

(*MISS WILLIAMS and ANGELA exit up C*)

PHILIP. (*looking up at Caroline*) It's murder.

CAROLINE. (*shrinking back; suddenly indecisive*) No. No—he did it himself.

PHILIP. (*quietly*) You can tell that story—to the police.

(*The LIGHTS slowly dim to BLACK-OUT. A spotlight comes up on Justin down L*)

JUSTIN. In due course the police arrived. They found the missing phial of conine in a drawer in Caroline's room. It was empty. She admitted taking it—but denied using it and swore she had no idea *why* it should be empty. No fingerprints but Meredith's and her own were found on it. On the terrace, a small eye-dropper was found crushed underfoot. It contained traces of conine and shows how the poison was introduced into the beer. Angela Warren told how she got a fresh bottle of beer from the refrigerator. Miss Williams took it from her and Caroline took it from Miss Williams, opened it and gave it to Amyas, as you have just heard. Neither Meredith nor Philip Blake touched it or went near it. A week later Caroline Crale was arrested on a charge of murder.

(*The spotlight fades. After a moment, the LIGHTS come up showing the scene as it was at the beginning of the Act. The coffee, lemonade, trolley, easel, etc., have been removed. The picture on the wall is again*



that of Elsa. PHILIP stands R of the sofa. MEREDITH is seated on the sofa at the left end. ANGELA is seated on the left arm of the sofa. ELSA stands in front of the door up C. MISS WILLIAMS is seated on the right end of the stool. CARLA is seated in the armchair R. JUSTIN is just inside the french windows with a notebook in his hand. They are all dressed for outdoors with coats and hats. ELSA is in mink. She appears excited. MEREDITH is crushed and miserable. PHILIP is aggressive. MISS WILLIAMS sits with lips set firm. ANGELA is upright, interested and thoughtful)

PHILIP. (irritably) Well, we've been through this extraordinary performance which must have been most painful to some of us. (He crosses above the stool to R of Justin) And what have we learnt? Nothing that we did not know before. (He glares at Justin)

(JUSTIN smiles. PHILIP goes on to the terrace, stands by the bench and lights a cigarette. MISS WILLIAMS rises and moves R)

JUSTIN. (thoughtfully) I wouldn't say that.

MEREDITH. It's brought it all back—just as though it happened yesterday. Most painful.

ELSA. (crossing to the sofa and sitting on it, R of Meredith) Yes, it brought it all back. It brought him back.

ANGELA. (to Justin) What have you learned that you did not know before?

JUSTIN. We shall go into that.

(PHILIP comes into the room and crosses to C)

PHILIP. May I point out something that does not seem to be recognized by anybody? (He moves to R of Justin) What we have been listening to—and supplying—can only be recollections, and probably faulty ones at that.

JUSTIN. As you say.

PHILIP. And therefore quite useless as evidence. (He turns away up L.C.) We haven't heard facts at all, only people's vague recollections of facts.

JUSTIN. (moving to L of Philip) What we have heard has no evidential value as such—but it has a value, you know.

PHILIP. In what way?

JUSTIN. Shall we say, in what people choose to remember? Or, alternatively, choose to forget.

PHILIP. Very clever—but fanciful.

ANGELA. (*to Philip*) I don't agree. I . . .

PHILIP. (*overriding Angela*) And I will point out something else. (*He crosses below the stool and stands between Miss Williams and Elsa*) It's not just a question of what people remember, or do not remember. It might be a question of deliberate lying.

JUSTIN. Of course.

ANGELA. That's just the point, I rather imagine. (*She rises and moves c*) Or am I wrong?

JUSTIN. You are thinking on the right lines, Miss Warren.

(ANGELA crosses to the armchair L)

PHILIP. (*exasperated*) Look here, what is all this? If somebody is deliberately lying—why then . . .

ANGELA. (*sitting in the armchair L*) Exactly.

PHILIP. (*crossing to Justin; angrily*) Do you mean you have got us here with the idea—the preposterous idea, that one of us could be guilty of murder?

ANGELA. Of course he has. Have you only just realized it?

PHILIP. I never heard such offensive nonsense in my life.

ANGELA. If Amyas didn't kill himself, and if his wife didn't murder him, then one of us must have done so.

PHILIP. But it has already been made perfectly clear, in the course of what we've heard, that nobody but Caroline *could* have killed him.

JUSTIN. I don't think we can be as certain as all that.

PHILIP. (*crossing below the stool to R*) Oh, God!

JUSTIN. (*not heeding*) There is the question you yourself raised, the question of lying.

(*There is a slight pause. PHILIP sits on the right end of the stool, with his back to the audience*)

When one person's evidence is corroborated or acquiesced in by another person—(*he moves down c*) then it can be regarded as checked. But some of what we have heard is vouched for by only one person. (*He crosses below the stool and moves up c*) For instance, at the very beginning, we had to rely solely on Mr Meredith Blake here for what passed between him and Caroline Crale.

MEREDITH. (*indignantly*) But, really . . .

JUSTIN. (*quickly*) Oh, I'm not disputing the authenticity of what you told

us. I only point out that the conversation *could* have been an entirely different one.

MEREDITH. (*rising*) It was as accurate as anything could be after a lapse of sixteen years.

JUSTIN. Quite. (*He crosses to the french windows and goes on to the terrace*) But remember the fine weather and the open windows. This means that most of the conversations, even those that were apparently *tête-à-têtes*, could be and probably were, overheard from either inside or outside the room. (*He comes into the room and stands up LC*) But that is not so for all of them.

MEREDITH. (*moving L*) Are you getting at me?

(*There is pause. JUSTIN looks at his notebook*)

JUSTIN. Not necessarily. I singled you out because you started the ball rolling.

MISS WILLIAMS. (*moving to R of the stool*) I would like to state here and now that any account I have given of *my* part in the affair is true. There is no witness who saw what I saw—Caroline Crale wiping fingerprints off that bottle, but I solemnly swear that is exactly what I saw her do. (*She turns to Carla*) I am sorry, for Carla's sake, I have to tell you this, but Carla is, I hope, courageous enough to face the truth.

ANGELA. Truth is what she asked for.

JUSTIN. And truth is what will help her. (*He crosses below the stool to Miss Williams*) What you don't realize, Miss Williams, is that what you have told us goes a long way towards proving Caroline Crale's *innocence*, not her guilt.

(*There are general exclamations from the others. PHILIP rises and moves to L of the stool*)

MISS WILLIAMS. What do you mean?

JUSTIN. You say you saw Caroline Crale take a handkerchief, wipe the beer bottle, and then press her husband's fingers on it?

MISS WILLIAMS. Yes.

JUSTIN. (*after a pause; quietly*) The beer bottle?

MISS WILLIAMS. Certainly. The bottle.

JUSTIN. But the poison, Miss Williams, was not found in the bottle—not a trace of it. The conine was in the glass.

(*There are general exclamations from the others*)

ANGELA. You mean . . . ?

JUSTIN. (*moving up c*) I mean that if Caroline wiped the bottle, she thought the conine had been in the bottle. But if she had been the poisoner, she would have *known* where the conine was. (*He turns to Carla*)

(MISS WILLIAMS *moves to the sofa*. MEREDITH, *bewildered*, *moves R*)

CARLA. (*on a very soft sigh*) Of course.

(*There is a pause*)

JUSTIN. (*moving to Carla*) We all came here today to satisfy one person. Amyas Crale's daughter. Are you satisfied, Carla?

(*There is a pause*. CARLA *risés and moves above the stool*. JUSTIN *sits in the armchair R*)

CARLA. Yes. I'm satisfied. I know now—oh, I know now such a lot of things.

PHILIP. What things?

CARLA. (*moving LC*) I know that you, Philip Blake, fell violently in love with my mother, and that when she turned you down and married Amyas, you never forgave her. (*To Meredith*) You thought you still loved my mother—but really it was Elsa you loved.

(MEREDITH *looks at ELSA, who smiles triumphantly*)

But all that doesn't matter—what does matter is that I know now what made my mother behave so oddly at her trial.

(MISS WILLIAMS *sits on the sofa at the left end*)

I know what she was trying to hide. (*She crosses above the stool to Justin*) And I know just why she wiped those fingerprints off the bottle. Justin, do you know what I mean?

JUSTIN. I'm not quite sure.

CARLA. There's only one person Caroline would have tried to shield—(*she turns to Angela*) you.

ANGELA. (*sitting up*) Me?

CARLA. (*crossing to Angela*) Yes. It's all so clear. You'd played tricks on Amyas, you were angry with him—vindictive because you blamed him for sending you to school.

ANGELA. He was quite right.

CARLA. But you didn't think so at the time. You were angry. It was you who went and fetched a bottle of beer for him, although it was my

mother who took it to him. And, remember, you'd tampered with his beer once before. (*She moves above the stool and kneels upon it*) When Caroline found him dead with the beer bottle and glass beside him, all that flashed into her mind.

ANGELA. She thought I'd murdered him?

CARLA. She didn't think you meant to. She thought you'd just played a trick, that you meant to make him sick, but that you had miscalculated the dose. Whatever you'd done, you'd killed him and she had to save you from the consequences. Oh, don't you see, it all fits in? The way she got you hustled off to Switzerland, the pains she took to keep you from hearing about the arrest and the trial.

ANGELA. She must have been mad.

CARLA. She had a guilt complex about you, because of what she'd done to you as a child. So, in her way, she paid her debt.

ELSA. (*rising and crossing below the stool to Angela*) So, it was you.

ANGELA. Don't be absurd. Of course it wasn't. Do you mean to say you believe this ridiculous story?

CARLA. Caroline believed it.

JUSTIN. Yes, Caroline believed it. It explains so much.

ANGELA. (*rising and crossing below the stool to Carla*) And you, Carla? Do you believe it?

CARLA. (*after a pause*) No.

ANGELA. Ah! (*She moves to the sofa and sits on it at the right end*)

CARLA. But then, there's no other solution.

(ELSA sits in the armchair L)

JUSTIN. Oh, yes, I think there might be. (*He rises and crosses to LC*) Tell me, Miss Williams, would it be natural or likely for Amyas Crale to have helped Angela by packing her clothes for her?

MISS WILLIAMS. Certainly not. He'd never dream of doing such a thing.

JUSTIN. And yet you, Mr Philip Blake, overheard Amyas Crale say, "I'll see to her packing." I think you were wrong.

PHILIP. Now look here, Fogg, have you got the nerve to insinuate that I was lying?

(*The LIGHTS dim to BLACK-OUT*)

JUSTIN. I'm not insinuating anything. But let me remind you that the picture we now have is built up from remembered conversations.

(*The spotlight comes up on Justin down L*)

Memory is the only thread that hangs this picture together—it is a fragile thread and uncertain. I suggest one conversation we've heard about went quite differently. Let's suppose it went something like this.

*(The spotlight fades and after a moment the LIGHTS come up to reveal the house and terrace as it was sixteen years previously. CAROLINE is seated in the armchair R, and AMYAS is about to open the door up C to go out. Instead he turns towards Caroline)*

AMYAS. I've told you, Caroline, I don't want to discuss this.

CAROLINE. You didn't want a scene until you'd finished your picture. That's it, isn't it?

*(AMYAS crosses and leans over Caroline)*

Oh, I understand you very well.

*(AMYAS is about to kiss her)*

*(She rises quickly and crosses to L)* And what you're doing is monstrous. You're going to treat this girl the same way as you've treated all the others. You were in love with her, but you're not now. All you want is to string her along so that you can finish that picture.

AMYAS. *(smiling)* All right, then. That picture matters.

CAROLINE. So does she.

AMYAS. She'll get over it.

CAROLINE. *(partly pleading)* Oh, you! You've got to tell her. Now—today. You can't go on like this, it's too cruel.

AMYAS. *(crossing to Caroline)* All right, I'll send her packing. But the picture . . .

CAROLINE. Damn the picture! You and your women. You don't deserve to live.

AMYAS. Caroline. *(He tries to embrace her)*

CAROLINE. I mean it. No, don't touch me. *(She crosses down R)* It's too cruel—it's too cruel.

AMYAS. Caroline!

*(CAROLINE exits down R. The LIGHTS dim to BLACK-OUT. The spotlight comes up on Justin down L)*

JUSTIN. Yes, that's how that conversation went. Caroline pleaded, but not for herself. Philip Blake didn't hear Amyas say, "I'll see to her packing"—what he in fact heard was the voice of a dying man struggling to say, "I'll send her packing."



*(The spotlight fades on Justin. The LIGHTS come up. Everyone is back in the same positions as they were before the BLACK-OUT)*

A phrase he'd no doubt used before of other mistresses, but this time he spoke of you—*(he turns to Elsa)* didn't he, Lady Melksham? The shock of that conversation was terrific, wasn't it? And straight away you acted. You'd seen Caroline take that phial of conine the day before. You found it at once when you went upstairs for a pullover. You handled it carefully, filled an eye-dropper from it, came down again, and when Amyas asked you for beer, you poured it into the glass, added the conine, and brought the beer to him. You resumed your pose. You watched him as he drank. Watched him feel the first twinges, the stiffness of the limbs, and the slow paralysis of the speech. You sat there and watched him die. *(He gestures to the portrait)* That's the portrait of a woman who watched the man she loved die.

*(ELSA rises quickly and stands looking at the portrait)*

And the man who painted it didn't know what was happening to him. But it's there, you know—in the eyes.

ELSA. *(in a hard voice)* He deserved to die. *(She looks at Justin)* You're a clever man, Mr Fogg. *(She moves to the door up c and opens it)* But there isn't a damn thing you can do about it.

*(ELSA exits up c. There is a stunned silence, then gradually everyone starts to speak together. CARLA goes on to the terrace and stands below the bench)*

PHILIP. There—there must be *something* we can do.

MEREDITH. I can't believe it, I simply can't believe it.

ANGELA. *(rising)* It stares one in the face—how blind we've been.

PHILIP. What can we do, Fogg—what the hell can we do?

JUSTIN. In law, I'm afraid, nothing.

PHILIP. Nothing—what do you mean—nothing? *(He goes to the door up c)* Why the woman practically admitted . . . I'm not so sure you're right about that.

*(PHILIP exits up c)*

ANGELA. *(moving to the door up c)* It's ridiculous, but true.

*(ANGELA exits up c)*

MISS WILLIAMS. (*moving to the door up c*) It's incredible, it's incredible! I can't believe it.

(MISS WILLIAMS *exits up c*. PHILIP *re-enters up c*)

PHILIP. (*to Justin*) I'm not so sure you're right about that. I'll get my fellow on to it in the morning.

(PHILIP *exits up c*)

MEREDITH. (*moving to the door up c*) Elsa of all people, it seems absolutely impossible. Caroline's dead, Amyas is dead, there's no-one to bear witness—(*he turns in the doorway*) is there?

(MEREDITH *shakes his head and exits up c*. The *babel dies down*. CARLA *sits on the upstage end of the bench*. JUSTIN *looks out of the french windows for a moment at Carla, then goes on to the terrace*.)

JUSTIN. What do you want done, Carla?

CARLA. (*quietly*) Nothing. She's been sentenced already, hasn't she?

JUSTIN. (*puzzled*) Sentenced?

CARLA. To life imprisonment—inside herself. (*She looks at him*) Thank you.

JUSTIN. (*crossing above the bench to L; embarrassed*) You'll go back to Canada, now, and get married. There's no legal proof, of course, but we can satisfy your Jeff. (*He crosses below Carla to c and looks at his notes*)

CARLA. We don't need to satisfy him. I'm not going to marry him. I've already told him so.

JUSTIN. (*looking up*) But—why?

CARLA. (*thoughtfully*) I think I've—well—grown out of him. And I'm not going back to Canada. After all, I do belong here.

JUSTIN. You may be—lonely.

CARLA. (*with a mischievous smile*) Not if I marry an English husband. (*Gravely*) Now, if I could induce *you* to fall in love with me . . .

JUSTIN. (*turning to her*) Induce me? Why the devil do you think I've done all this?

CARLA. (*rising*) You've been mixing me up with my mother. But I'm Amyas' daughter, too. I've got a lot of the devil in me. I want you to be in love with *me*.

JUSTIN. Don't worry. (*He smiles, moves to her and takes her in his arms*)

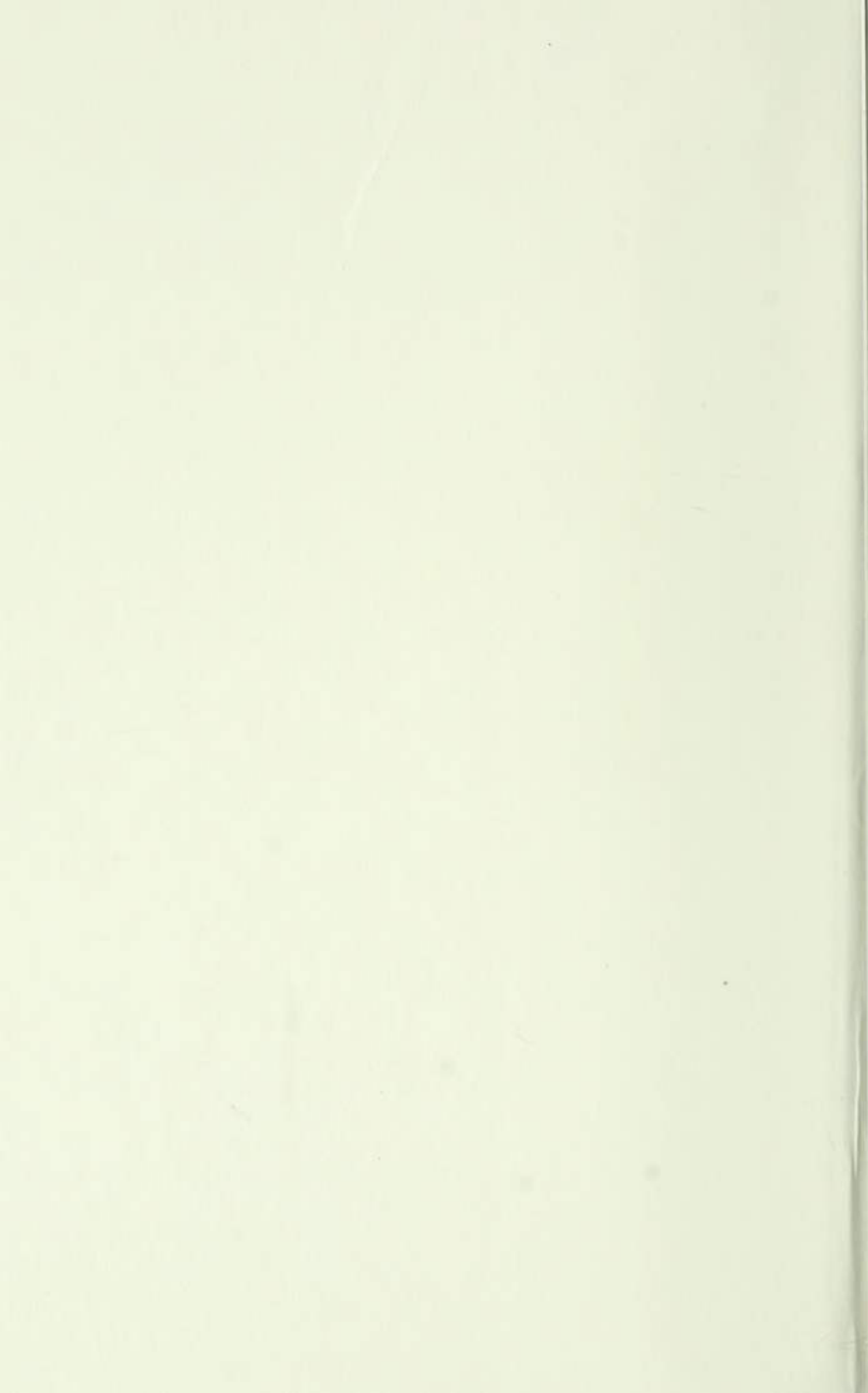
CARLA. (*laughing*) I don't.

*(They kiss. MEREDITH enters up c)*

MEREDITH. *(as he enters)* May I suggest a drink at my house before . . .  
*(He realizes the room is empty, goes to the french windows and looks out)* Oh! *(He smiles)* My word!

MEREDITH *exits up c and the* LIGHTS *dim to* BLACK-OUT *as—*

*the CURTAIN falls*



(continued from front flap)

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