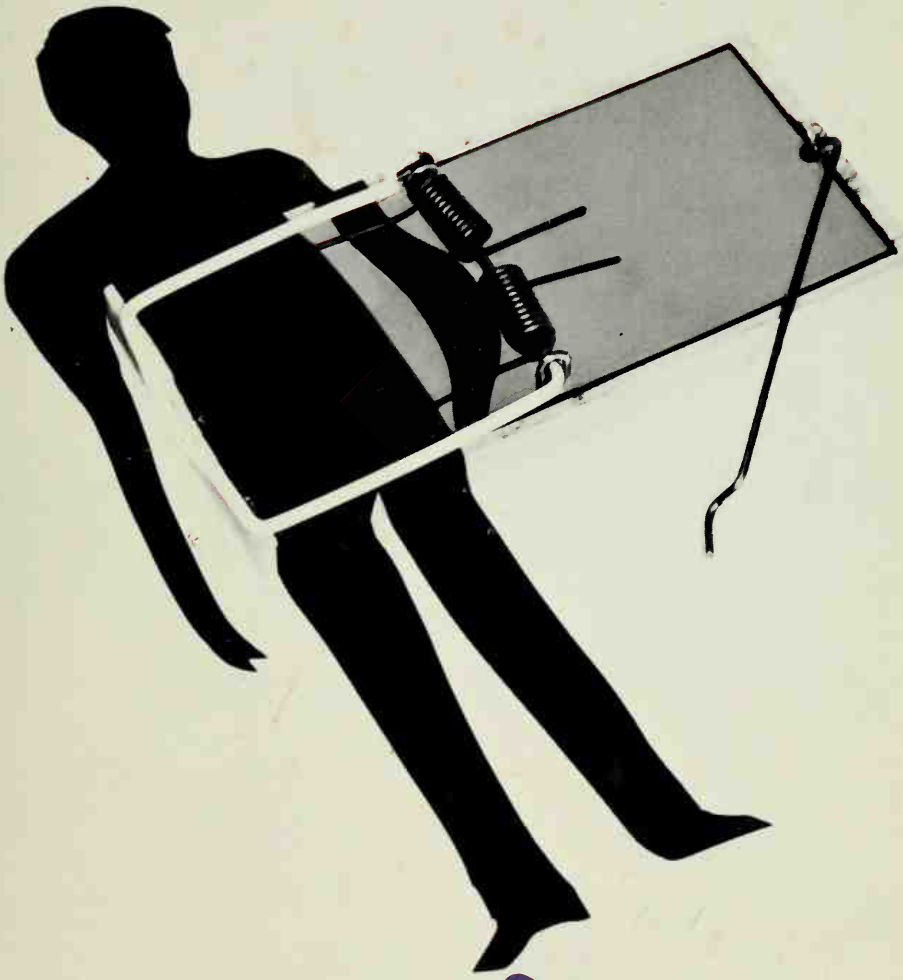
# The Mousetrap and Other Plays



by Agatha Christie

INTRODUCTION BY IRA LEVIN

# The Mousetrap and Other Plays by Agatha Christie

**ow in its 26th year—**
**e longest-running play ever...**

uring her lifetime, Agatha Christie steadstly refused to publish her plays. Now—ter much arduous negotiating—readers n delight in this first volume of eight brilnt stage thrillers from the Grande Dame suspense. Here, making their initial apearance, are some of the most ingenious nd chilling whodunits ever to grace the age. And heading the list is the recordreaking, phenomenally successful *The lousetrap*, now in its 26th year of continuus performance in London.

**HE MOUSETRAP.** A superbly constructed nystery, irresistibly suspenseful from the rst moment, this legendary drama about ight people snowbound with an avenging nurderer has been wearing out actors, urniture and theatrical records ever since it rst opened in London in 1952. The longestunning play in the history of the Englishpeaking stage, it appears here in print for he first time.

**VITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION.** Classic, "double-twist" stunner about a sensational nurder trial. International stage success, New York Drama Critics Award-winner and nit motion picture.

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

*(continued on back flap)*

*Book Club Edition*

Merry Christmas 25/8
your son

# THE MOUSETRAP & OTHER PLAYS

# 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 dectective 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 legitimitizes 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 mantlepiece 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

# APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

Produced at the Piccadilly Theatre, London, on the 31st March 1945, with the following cast of characters:

*(in order of their appearance)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Mrs. Boynton | *Mary Clare* |
| Ginevra Boynton | *Deryn Kerbey* |
| Lennox Boynton | *Ian Lubbock* |
| Nadine Boynton | *Beryl Machin* |
| Lift Boy | *John Glennon* |
| Alderman Higgs | *Percy Walsh* |
| Clerk<br>Bedouin | *Anthony Dorset* |
| Lady Westholme | *Janet Burnell* |
| Miss Pryce | *Joan Hickson* |
| Dr. Gerard | *Gerard Hinze* |
| Sarah King | *Carla Lehmann* |
| Jefferson Cope | *Alan Sedgwick* |
| Raymond Boynton | *John Wynn* |
| Dragoman | *Harold Berens* |
| Colonel Carbery | *Owen Reynolds* |
| Lady Visitor | *Cherry Herbert* |
| Hotel Visitors | *Corinne Whitehouse*<br>*Joseph Blanchard* |

*The play directed by* Terence de Marney

# CHARACTERS

Mrs. Boynton
Ginevra Boynton, her stepdaughter
Lennox Boynton, her elder stepson
Nadine Boynton, Lennox's wife
Hotel Clerk
An Italian Girl
Alderman Higgs
An Arab Boy
Lady Westholme
Miss Amabel Pryce
Dr. Theodore Gerard
Sarah King
Jefferson Cope
Raymond Boynton, Lennox's younger brother
A Dragoman
Colonel Carbery

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT I

The lounge of the King Solomon Hotel, Jerusalem. Afternoon

### ACT II

Scene 1 The Travellers' Camp at Petra. Early afternoon. A week later
Scene 2 The same, three hours later

### ACT III

Scene 1 The same, the following morning
Scene 2 The same, the same afternoon

*Time—the present*

# PRODUCTION NOTE

The effect of the lift ascending and descending can be easily obtained by having a gauze window in the lift door, behind which is a shutter which can be raised as the lift descends and lowered as the lift ascends. There should be a domed light which is always alight, suspended in the lift in sight of the audience.

Characters should wear semi-tropical clothes suitable to character and nationality. It will be found effective if all characters wear costume light in colour, except Mrs Boynton who should dress throughout in unrelieved black. The Hotel Clerk wears a grey frock coat and tarboosh. The Dragoman wears a white Arab dress and red tarboosh in the hotel, but changes into brown garments for the camp scenes, as also does the Arab boy. Colonel Carbery wears the khaki uniform of the Palestine Police, i.e. tunic and shorts with a blue service peaked cap.

# Act One

SCENE: *The lounge of the king Solomon Hotel, Jeusalem. Afternoon.*

*Back* C *are three open arches, the centre one giving access to a terrace with a balcony rail with a wide expanse of blue sky beyond. An arch up* R *leads to the main entrance, and arches down* R *and up* L *lead to other parts of the hotel. There is a lift behind a sliding door down* L *A quadrant counter for the reception clerk is up* L. *A small table stands* C *with five chairs around it. There is a low table with a chair above it, down* R. *Other small tables are set against the walls. On the terrace there are two chairs and a table with a sunshade.*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises,* MRS. BOYNTON *is seated above the table* C. *She is a vast obese woman rather like an idol, with an expressionless face. She moves her head and eyes but not her body. A stick is beside her chair. Her family are grouped round her like courtiers round a queen.* GINEVRA BOYNTON, *her daughter, sits* R *of Mrs. Boynton. She is a pretty girl of nineteen with a lost, vacant expression. She sits staring into space: occasionally her lips move as though she is talking to herself. Her fingers are picking at a handkerchief which she is tearing in little bits. This is partly masked by the table.* NADINE BOYNTON, *the daughter-in-law, sits* L *of Mrs. Boynton. She is a quiet woman of twenty-eight. She is sewing.* LENNOX BOYNTON, *Mrs. Boynton's elder son and Nadine's husband, sits* L *of Nadine. He is holding a book upside down and appears to be reading. The* HOTEL CLERK *is behind his desk. A glamorous* ITALIAN GIRL *enters up* R *and crosses to the desk.*

GIRL. (*to the Clerk*) *La mia chiave, per favore.*

CLERK. (*puzzled*) I beg your pardon?

GIRL. (*emphasizing*) *Chiave.* Ah, you do not understand. My—key—please.

CLERK. Oh. Certainly, *signorina.* (*He hands her a key*)

GIRL. *Grazie, signor.* (*She moves towards the lift*)

(*The lift door opens.* ALDERMAN HIGGS *enters from the lift. He is a portly, middle-aged man and has a broad Lancashire accent. He stands aside to let the* GIRL *pass, half-raising his hat*)

(*She acknowledges Higgs' courtesy with a smile*) *Signor.*

(*The* GIRL *exits to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends.* HIGGS *glances curiously at the Boyntons, as though slightly fascinated by their static quality, crosses hurriedly towards the arch up* R, *then stops, turns and moves to the desk*)

HIGGS. (*to the Clerk*) Any letters for me? Name of 'Iggs.

CLERK. Letters are at the concierge's office in the hall, sir.

HIGGS. Conciurge? Moost you call 'im by these fancy names? What's WRONG with "porter"?

CLERK. (*indifferently*) Just as you please, sir.

HIGGS. Five quid a day you're charging me 'ere, and I don't think so mooch of this place. (*He looks around*) Give me the *Midland* at Manchester even if it 'asn't got so many fancy columns. (*He moves to the arch up* R, *then stops and returns a step or two*) See 'ere, if one of them Dragomen chaps turn oop from Cook's, askin' for me, you tell 'im to wait till I coom back. See?

(HIGGS *turns and exits up* R. *There is silence. You expect the* BOYNTONS *to speak, but they do not.* NADINE *drops her scissors. As she picks them up,* MRS. BOYNTON'S *head turns to look at her, but she does not speak.* GINEVRA'S *lips move. She smiles. Her fingers work. A faint whispering sound comes from her.* MRS. BOYNTON *transfers her attention to Ginevra, contemplates her in silence for a moment, then speaks in a deep voice*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Jinny!

(GINEVRA *starts, looks at Mrs. Boynton, opens her mouth to speak but says nothing. The sound of a bus arriving outside and the murmur of native voices is heard off up* R. MRS. BOYNTON *and* NADINE *look towards the arch up* R. GINEVRA *and* LENNOX *have no reaction. An* ARAB BOY, *carrying some baggage enters up* R *and crosses to the desk. He gets some directions from the* CLERK *and exits with the baggage up* L. LADY WESTHOLME, MISS AMABEL PRYCE *and* DR. GERARD *enter up* R *and*

*cross to the desk.* LADY WESTHOLME *is a large important-looking woman in tweeds, very British and country.* MISS PRYCE *is a typical spinster with a large terai hat and many bead chains and scarves.* DR. GERARD *is a good-looking, middle-aged Frenchman. He carries a newspaper)*

LADY WESTHOLME. (*announcing the fact*) I am Lady Westholme.

CLERK. (*indicating a pile of registration forms*) You will register, please.

LADY WESTHOLME. You received my wire from Cairo?

CLERK. Certainly, Lady Westholme. Your rooms are reserved. One-one-eight and one-one-nine on the second floor.

LADY WESTHOLME. I prefer the first floor.

CLERK. I am afraid we have nothing vacant on the first floor.

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*overpoweringly*) I have chosen to stay here instead of at the High Commissioner's and I expect to be treated properly. If there are no rooms vacant on the first floor, somebody must be moved. You understand?

CLERK. (*defeated*) If your ladyship will go temporarily to the second floor we will arrange something before tonight. Can I have your passport, please? (*He indicates the form*) Surname, Christian names and nationality, please.

(LADY WESTHOLME *fills up the form*)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*as she writes; loudly*) British.

GERARD. (*softly*) Very definitely.

CLERK. (*to the* ARAB BOY) Boy. (*He hands a key to the* ARAB BOY)

(*The* ARAB BOY *moves to the lift.* LADY WESTHOLME *follows him.* MRS. BOYNTON *follows Lady Westholme with her eyes.* MISS PRYCE *struggles with her form*)

MISS PRYCE. Oh, dear, I *hope* I've filled this in right. I always find these forms so *confusing.*

GERARD. (*helping* MISS PRYCE) The nationality here. You, too, are British.

(*The* ARAB BOY *rings the lift bell and returns to the desk.* LADY WESTHOLME *waits impatiently*)

MISS PRYCE. Oh, well—yes, certainly—at least—really, you know—(*confi-*

*dentially*) I'm *Welsh*—but still, it's all the *same*. (*She drops her handbag*)

GERARD. (*picking up the handbag*) Allow me.

MISS PRYCE. (*taking the bag*) Oh, thank you. (*To the Clerk*) Have you—is there—I believe you have a room booked for me—one with a view towards the Dead Sea, I asked for.

CLERK. The name?

MISS PRYCE. Oh, dear me—how stupid of me. Pryce. Miss Pryce. Miss Amabel Pryce.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* LADY WESTHOLME *exits to the lift*)

CLERK. (*to the Arab Boy*) Number four-eighty-four. (*He hands him a key*)

(*The* ARAB BOY *moves to the lift.* MISS PRYCE *drops her handbag.* GERARD *picks up the bag*)

MISS PRYCE. So stupid of me. (*She takes the bag*) Thank you *so* much.

(*The* ARAB BOY *exits to the lift*)

(*She hurries to the lift*) Wait for me! Wait for me!

(MISS PRYCE *exits to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends*)

GERARD. (*to the Clerk*) Dr. Theodore Gerard. (*He fills in a form*)

CLERK. Oh, yes, Doctor Gerard. Number one-eight-four. (*He hands him a key.*)

(GERARD *moves to the lift and waits.* GINERVRA *looks at Gerard. The lift descends and the door opens.* SARAH KING *enters from the lift. She is an attractive, decided looking girl of twenty-three. She passes Gerard, hesitates, then smiles at him.* GERARD *bows*)

GERARD. How do you do?

SARAH. I'm so pleased to see you. I never thanked you for helping me the other night at the station in Cairo.

GERARD. That was nothing—a pleasure. You are enjoying Jerusalem, Miss —er . . . ?

SARAH. King—Dr. Sarah King.

GERARD. (*gaily*) Ah, we are colleagues. (*He takes a card from his pocket and hands it to her*) Dr. Gerard.

SARAH. Colleagues? (*She looks at the card*) Dr. Theodore Gerard. Oh. (*Reverently*) Are you *the* Dr. Gerard? But yes, you must be.

GERARD. I am Dr. Theodore Gerard. So, as I say, we are colleagues.

SARAH. Yes, but you're distinguished and I am only starting.

GERARD. (*smiling*) Oh, well, I hope it will not be like your English proverb—wait a minute so that I get it right. (*Slowly*) "Doctors differ and patients die."

SARAH. Fancy your knowing that! Just as well we haven't any patients. Have you just come in on the afternoon train?

GERARD. Yes. With a very important English lady. (*He grimaces*) Lady Westholme. Since God is not in Jerusalem, she is forced to put up with the *King Solomon Hotel.*

SARAH. (*laughing*) Lady Westholme is a political big bug. In her own eyes at any rate. She's always heckling the Government about housing or equal pay for women. She was an under-secretary or something—but she lost her seat at the last election.

GERARD. Not the type that interests you?

SARAH. No—but—(*she drops her voice and draws Gerard up* L) there's someone over there who does. Don't look at once. It's an American family. They were on the train with me yesterday. I talked to the son.

(GERARD *looks at Lennox*)

Not that one—a younger one. He was rather nice. Extraordinary looking old woman, isn't she? Her family seem absolutely devoted to her.

GERARD. (*in a low voice*) Possibly because they know she will not long be with them. You recognized the signs?

SARAH. How long would you give her?

GERARD. Perhaps six months—who knows? You will have a drink?

SARAH. Not now. (*She glances at her watch*) I've got to call for a parcel at one of the shops. I must hurry. (*She gives him a friendly nod*) Another time.

(SARAH *crosses and exits quickly up* R. GERARD *looks after her a moment, then turns to the Clerk*)

GERARD. *Cinzano à l'eau,* please. (*He moves down* L, *then crosses slowly below the table* C *to* R, *glancing as he passes at the book Lennox is holding. He sits in the chair down* R, *and opens his newspaper, covertly studying the Boyntons*)

(*The* CLERK *claps his hands. The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L. *The* CLERK *gives him Gerard's order. The* ARAB BOY *exits up* L. GINEVRA *raises her head and watches Gerard. Her fingers twist and tear her handkerchief*)

MRS. BOYNTON. (*her voice sudden and deep*) Ginevra you're tired.

(GINEVRA *jumps*)

You'd better go and rest.

GINEVRA. I'm not tired, Mother. I'm not really.

MRS. BOYNTON. Yes, you are. I always know. I don't think—(*she pauses*) I don't think you'll be able to do any sightseeing tomorrow.

(*The lift door closes and the lift ascends*)

GINEVRA. Oh, but I shall. (*Vehemently*) I'm quite all right.

MRS. BOYNTON. No, you're not. (*With slow relish*) You're going to be ill.

GINEVRA. (*rising; hysterically*) I'm not. I'm not.

MRS. BOYNTON. Go up and lie down.

GINEVRA. I'm not going to be ill. I don't want to be ill.

MRS. BOYNTON. I always know.

NADINE. I'll come up with you, Jinny.

MRS. BOYNTON. No, let her go up alone.

GINEVRA. I want Nadine to come. (*Her handkerchief slips from her fingers to the floor*)

NADINE. (*putting her sewing on the table*) Then, of course, I will. (*She rises*)

MRS. BOYNTON. The child prefers to go by herself. (*She fixes Ginevra with her eye*) Don't you, Jinny?

GINEVRA. (*after a pause; mechanically*) Yes—I'd rather go alone. Thank you, Nadine. (*She crosses slowly to the lift*)

(MRS. BOYNTON *follows Ginevra with her eyes.* NADINE *resumes her seat and picks up her sewing. The lift descends and the door opens. The* ITALIAN GIRL *enters from the lift. She has changed into a very revealing sun-suit, and carried a magazine and an unlighted cigarette in a long holder.*

GINEVRA *passes the Girl, and exits into the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends. The* GIRL *goes to the* CLERK *who lights her cigarette for her*)

GIRL. (*to the Clerk*) I would like a Martini on the terrace, please. (*She goes on to the terrace and sits* R *of the table under the sunshade*)

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L, *with Gerard's drink on a tray. He crosses above the table* C *and puts the glass on the table beside Gerard. He*

*then returns to the desk, takes the Girl's order from the* CLERK *and exits up* L.

JEFFERSON COPE *enters breezily up* R. *He is about forty-five; a pleasant, normal, rather old-fashioned American*)

COPE. (*moving to* R *of the table* C) I was looking around for you all. (*He shakes hands all round, then stands* R *of the table*) How do you find yourself, Mrs. Boynton? Not too tired by the journey from Cairo?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*suddenly very gracious*) No, thank you. My health's never good, as you know . . .

COPE. Why, of course. (*Sympathetically*) Too bad, too bad.

MRS. BOYNTON. But I'm certainly no worse. (*She looks at* NADINE) Nadine takes good care of me, don't you, Nadine?

NADINE. (*without expression*) I do my best.

COPE. (*heartily*) Why, I bet you do. Well, Lennox, and what do you think of King David's city?

(LENNOX *continues to look at his book and does not answer*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Lennox!

LENNOX. (*as from the very far away*) Sorry—what did you say, Cope?

COPE. (*crossing above the table to* LC) I asked what you thought of King David's city.

LENNOX. Oh—I don't know.

COPE. Find it kind of disappointing, do you? I'll confess it struck me that way at first. But perhaps you haven't been around much yet?

LENNOX. We can't do much because of mother.

MRS. BOYNTON. A couple of hours' sightseeing is about all I *can* do.

COPE. I think it's wonderful you manage to do all you do, Mrs. Boynton.

MRS. BOYNTON. I don't give in to my body. It's the mind that matters—(*with secret zest*) yes, the mind.

(RAYMOND BOYNTON *enters up* R *and moves to* R *of the table. Hs is a good-looking young man of twenty-four. He is smiling and looking happy. He carries a wrapped bottle of medicine*)

COPE. Hullo, Ray, caught sight of you just now as I came in—but you were too busy to see me. (*He laughs*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Busy? (*She turns her head slowly to look at Raymond*)

(RAYMOND's *smile vanishes*)

Did you get my medicine at the chemist?

RAYMOND. Yes, Mother, here it is. (*He hands her the package, avoiding her eye*)

COPE. That was a nice-looking girl you were talking to, Ray.

MRS. BOYNTON. A girl? What girl? (*She puts the package on the table*)

RAYMOND. (*nervously*) She was on the train last night. I helped her with some of her cases—they were a bit heavy.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*intent on Raymond*) I see.

RAYMOND. (*turning desperately to Cope*) I suppose you've seen all there is to see by this time.

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L. *He carries a tray with the* GIRL's *drink. He goes on to the terrace, puts the glass on the table, then exits up* L)

COPE. Well, I hope to have done Jerusalem pretty thoroughly in another couple of days and then I'm going to have a look at Petra, the rose-red city of Petra—a most remarkable natural phenomenon, right off the beaten track.

MRS. BOYNTON. "A rose-red city—half as old as time."

RAYMOND. It sounds marvellous.

COPE. It's certainly worth seeing. (*He hesitates, moves* L, *then returns to* L *of Mrs. Boynton*) I wonder if I couldn't persuade some of you people to come along with me? I know *you* couldn't manage it, Mrs. Boynton, and naturally some of your family would want to remain with you—but if you were to divide forces, so to speak . . . (*He looks from one to the other of them, finally at Mrs. Boynton*)

MRS. BOYNTON. (*expressionless*) I don't think that we'd care to divide up. We're a very united family. (*She pauses*) What do you say, children?

LENNOX, RAYMOND } (*together*) { No, Mother. / Oh, no.

MRS. BOYNTON. You see. They won't leave me. What about you, Nadine? You didn't say anything.

NADINE. No, thank you, not unless Lennox cares about it.

MRS. BOYNTON. Well, Lennox, what about it? Why don't you and Nadine go? She seems to want to.

LENNOX. (*nervously*) I—well—no—I—I—think we'd better all stay together.

COPE. Well—you are a devoted family.

(COPE *exchanges a look and a smile with* RAYMOND, *and picks up a magazine from the table.*)

SARAH *enters up* R. *She carries a small parcel. She goes on to the terrace*

*and exits on it to* R. RAYMOND *watches Sarah.* MRS. BOYNTON *watches Raymond)*

MRS. BOYNTON. (*to Cope*) We keep ourselves to ourselves. (*To Raymond*) Is that the girl you were talking to outside?

RAYMOND. Yes—er—yes.

MRS. BOYNTON. Who is she?

RAYMOND. Her name is King. She's—she's a doctor.

MRS. BOYNTON. I see. One of those women doctors. (*Deliberately to him*) I don't think we'll have much to do with her, son. (*She rises*) Shall we go up now? (*She picks up the medicine*)

(NADINE *hastily puts her sewing together, rises, gets Mrs. Boynton's stick and hands it to her.* LENNOX *rises*)

(*To Cope*) I don't know what I should do without Nadine.

(COPE *moves to* R *of Mrs. Boynton and puts the magazine on the table* C. NADINE *is* L *of* MRS. BOYNTON)

She takes such good care of me. (*She moves towards the lift*)

(COPE, NADINE, LENNOX *and* RAYMOND *move with* MRS. BOYNTON *to the lift. It is a royal procession.* COPE *rings the lift bell.* GERARD *watches them*)

But it's dull for her sometimes. You ought to go sightseeing with Mr. Cope, Nadine.

COPE. (*to Nadine; eagerly*) I shall be only too delighted. Can't we fix up something definite?

NADINE. We'll see—tomorrow.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* MRS. BOYNTON, NADINE, LENNOX *and* RAYMOND *exit to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends.* COPE *wanders around for a moment then crosses to Gerard*)

COPE. Excuse me—but surely you're Dr. Theodore Gerard?

GERARD. Yes. (*He rises*) But I'm afraid . . .

COPE. Naturally you wouldn't remember me. But I had the pleasure of hearing you lecture at Harvard last year, and of being introduced to you afterwards. (*Modestly*) Oh, I was just one of fifty or so. A mighty interesting lecture it was, of course, on psychiatry.

GERARD. You are too kind.

COPE. Jerusalem certainly is full of celebrities. We must have a drink. What are you drinking?

GERARD. Thank you. *Cinzano à l'eau.*

COPE. (*as he crosses to the desk*) By the way, the name's Cope. (*To the Clerk*) A *Cinzano à l'eau* and a rye straight. (*He moves to* L *of the table* C)

(*The* CLERK *claps his hands. The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L, *takes the order from the* CLERK *for the drinks and exits up* L)

GERARD. (*moving to* R *of the table* C) Tell me, I am interested, is that a typical American family to whom you were talking?

COPE. Why, no, I wouldn't say it was exactly typical.

GERARD. They seem—a very devoted family.

COPE. You mean they all seem to revolve round the old lady? That's true enough. She's a very remarkable woman, you know.

GERARD. Indeed? Tell me something about her. (*He sits* R *of the table* C)

COPE. I've been having that family a good deal on my mind lately. You see, young Mrs. Boynton, Mrs. Lennox Boynton, is an old friend of mine.

GERARD. Ah, yes, that very charming young lady?

COPE. That's right—that's Nadine. I knew her before her marriage to Lennox Boynton. She was training in hospital to be a nurse. Then she went for a vacation to stay with the Boyntons—they were distant cousins—and she married Lennox.

GERARD. And the marriage—it has been a happy one?

COPE. (*after a pause; moving a little up* LC) I—I hardly know what to say about that.

GERARD. You are worried about something?

COPE. Yes. (*He moves above the chair* L *of the table* C *and leans on the back of it*) I'd value your opinion—that is, if you won't be bored?

GERARD. I shall not be bored. People are my speciality—always they interest me. Tell me about this Boynton family.

COPE. Well, the late Elmore Boynton was a very rich man. This Mrs. Boynton was his second wife.

GERARD. She is the stepmother, then?

COPE. Yes, but they were young children at the time of the marriage, and they've always looked upon her as their own mother. They're completely devoted to her, as you may have noticed.

GERARD. I noticed their—(*he pauses*) devotion—yes.

COPE. Elmore Boynton thought a lot of his second wife. When he died he left everything in her hands—she has an excellent head for business. Since his death she's devoted herself entirely to those children, and

she's shut out the outside world altogether. I'm not sure, you know, that that is really a sound thing to do.

GERARD. Nothing could be more harmful to developing mentalities.

COPE. (*struck*) Well now, that's rather what *I* feel. In her devotion to them she's never let them make any outside contacts. Result is, they've grown up kind of—(*he pauses*) nervy. They can't make friends with strangers.

GERARD. Do they all live at home? Have the sons no professions? No careers?

COPE. No—there's plenty of money, you see.

GERARD. But they are dependent on their stepmother financially?

COPE. That's so. She's encouraged them to live at home and not go out and look for jobs.

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters up* L *with two drinks on a tray. He serves the drinks to Cope and Gerard, then exits up* L)

They don't play golf, they don't belong to any country clubs, they don't go around to dances, or meet other young people.

GERARD. What do they do, then?

COPE. Well, they just—sit around. You've seen them today.

GERARD. And you disapprove?

COPE. (*with heat*) No boy ought to keep on being tied to his mother's apron strings. He ought to strike out and be independent.

GERARD. And suppose that was impossible?

COPE. What do you mean—impossible?

GERARD. There are ways, Mr. Cope, of preventing a tree from growing.

COPE. (*staring*) They're a fine healthy well-grown lot.

GERARD. The mind can be stunted as well as the body.

COPE. The mind?

GERARD. I don't think you have quite grasped my point.

(COPE *stares at Gerard*)

But continue.

COPE. (*moving* LC) What I feel is that it's time Lennox Boynton stopped just sitting around twiddling his thumbs. How can a man who does that hope to keep a woman's respect.

GERARD. (*with a Gallic twinkle*) Aha—I see—you are thinking of his wife. (*He puts his glass on the table*)

COPE. I'm not ashamed of my feeling for that lady. I am very deeply at-

tached to her. All I want is her happiness. If she were happy with Lennox, I'd sit right back and fade right out of the picture.

GERARD. (*rising and moving to* R *of Cope*) Chivalry only lives today in the American nation.

COPE. I don't mind your laughing at me, Dr. Gerard. I dare say I sound romantic and old-fashioned, but that young man riles me. Sitting there reading a book and taking no notice of his wife or anybody else.

GERARD. (*moving above the table* C *to* R *of it*) But he was not reading a book.

COPE. (*puzzled*) Not reading—but he had a book . . . (*He puts his glass on the table*)

GERARD. He was holding that book upside down. Curious, is it not? (*He sees Ginevra's torn handkerchief on the floor*) And here is something else. (*He picks up the handkerchief*) A handkerchief that has been torn to pieces, so—by a girl's fingers.

COPE. (*moving below the table to* L *of Gerard*) But that's—that's very extraordinary.

GERARD. Yes, it is extraordinary. (*He moves to the chair down* R *and sits*) It is also very interesting.

COPE. Well, I've a great respect for maternal devotion, but I think it can be carried too far. (*He moves* RC) I've got to get down to the American Express before they close. See you later.

GERARD. *A toute à l'heure.*

(COPE *exits up* R)

(*He looks at the handkerchief*) Maternal devotion? I wonder.

(GINEVRA *enters up* L, *pauses, looks around, then comes swiftly and romantically across to Gerard*)

GINEVRA. Please, please—I must speak to you.

(GERARD *looks at Ginevra in astonishment, then rises*)

GERARD. Miss Boynton?

GINEVRA. (*dramatically*) They're taking me away. They're planning to kill me—or shut me up. (*She takes his arm and shakes it vehemently*) You must help me—you *must* help me. (*She stares pleadingly up at his face*)

GERARD. This is your handkerchief?

GINEVRA. Yes. (*She takes the handkerchief without interest*) Listen—I

don't belong to them really. My name's not really Boynton at all. I'm —I'm—(*she draws herself up*) *royal.*

(GERARD *studies her attentively*)

GERARD. I see. Yes, I see.

GINEVRA. I knew I could trust you. There are enemies, you know, all round me. They try to poison my food—all sorts of things—they don't let me speak to anyone. If you could help me to escape . . . (*She starts and looks around*) They're coming. I'm spied on—all the time. (*She moves quickly up* L) They mustn't know I've spoken to you.

(GINEVRA *exits up* L)

GERARD. (*moving* C *and looking after her*) *Nom d'un nom d'un nom!*

(SARAH *enters on the terrace from* C *and comes into the room*)

SARAH. (*moving to* R *of Gerard*) Has something upset you, Dr. Gerard?

GERARD. Yes, I am upset. *Quelle histoire!* Royal blood, persecution, poison in the food, surrounded by enemies.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* LADY WESTHOLME, MISS PRICE *and the* DRAGOMAN *enter from the left.* LADY WESTHOLME *carries a copy of "The Times" and* MISS PRYCE *has her handbag*)

SARAH. But that . . . (*She breaks off and moves down* R)

(GERARD *moves down* RC)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*crossing to* L *of Gerard*) Ah—Dr. Gerard. I've been looking for you.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *moves to* L *of Lady Westholme.* MISS PRYCE *moves to the desk*)

The arrangements for our trip to Petra are quite complete. We start on Tuesday and spend the night at Amaan, then on to Petra the following day. The journey will be made in a first class touring car. (*She indicates the Dragoman*) This is our dragoman—Mahommed.

DRAGOMAN. My name not Mahommed, lady. My name Aissa.

LADY WESTHOLME. I always call dragomen Mahommed.

DRAGOMAN. I Christian dragoman. Name Aissa, all same Jesus.

LADY WESTHOME. Most unsuitable. I shall call you Mahommed so please don't argue.

DRAGOMAN. As you like, lady. I always give satisfaction. (*He moves above Lady Westholme and stands between her and Gerard*) You see—(*he produces a handful of dirty and torn letters*) here are testimonials. Here one from English lady—Countess like you. Here one from very reverend clergyman—Bishop—wear gaiters and very funny hat. Here letter Miss Coralle Bell, lady who act and dance on stage. All say same thing—Aisssa very clean—very religious—know all about Bible history . . .

LADY WESTHOLME. (*severely*) I hope you *are* clean. Those testimonials look *filthy* to me.

DRAGOMAN. No, no, lady—no filthy postcards. No hot stuff. All very Christian—like Aissa. (*He pats his chest*) Aissa very clean. Very hygiene.

(MISS PRYCE *moves down* LC)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*to Gerard*) As I was saying, we will start Tuesday. That will be four of us—Mahommed, you and I—and now who is the fourth?

(MISS PRYCE *moves to* L *of Lady Westholme and gives an apologetic little cough*)

Oh, yes, Miss Pryce, of course.

MISS PRYCE. So kind of you. Really, it will be a wonderful experience. Perhaps a little tiring.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*cutting her short*) I *never* feel fatigue.

MISS PRYCE. It really is wonderful—in spite of all you *do*.

LADY WESTHOLME. I have always found hard work a great stimulant.

(MISS PRYCE *moves and sits* L *of the table* C)

I was about to say, Dr. Gerard, that that will leave a vacant place in the car, since Mahommed, of course, will sit beside the driver.

DRAGOMAN. I stop car, turn round and tell you everything we see.

LADY WESTHOLME. That's what I'm afraid of.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *goes on to the terrace, tries to sell curios to the* ITALIAN GIRL, *fails, moves to the desk and has a word or two with the* CLERK)

It occurred to me that if you knew of anyone suitable it would reduce the *expense*. I abhore useless extravagance. (*She looks pointedly at Sarah*)

GERARD. Miss King? You were, I believe, expressing the wish to visit Petra. May I introduce Miss King—no, Dr. King—Lady Westholme.

(SARAH *moves to* R *of Gerard*)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*patronizingly*) I am always glad to meet a young woman who has set out to make a career for herself.

MISS PRYCE. Yes, women do such *wonderful* things nowadays.

LADY WESTHOLME. Don't be foolish, Miss Pryce. You had better go with Mahommed and buy that Keatings powder at the chemists. We shall probably need it.

DRAGOMAN. (*moving to* L *of Miss Pryce*) No, no—no bugs—no fleas. Everything very nice—very clean.

LADY WESTHOLME. Get the Keatings.

MISS PRYCE. (*rising*) Yes, yes, of course, Lady Westholme. (*She drops her bag*)

(*The* DRAGOMAN *picks up Miss Pryce's bag and returns it to her.* MISS PRYCE *moves to the arch up* R. *The* DRAGOMAN *follows her. She quickens her pace, protesting she does not want to buy anything, until they end almost running off*)

DRAGOMAN. (*as they go*) I take you curio shop, too. Crosses, paper knives, inkstands, all made out of olive wood from Mount of Olives. Very nice souvenirs take home. All genuine—no rubbish.

(MISS PRYCE *and the* DRAGOMAN *exit up* R)

LADY WESTHOLME. She's a well-meaning creature, but of course not quite a sahib. Still, one mustn't let her *feel* that. I do so abhor snobbishness. Well, Miss King, I hope you *will* join us. But please do not bring a lot of baggage. We shall travel light.

SARAH. I shall have to think it over.

LADY WESTHOLME (*graciously*) Discuss it with Dr. Gerard. (*To Gerard*) I think we shall be meeting again at the High Commissioner's at dinner tonight?

GERARD. I shall look forward to that pleasure.

(LADY WESTHOLME *crosses to the chair down* R, *sits and reads her paper.* GERARD *and* SARAH *move up* C *to the terrace*)

(*As they go*) Have you seen the view from the terrace—it is really very fine.

(GERARD *and* SARAH *exit on the terrace to* R. HIGGS *enters and crosses towards the lift*)

CLERK. (*to Higgs*) Excuse me, sir, but I am changing your room.

(HIGGS *stops and stands up* LC)

There was an unfortunate mistake . . .

HIGGS. What d'yer mean—mistake? Ah doesn't *want* ter change my room.

(*He moves above the table* C)

CLERK. Unfortunately we find that room was booked for Lady Westholme. We shall have to move you to the second floor.

HIGGS. Fer 'oo?

CLERK. Lady Westholme.

HIGGS. Lady Westholme! (*He chuckles*) That's a rum 'un. Lady Westholme! Where is she?

LADY WESTHOLME. (*rising and advancing on* HIGGS) I am Lady Westholme.

HIGGS. Oh! So *you're* Lady Westholme. Ah'm glad ter meet yer. (*He politely raises his hat*) Ah've been wantin' ter meet *you* for a long time.

LADY WESTHOLME. Meet me?

HIGGS. Aye, you.

LADY WESTHOLME. Meet me—what for?

HIGGS. My name's 'Iggs.

LADY WESTHOLME. 'Iggs?

HIGGS. No, not 'Iggs—'Iggs.

LADY WESTHOLME. Well?

HIGGS. 'Iggs—Halderman 'Iggs.

LADY WESTHOLME. Well?

HIGGS. (*chuckling*) Ah coom from Lancashire—same as you do—but I see yer doan't know 'oo I am.

LADY WESTHOLME. You've just told me, Alderman 'Iggs—Higgs.

HIGGS. Ah, but it doesn't mean nowt to yer?

LADY WESTHOLME. Ought it to?

HIGGS. Aybe, by gum, it ought. But if yer don't know *why*—I'm not goin' ter *tell* yer. And another thing—I'm not changing any rooms.

LADY WESTHOLME. But that room was reserved for *me*.

(*The lift door closes and the lift ascends*)

HIGGS. Do yer think I'm daft? Ah've been 'ere four days, and soon as

*you* arrive ah've got the wrong room. But ah 'aven't—see? Now if you wanted my room special—and coom ter me in a friendly spirit—I doan't say I *would* of—but I *might* of—see? This may be *King Solomon 'Otel,* but you're not Queen of Sheba. (*He moves up* C)

(LADY WESTHOLME *decides to ignore Higgs and turns on the Clerk*)

LADY WESTHOLME. Unless I am moved down to the first floor by this evening I shall report the matter to the High Commissioner.

CLERK. But, your ladyship, I . . .

LADY WESTHOLME. I never argue.

(LADY WESTHOLME *turns and exits up* R)

HIGGS. (*to the Clerk*) And if you so much as shift a bluddy toothbrush from that room I won't pay a bluddy penny.

(HIGGS *exits on the terrace to* L. SARAH *and* GERARD *enter on the terrace from* R, *come into the room and stand* RC)

SARAH. (*as they enter*) I certainly would love to see Petra—and I definitely couldn't afford to go on my own.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* RAYMOND *enters from the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends*)

GERARD. Then I think you will come?

(SARAH *turns and sees Raymond*)

SARAH. I—I'm not sure . . .

(GERARD *looks amused and exits up* R)

RAYMOND. (*agitated*) I—I *must* speak to you.

SARAH. (*moving to* R *of the table* C; *amused*) Well, why not?

RAYMOND. (*moving to* L *of the table* C) You don't understand. I'd like to tell you . . . (*He breaks off*)

SARAH. Is anything the matter?

RAYMOND. I came down to see if mother had left her spectacles on the table here. I—I mustn't be long.

SARAH. Is there such a hurry?

RAYMOND. You see, my mother—(*he pauses*) You don't know my mother.

SARAH. I caught a glimpse of her on the train last night, and I saw her sitting here this afternoon.

RAYMOND. You see—she's not very strong. She's got a bad heart. We—we have to take care of her.

SARAH. You seem a very devoted family.

RAYMOND. (*turning away* LC) Oh, yes, we are a very devoted family.

SARAH. Well, don't sound so depressed about it. I'm sure it's a very nice thing to be.

RAYMOND (*moving to* L *of the table* C) Oh, how I wish . . . I can't say what I want to say. (*Desperately*) I've no time. And I may never have the chance of talking to you like this again.

SARAH. Why ever not? You're not leaving Jerusalem at once, are you?

RAYMOND. No, but—my mother doesn't like us talking to people outside the family.

SARAH. But how absurd.

RAYMOND. Yes, that's what it must seem like—just absurd.

SARAH. I'm sorry if I was rude. I know it's awfully difficult sometimes for parents to realize that their children are grown up—and, of course, if your mother isn't very strong . . . (*She hesitates*) But still, you know, it's a pity to give in. One must stand up for one's rights.

RAYMOND. You don't understand.

SARAH. Even if it seems unkind one must be free to live one's own life.

RAYMOND. Free? None of us will ever be free.

SARAH. What do you mean?

RAYMOND. We're not free.

SARAH. Why don't you leave home?

RAYMOND. Because I wouldn't know where to go or what to do. Oh, you don't understand. None of us has ever left home. We've never been to school, we've never had any friends. We've no money.

(*The lift descends and the door opens*)

SARAH. I suppose you could make some money.

RAYMOND. How?

(NADINE *enters from the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends.* SARAH *and* RAYMOND *watch* NADINE *as she moves* L *of Raymond*)

NADINE. Mother is asking for you, Ray.

RAYMOND. (*starting nervously*) I'll go.

NADINE. Won't you introduce me?

RAYMOND. (*to Sarah*) This is my sister-in-law—Nadine.

NADINE. (*to Sarah*) You were on the train last night, I think.

SARAH. Yes. (*to Raymond*) I was just going out for a stroll. Why don't you come?

RAYMOND. I—come with you?

NADINE. I think that's a very good idea, Ray.

RAYMOND. Oh. Yes, I'll come.

(SARAH AND RAYMOND *exit up* R. COPE *enters up* R *and passes them as they go*)

COPE. (*crossing and standing down* R *of the table* C) Why, Nadine, all alone?

NADINE. (*moving below the table* C) I came down to fetch Mrs. Boynton's spectacles. (*She picks up the spectacles from the table* C) Here they are. (*She turns to go*)

COPE. Are you going up with them right away?

NADINE. (*turning to him*) Yes—Mrs. Boynton is waiting.

COPE. (*moving to* R *of her*) I feel, you know, that you ought to think more of yourself. I don't think Mrs. Boynton always realizes . . . (*He breaks off*)

NADINE. (*with a queer smile*) What doesn't Mrs. Boynton always realize?

COPE. Well, that you have—lives of your own.

NADINE. (*bitterly*) Lives of our own!

COPE. (*anxiously*) You—you know what I mean?

NADINE. (*with suddden warmth*) You are such a nice person.

(*The lift descends and the door opens*)

COPE. You know there's nothing—at any time—that I wouldn't do for you. (*He takes her hand*)

(LENNOX *enters from the lift and stands watching*)

(*He looks at Lennox, releases Nadine's hand and steps away from her. Hurriedly*) Excuse me. I'll be going up to my room now.

(COPE *crosses and exits to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends*)

LENNOX. (*moving to* L *of Nadine*) Nadine, why have you been so long? Where's Raymond? Mother's getting impatient.

NADINE (*crossing below him to* LC) Is she?

LENNOX. Yes. (*Nervously*) Please, Nadine—come up to her.

NADINE. I'm coming.

LENNOX. But where's Ray?

NADINE. Ray has gone out for a walk.

LENNOX. (*astonished*) For a walk. By himself?

NADINE. No, with a girl.

LENNOX. With a *girl?*

NADINE. (*bitterly*) Does that surprise you so much? (*She moves to* L *of him*) Don't you remember how once you sneaked out of the house and went to Fountain Springs—to a roadhouse? Do you remember, Lennox?

LENNOX. Of course I do—but we *must* go up to mother.

NADINE. (*with sudden vehemence*) Lennox—let's go away.

LENNOX. What do you mean?

NADINE. I want to live my own life—our own lives—together.

LENNOX. I don't understand what you mean. (*He looks nervously towards the lift*) Mother will be getting so upset.

NADINE. Stop looking at that lift. Stop thinking about your mother. I want you to come away with *me.* It's not too late.

LENNOX. (*without looking at her; unhappy and frightened*) Please, Nadine. Don't let's talk like this. (*He crosses below her to* L) Must we go into it all again?

NADINE. (*following him*) Let's go away, Lennox, let's go away.

LENNOX. How can we? We've no money.

NADINE. You can earn money.

LENNOX. How can I earn money? I'm untrained—unqualified.

NADINE. I could earn enough for both of us.

LENNOX. (*his voice rising*) It's impossible—hopeless—(*his voice trails away*) hopeless.

NADINE. (*moving* LC; *bitterly*) It's our present life that is hopeless.

LENNOX. I don't know what you mean. Mother is very good to us. She gives us everything we want.

NADINE. Except liberty.

LENNOX. You must remember she's getting old and she's in bad health. When she dies father's money will come to us.

NADINE. (*desperately*) When she dies it may be too late.

LENNOX. Too late for what?

NADINE. Too late for happiness. (*Appealingly*) Lennox, I still love you. It's not too late. Won't you do what I ask?

LENNOX. I—I can't. It isn't possible.

(NADINE *draws away. Her manner changes back to its usual quiet reserve*)

NADINE. I see. So it's up to me. To do—what I want to do—with my own life. (*She goes on to the terrace*)

(LENNOX *follows Nadine and stands behind her.* LADY WESTHOLME *and the* DRAGOMAN *enter up* R. *He is thrusting curios upon her notice.* LADY WESTHOLME *moves down* C)

DRAGOMAN. (*moving to* R *of Lady Westholme*) No other dragoman got anything like these. Very special—I make for distinguished English lady very special price. The owner, he friend of mine. I get them very cheap.

LADY WESTHOLME. Now let us understand each other, Mahommed. (*Forcefully*) *I don't buy rubbish.*

DRAGOMAN. (*howling in anguish*) Rubbish? (*He holds up a long rusty nail*) The original nail from the toe of Balaam's ass.

(NADINE *moves along the terrace to* R *of it.* LENNOX follows her)

LADY WESTHOLME. I said *rubbish.* If I want to buy anything I will inform you of the fact and I will allow you a reasonable commission. The truth is that you have imposed upon tourists too much. I am *not* a tourist, and I have a very good sense of values.

DRAGOMAN. (*with a sudden ingratiating smile*) You very clever English high-up lady. Not want buy cheap junk. You want enjoy yourself, see sights. You like see Gilly-Gilly men? Bring chickens out of everywhere—(*he demonstrates on her*) out of sleeves, out of hat, out of shoes—everything. (*He twitches and lifts her skirt*)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*hitting him with her folded newspaper*) Certainly not. (*She crosses, sits in the chair down* R *and reads her paper*)

(*The* DRAGOMAN *crosses and exits up* L. SARAH *and* RAYMOND *enter up* R. RAYMOND *carries a small parcel*)

RAYMOND. (*as they enter*) There *is* a moon. I noticed it last night from the train.

(NADINE *turns from Lennox and stands with her back to him*)

SARAH. It really will be simply heavenly. That curly street and the gate where the donkeys were.

(LENNOX *moves to* C *of the terrace*)

RAYMOND. (*carelessly*) Hullo, Len. (*To Sarah*) This is my brother Lennox. (*He crosses to the lift*)

SARAH. (*hardly noticing Lennox*) How d'you do? (*She follows Raymond to the lift*)

(*The* ITALIAN GIRL *rises and exits on the terrace to* R)

Could we go to that courtyard place outside the mosque, or is it shut at night?

(RAYMOND *rings the lift bell*)

RAYMOND. We can easily find out.

SARAH. I must get my camera—you think there's enough light, still?

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* MRS. BOYNTON *enters from the lift, leaning on her stick.* RAYMOND *stands paralyzed.* SARAH *is taken aback*)

RAYMOND. I—I . . . (*He breaks off*)

SARAH. (*loudly and firmly*) Won't you introduce me to your mother?

MRS. BOYNTON. Where have you been, Raymond?

RAYMOND. I—went out . . .

SARAH. Won't you introduce me, Raymond?

RAYMOND. This is Miss King, Mother.

SARAH. How do you do?

MRS. BOYNTON. How do you do? You were wanting the lift? (*She moves aside*)

(SARAH *looks once at Raymond to see if he is resenting Mrs. Boynton's rudeness, then slowly exits to the lift.* RAYMOND *is staring at Mrs. Boynton. The door closes and the lift ascends*)

(*She crosses to the chair above the table* C) Who is that girl, Ray?

RAYMOND. I—I told you. Sarah King.

MRS. BOYNTON. Oh, yes, the girl you were talking to on the train last night. (*She sits*)

(RAYMOND *moves to* L *of Mrs. Boynton.* HIGGS *enters on the terrace from* L *and sits* R *of the table under the sunshade*)

Have you made plans to see her again?

(RAYMOND *stands like a prisoner in the dock and speaks like an automaton*)

RAYMOND. Yes, we were going out together after dinner.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*watching him*) I don't think, you know, she is quite our style. We'll keep ourselves to ourselves. That's the best way. (*She pauses*) You understand, Ray?

(NADINE *turns, moves in a little and watches.* LENNOX *relapses into complete vacancy*)

RAYMOND. (*automatically*) Yes.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*with authority*) So you won't be meeting her this evening.

RAYMOND. No—no . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. That's quite settled, isn't it?

RAYMOND. Yes.

MRS. BOYNTON. You'll have nothing more to do with that girl?

RAYMOND. No.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* SARAH *enters from the lift and crosses to Raymond*)

SARAH. I forgot my parcel. Oh. You've got it in your hand.

(RAYMOND *looks down, stares at the parcel, then hands it to Sarah without looking at her*)

(*She turns to go. Cheerfully*) See you later.

MRS. BOYNTON. You'd better explain to Miss King, Raymond.

(SARAH *stops and turns*)

RAYMOND. (*with clenched hands; stiffly*) I'm so sorry, Miss King. I shan't be able to go out this evening.

(SARAH *gives a quick glance towards Mrs. Boynton*)

SARAH. (*belligerently*) Why not?

(RAYMOND *opens his mouth to speak, then shakes his head*)

MRS. BOYNTON. My son prefers to remain with his family.

SARAH. Can't your son speak for himself?

MRS. BOYNTON. Tell her, Son.

RAYMOND. I—I prefer to be with—with my family.

SARAH. (*angrily*) Really? What devotion! (*With a contemptuous glance at Raymond, she crosses below the table* C *to Lady Westholme*) Thank

you for suggesting that I should come to Petra with your party, Lady Westholme. I should like to very much.

LADY WESTHOLME. Excellent.

(MRS. BOYNTON *turns her head and looks at Lady Westholme and Sarah. Her face shows no expression*)

On Tuesday, then, ten o'clock. So pleased you are joining us, Miss King.

(SARAH *crosses and exits quickly to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends.* LADY WESTHOLME *rises and follows Sarah to the lift, but the door closes as she arrives. She angrily rings the bell.* MRS. BOYNTON *continues to observe Lady Westholme.* HIGGS *rises and moves to the desk*)

LENNOX. (*moving* LC) Do you want to go up now, Mother?

MRS. BOYNTON. What?

LENNOX. Do you want to go up now?

MRS. BOYNTON. Not just now. You and Ray go. I want my spectacles. You two go on. Nadine and I will follow.

(LENNOX *and* RAYMOND *move to the lift door. The lift descends and the door opens.* LADY WESTHOLME, LENNOX *and* RAYMOND *exit to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends.* MRS BOYNTON *smiles to herself, then turns her head and looks at Nadine*)

HIGGS. (*to the Clerk*) 'Ere! What floor's 'er ladyship goin' oop to?

CLERK. Second floor, sir.

HIGGS. Ho! And another thing. I'm goin' on this trip to Petra. There's room in the car?

CLERK. Yes, sir. I've a seat reserved for you.

HIGGS. Ho! And is 'er ladyship comin'?

CLERK. Yes, sir.

HIGGS. Ho! Well, I'm not ridin' on t'roof, see.

(HIGGS *exits up* R)

MRS. BOYNTON. Nadine.

NADINE. (*moving to* R *of Mrs. Boynton*) Yes, Mother?

MRS. BOYNTON. My spectacles.

(*The lift descends and the door opens.* COPE *enters from the lift and goes to the desk*)

NADINE. (*holding out the spectacles*) They were on the table.

MRS. BOYNTON. Don't give them to me. Take them upstairs. And will you see that Jinny has some hot milk?

NADINE. She doesn't like hot milk.

MRS. BOYNTON. It's good for her. Go along, my dear. I'll just have a little talk with your friend Mr. Cope.

(NADINE *exits to the lift. The door closes and the lift ascends*)

COPE. (*moving* LC) Delighted, Mrs. Boynton.

MRS. BOYNTON. Such a good daughter to me—quite like a real daughter, I don't know what we should all do without Nadine.

COPE. Yes, indeed, I can quite appreciate how you rely upon her.

(*The* CLERK *exits up* L)

MRS. BOYNTON. We're a very devoted family.

COPE. I know—I know . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. (*looking sharply at him*) What's on your mind?

COPE. Why—nothing.

MRS. BOYNTON. Don't mind saying it.

COPE. Well—maybe you'll think it great cheek on my part . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. I like frankness.

COPE. Well, frankly, then, I just wondered . . . Oh, don't misunderstand me—I only meant that—well—one can shield people too much from the outside world.

MRS. BOYNTON. You mean—(*she smiles*) I'm too fond of my children?

COPE. Let's say—you're over-anxious about them. They—they've got to learn to stand on their own feet sometime, you know. (*He sits* L *of the table* C)

MRS. BOYNTON. You're probably quite right. That's partly, you know, why I brought them abroad. I didn't want them to become provincial. Travel, they say, broadens the mind.

COPE. Yes, indeed.

MRS. BOYNTON. It was very dull. (*Reminiscently*) Day after day—no savour to things. Yes, it was dull. (*She chuckles*) It's not dull here.

COPE. No, Jerusalem is a mighty interesting place.

MRS. BOYNTON. And I've been thinking of what you said earlier—about Petra.

COPE. Yes?

MRS. BOYNTON. I feel—the children ought to see Petra.

COPE. (*rising*) Why, that's grand. You'll do as I suggested, split up. Someone's got to stay and look after you, of course.

MRS. BOYNTON. No, I'm going to Petra, too.

COPE. Oh, but really, Mrs. Boynton, I don't think you realize the difficulties. It's right off the beaten track. Two long days motoring and the last stage is on horses or mules.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm an old woman with many physical disabilities, but I don't allow that to interfere with my—(*she pauses*) pleasures. These things can be arranged—by the expenditure of money. The last stage can be done in a carrying chair with bearers or a kind of litter.

COPE. It sounds quite Biblical.

MRS. BOYNTON. Yes—quite Biblical.

COPE. But really, you know, I don't think you're wise. Your health isn't too good, you know. Your heart . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. I don't take my heart into account when I'm planning a pleasure party for other people. It's a bad plan to think too much of oneself. One should think of others. That's settled, then?

COPE. Well, I do really take my hat off to you, Mrs. Boynton. You're the most unselfish woman. Always thinking of the youngsters.

MRS. BOYNTON. It wouldn't be the same for them if I wasn't there. You'll travel with us?

COPE. Why, certainly, I shall be delighted.

MRS. BOYNTON. That will give Nadine great pleasure, I'm sure. You're very fond of Nadine, aren't you?

COPE. (*moving a little down* L; *embarrassed*) Well, I . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. You'll make the arrangements, won't you?

COPE. (*crossing up* R) Certainly. I'll go and make enquiries now.

COPE *exits* R. MRS. BOYNTON *is left alone. Presently she begins to laugh, a silent laugh that shakes her like a jelly. Her face is malevolent and full of glee as—*

*the* CURTAIN *falls*

# Act Two

## Scene I

SCENE—*The Travellers' Camp at Petra. Early afternoon, a week later.*

*Fantastic scarlet rocks rise all round so that the stage has the appearance of an amphitheatre. On an upper level up* R *there is a path, masked by rocks, giving access to a cave. An exit* RC *leads to the sleeping tents. A slope of rock* L *leads to the path out of the camp. Down* L *is the entrance of a big marquee dining tent. A camp table and three chairs are set* LC; *there is a camp armchair with a tea chest behind it down* L *and a deck chair stands down* R. *On the rock up* R, *in front of the cave are two camp stools.*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises,* RAYMOND *is seated in the deck chair down* R, *lost in thought.* MRS. BOYNTON *is sitting on a stool outside the cave on the rock up* R, *her stick by her side, reading. She looks like a monstrous idol in a niche. The* DRAGOMAN *is standing* C, *looking benevolent.* LADY WESTHOLME, MISS PRYCE *and* GERARD *enter from the marquee* L. LADY WESTHOLME *picks up a "Baedaker" from the table* LC *and crosses to* RC. MISS PRYCE *stands* LC. GERARD *moves down* L.

DRAGOMAN. You had nice luncheon? You rested after big expedition this morning?

MISS PRYCE. Yes, thank you. It was most interesting.

DRAGOMAN. I tell you all about Babatesh architecture. I tell you ancient history. Very interesting place, Petra. I show you place high up there. Place of sacrifice.

LADY WESTHOLME. There is no need to hear it all over again. You were wrong on several points. I have just been checking up in *Baedaker.*

DRAGOMAN. No, no, lady. You not believe everything you read. You believe Aissa. Aissa educated Christian mission, learn speak truth. Everything I tell you truth and just like Holy Bible.

(SARAH *enters from the marquee, sees Raymond, turns abruptly back and goes inside again*)

LADY WESTHOLME. You were educated at a mission?

DRAGOMAN. Yes, lady, American Mission.

LADY WESTHOLME. Oh, American!

DRAGOMAN. I learn poetry—very beautiful. (*Rapidly, and with an indescribable intonation*) "Hail-to-the-blysprut Birtoneverwort."

GERARD. I beg your pardon?

DRAGOMAN. (*repeating*) "Hailtotheblysprut Birtoneverwort." (*He beams*)

MISS PRYCE. (*after a pause*) I *think* it's Shelley's "Skylark."

DRAGOMAN. (*beaming*) That's right, lady. Percy Bish Shelley. I know Willyam Wordwort, too. "I wonder lonely asaclout . . ."

GERARD. *Assez, assez.*

DRAGOMAN. I full of culture and higher education.

GERARD. Civilization has much to answer for.

LADY WESTHOLME. The thing, Mahommed, is not only to learn by heart, but to assimilate what you learn.

DRAGOMAN. You not call me Mahommed, lady. That Moslem name. You not like "Aissa," you call me Abraham. Like Father Abraham, I got clean bosom, very snowy. (*He opens his tunic*) Wear clean clothes every day.

GERARD. (*to Lady Westholme*) Which was more than Abraham did, I expect.

DRAGOMAN. (*moving close to Miss Pryce and displaying his chest*) All clean like Abraham's bosom.

MISS PRYCE. (*embarrassed*) Oh, yes, yes, very nice, I'm sure.

DRAGOMAN. What you like to do this afternoon? Another expedition or you like rest? Most of my ladies and gentlemen like rest on day when have done big expedition to place of sacrifice.

MISS PRYCE. It certainly was rather tiring. Such a very steep climb. But perhaps . . . (*She looks doubtfully at Lady Westholme*)

LADY WESTHOLME. I never feel fatigue. But I don't think another expedition. Perhaps a stroll later.

DRAGOMAN. You take nice walk-after-tea? I show you maiden hairyfern.

LADY WESTHOLME. Later. We'll let you know.

DRAGOMAN. Very good. (*He moves up* R) When you want Abraham, you just call Abraham. I come.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *exits up* R)

MISS PRYCE. He's really very obliging.

LADY WESTHOLME. He talks too much.

MISS PRYCE. I think, you know, that perhaps I shall lie down for a little. The sun is very hot.

LADY WESTHOLME. I shall go to my tent, but I shall not lie down. I shall write letters. (*She moves* R)

MISS PRYCE (*crossing to* R) You have such wonderful energy, dear Lady Westholme.

LADY WESTHOLME. It's just a question of training.

(LADY WESTHOLME *and* MISS PRYCE *exit* R. GERARD *strolls to Raymond*)

GERARD. You reflect very earnestly upon something.

RAYMOND. I was thinking about our journey down here, it was like coming down into an illustration of Hell. Winding through those narrow gorges, I kept saying to myself, "Down into the valley of death"—(*he pauses*) "the valley of death . . ."

GERARD. So that is how you felt? But it was not death you found at the end of your journey.

RAYMOND. (*natural again*) No—it was a very pleasant camp, tents or caves to suit one's fancy, a really excellent dinner.

GERARD. And friendly faces to greet you.

RAYMOND. Yes, I—I remembered seeing you at the *King Solomon* and Cope had mentioned you to us.

GERARD. I really meant Miss King. She you already knew, did you not?

RAYMOND. (*upset*) Yes—yes, I suppose so. I wish she had come on the expedition this morning. She—she backed out very suddenly.

GERARD. (*moving* C) Young ladies change their minds. But she missed much of interest and scenery.

(SARAH *enters from the marquee. She carries a small metal case containing a hypodermic.* RAYMOND *rises and moves* RC)

SARAH. Dr. Gerard—one of the Bedouin . . . (*She pauses as Raymond moves towards them*)

GERARD. Yes?

SARAH. (*without looking at Raymond; brusquely*) One of the guides is ill, acute malaria. Have you got any quinine with you? Stupidly, I seem to have left mine in Jerusalem. I've got my hypodermic here—(*she indicates the case*) if you want to give it intraveneously.

GERARD. I have a small medicine case of drugs with me. I will get it.

(GERARD *exits hurriedly* R. SARAH *moves above the table and puts her case on it.* RAYMOND *is in a pitiable state of nervousness*)

RAYMOND. Sarah. (*He pauses*)

(SARAH *ignores Raymond*)

(*He crosses to* R *of the table*) You despise me, don't you? I don't wonder. I despise myself.

SARAH. I really don't know what you are talking about.

RAYMOND. It was like a dream to arrive here—and find you. I thought at first you were a ghost—because I'd been thinking about you so much. (*He moves to* R *of her*) I love you. I want you to know that. It isn't me—the real man—who—who behaved so badly that day at the *King Solomon*. I can't answer for myself even now. (*He nervously clasps and unclasps his hands*) It's my nerves. I can't depend on them. If she tells me to do things, I have to do them—I can't help it. I know that I can never make you understand. It's courage I need—courage. And I haven't got it.

(GERARD *enters* R, *carrying his drug case. He pauses a moment and observes Sarah and Raymond.* RAYMOND *moves quickly away from Sarah, crosses and exits* R)

GERARD. (*crossing to the table*) I fear I interrupted something. (*He puts his case on the table and opens it*)

SARAH. (*trying to be matter of fact*) Nothing of any importance.

GERARD. Are you not being a little cruel to that young man?

SARAH. I can't stand a man who's tied to his mother's apron strings.

GERARD. Oh, la, la, so that is the trouble. (*He takes some quinine from his case and fills his own hypodermic syringe*) So you are, after all, just the English miss. And you call yourself a budding psychologist? Do you not recognize a psychological problem when you see one?

SARAH. Do you mean that old woman? (*She looks up towards Mrs. Boynton*) She's like some obscene Buddha—brooding over us all. Ugh! How they can all be devoted to her I can't imagine. It's thoroughly unhealthy. (*She sits* L *of the table*)

GERARD. You are wrong. They're not devoted to her. And she—she is not devoted to them. You have not been yourself since you have arrived here or you would have noticed many things.

SARAH. Travelling with Lady Westholme and Miss Pryce gets on my nerves.

GERARD. (*moving to* R *of the table*) Naturally. Lady Westholme is exactly fitted to the life she leads and enjoys it immensely. Miss Pryce is real-

izing the dream of a lifetime in travelling abroad. Both of them have got what they want, whereas you have not got what *you* want.

SARAH. What do I want?

GERARD. You want that young man who has just gone away.

SARAH. Really, Dr. Gerard, nothing of the kind.

GERARD. English miss.

SARAH. I'm not an English miss. (*She rises and moves down* L)

GERARD. But it is what you are. (*He moves to* R *of her*) You will talk learnedly of sex problems and sex life—but when it comes to a flesh and blood young man, you protest and blush just like your great-grandmother would have done. But come, let us be colleagues. Admittedly that young man is completely dominated by his mother—she has, what I cannot but consider a most unhealthy power over him. Do we rescue him or do we not?

SARAH. Can we?

GERARD. (*taking her hands for a moment*) I think perhaps you can. Now —where is this man?

SARAH. Through the marquee. I'll show you.

(SARAH *and* GERARD *exits to the marquee.* NADINE *enters from the slope* L. *She walks as though very tired. She moves to the table and looks at the open cases. The* ARAB BOY *enters* R, *carrying a tray*)

BOY. (*crossing to the table*) Good afternoon, ma'am.

NADINE. Hullo, Abdulla.

(*The* ARAB BOY *collects the dirty glasses from the table, crosses and exits* R. NADINE *picks the bottles out of Gerard's case and puts them back, as though curious but only half aware of what she is doing.* COPE *strides on down the slope* L. NADINE *starts and moves from the table*)

COPE. So there you are. (*He crosses to* RC) You've been running away from me, Nadine.

NADINE. What makes you think that?

COPE. Nadine, things can't go on like this. I've got to talk to you.

NADINE. (*crossing to him*) Oh, please, Jeff, please.

COPE. (*turning her to face him*) No, listen. I've loved you for a long time. You know that. I want you to have some happiness in your life.

NADINE. Perhaps no-one is happy.

COPE. That's nonsense, dear, and you know it. You've been a loyal wife to Lennox—you've put up with an impossible life for his sake and you've never complained. But the time's come when you've got to think of

*yourself.* I'm not expecting romantic devotion from you—but you do like me a litttle, don't you?

NADINE. I like you very much.

COPE. You're not doing Lennox any good by staying with him. Divorce him and marry me.

(SARAH *enters from the marquee*)

(*He moves* R) We might take a walk later—when the sun isn't so hot.

NADINE. Yes.

(COPE *exits* R. SARAH *looks at Nadine then sits* L *of the table*)

Miss King.

SARAH. Yes?

NADINE. May I say something to you?

SARAH. Why, of course.

NADINE. (*moving to* R *of the table*) I saw you talking to my brother-in-law just now.

SARAH. Really?

NADINE. Do help him if you can.

SARAH. What makes you think I can help him?

NADINE. If you can't help him, nobody can.

SARAH. He could help himself if he liked.

NADINE. That's where you're wrong. We're an odd family. He can't.

SARAH. You're a very devoted family—I know. Your mother-in-law told me so.

NADINE. No, we're not. That's the last thing we are.

(SARAH *looks in surprise at Nadine*)

(*She moves nearer to Sarah and lowers her voice*) Do you know what *she*—(*she gestures towards Mrs. Boynton*) was before my father-in-law married her?

SARAH. What was she?

NADINE. She was a wardress in a prison. (*She pauses*) My father-in-law was the governor. He was a widower with three young children, the youngest, Jinny, only six months old.

SARAH. (*looking at Mrs. Boynton*) Yes—I can see her as a wardress.

NADINE. It's what she still is—Lennox and Raymond and Jinny have been the prisoners. They've never known what it is to live outside the prison walls.

SARAH. Not even now—here—abroad?

NADINE. Yes. She's brought the prison walls with her. She's never allowed them to make friends—to have outside contacts—to have any ideas or interests of their own. It's all been done under the pretence of solicitude and devotion—but there's no devotion.

SARAH. What is there, then?

NADINE. Something that frightens me—something cruel—something that rejoices and gloats in its own power . . .

(MRS. BOYNTON *moves, puts down her book and peers forward*)

MRS. BOYNTON. (*calling*) Nadine. Come and help me.

NADINE. (*to Sarah; urgently*) I didn't understand when I married Lennox —I left things too late. I think he's beyond help. But it's different with Raymond. You could fight.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*calling*) Nadine.

NADINE. Coming, Mother. (*She goes up on the rock to Mrs. Boynton*)

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters from the marquee*)

BOY. (*to Sarah*) Selun, he very bad. You come, Miss Doctor.

SARAH. (*rising*) Very well.

(SARAH *and the* ARAB BOY *exit to the marquee.* RAYMOND *enters* R *and crosses to the table. He picks up a bottle that Nadine has left out of the case, at first casually, then with suddenly awakened attention. He stares down at it.* NADINE *helps* MRS. BOYNTON *to rise*)

RAYMOND. (*looking at the case*) Dr. Gerard's. (*He moves a step or two forward from the table, intent on the bottle in his hand*)

(MRS. BOYNTON *and* NADINE *move down* C)

MRS. BOYNTON. I think I'll sit here for a bit.

(RAYMOND, *startled, drops the bottle and turns*)

(*She indicates the chair* R *of the table*) There.

NADINE. Won't it be too hot for you in the sun?

MRS. BOYNTON. I don't mind the sun. It's really hotter up there among the rocks because of the refraction. This will do very well. (*She sits* R *of the table. To Raymond*) I saw you talking to that girl, Son.

RAYMOND. (*frightened*) I—I . . . (*with an effort*) Yes, I did speak to her. Why not?

MRS. BOYNTON. Why not, indeed. After all, you're young. You'd better go for a walk this afternoon.

RAYMOND. Go—for a walk? You—you want me to?

MRS. BOYNTON. Young people must enjoy themselves.

NADINE. Cat and mouse.

MRS. BOYNTON. That's an odd thing to say, Nadine.

NADINE. Is it?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*to Raymond*) Your friend went that way. (*She points with her stick to the marquee*)

(RAYMOND *exits doubtfully to the marquee.* NADINE *looks at Mrs. Boynton*)

(*She chuckles quietly*) Yes, young people must enjoy themselves—in their own way.

NADINE. (*crossing above Mrs. Boynton and standing above the table*) And old people in theirs.

MRS. BOYNTON. Now what do you mean by that, my dear?

NADINE. Just—cat and mouse.

MRS. BOYNTON. Very cryptic. You ought to go for a walk, Nadine, with that nice friend of yours—Mr. Cope.

NADINE. I suppose you saw us talking, too?

MRS. BOYNTON. Yes. He's very fond of you.

NADINE. (*moving* L *of the table*) I know.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm afraid you don't get as much fun as you ought to get. It's a very dull life waiting on a sick old woman—and Lennox—he's changed a lot—yes, he's changed.

NADINE (*moving down* L) He is not very happy.

MRS. BOYNTON. He ought to be—married to a charming and good-looking girl like you. I'm afraid sometimes, he doesn't appreciate you as much as he ought to do.

NADINE. You think Jefferson Cope appreciates me better?

MRS. BOYNTON. I think he's very much in love with you.

NADINE. And you want me to go away with him and leave Lennox—why?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*smoothly; with faint malicious amusement*) Really, Nadine, what words you put into my mouth—I've said nothing of the kind.

NADINE. It's what you mean, though. (*Slowly*) It was one of your reasons for coming here.

MRS. BOYNTON. You are talking very extravagantly, Nadine dear. Naturally

I want you to be happy—but of course I am not urging you to leave your husband. That would be a very wrong thing to do.

(NADINE *stares at Mrs. Boynton in silence for a moment or two*)

NADINE. (*moving up* L *of the table*) Why do you hate us all so much?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*amused*) Really, my dear child!

NADINE. (*still staring at her*) You like hurting people—don't you? You like the sense of power. I've thought sometimes that it came from your having been a wardress—but I think I see further than that—it was what made you become a wardress.

(MRS. BOYNTON *smiles gently*)

There are a lot of people who can't stand that job—but you—(*she slows down, dropping truth after truth as she stares at Mrs. Boynton*) liked it. When you married, you missed it—but you found consolation in the children—three helpless children. You started on *them.*

MRS. BOYNTON. Dear me, what an imagination you have got, Nadine dear.

NADINE. You've never been physically cruel. It's been a mental sport. You've thwarted and tortured Jinny until she's gone nearly over the edge. You know only too well what you've done to Lennox—I can't reach him any more. He doesn't give you much sport nowadays, does he? But Raymond does. Raymond's still able to rebel. You can have some fun with Raymond, can't you?

MRS. BOYNTON. Such curious ideas you have, Nadine, haven't you?

NADINE. That's why you came abroad. You were bored, weren't you? You'd tamed your wild beasts. You'd got them jumping through hoops just as you told them to. It was dull for you. So you brought them abroad—hoping they would rebel—hoping they'd suffer and that you'd have some fresh fun hurting them, seeing them writhe and squirm. (*Sharply*) Haven't you any pity?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*turning an impassive face to her*) I don't know what you mean.

NADINE. (*crossing above the table to* RC) Why do you like hurting people? It seems so senseless.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*in a thick voice*) Does it?

NADINE. So it's true—you *are* like that.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*with infinite scorn*) You little fool.

NADINE. (*turning on her*) It's you who are the fool. Hasn't it ever occurred to you that what you're doing is *dangerous?*

MRS. BOYNTON. Dangerous?

NADINE. Yes, dangerous. You can drive people too far.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm not afraid.

NADINE. You might—die.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm not going to die for a long time to come, Nadine dear. I may not have good health, but I've great powers of enjoyment—(*she chuckles grimly*) great powers of enjoyment.

NADINE. I think you're mad.

MRS. BOYNTON. Not in the legal sense, my dear.

(GINEVRA *enters* R *and stands listening*)

You won't be able to get me certified. (*She looks at Nadine and laughs*) There's someone else who's likely to be certified before me.

NADINE. (*catching her breath*) You mean—Jinny?

MRS. BOYNTON. (*smoothly*) Poor child.

(GINEVRA *runs off* R)

NADINE. Dr. Gerard is very interested in Jinny's case.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*almost with a snarl*) It's nothing to do with him.

NADINE. He assures me that with treatment Jinny would become perfectly normal. I think we ought to get his advice.

MRS. BOYNTON. Jinny is under age—and what you think or don't think, Nadine, doesn't matter. I'm the one who decides.

NADINE. Yes—we're all in your power—but if Jinny gets worse . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. If Jinny gets violent—(*smoothly*) she will have, of course to be restrained.

NADINE. Certified. Shut up. (*She shivers*) That's what you want to happen. I'm beginning to understand you—at last.

MRS. BOYNTON. My poor dear admirable daughter-in-law. And you don't know what to do about it.

NADINE. (*in a low voice*) Perhaps I do.

MRS. BOYNTON. Still going to remain devoted to Lennox however little he notices the fact? Jefferson Cope won't wait for ever, you know.

NADINE. (*crossing below the table to* L) As long as Lennox wants me I shall stay with him.

MRS. BOYNTON. Does Lennox want you very much?

(NADINE *winces*)

You must face facts, you know.

NADINE. What will you do if Raymond—escapes? (*She turns to her*)

MRS BOYNTON. I can manage Raymond.

NADINE. Perhaps you won't be able to manage Sarah King. You may find that she's stronger than you are.

MRS. BOYNTON. She's a fool!

NADINE. Not Sarah.

MRS. BOYNTON. Have you been asking Lennox to go away with you lately? You haven't had much success with that idea of yours, have you?

(NADINE *turns away*)

Dear Lennox. He's always been such an obedient, devoted son. (*She laughs*)

(COPE *enters* R)

COPE. (*moving* RC) You sound in good spirits, Mrs. Boynton. That's fine. I was afraid, you know, that the journey here might knock you up completely.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm enjoying myself here. I'm enjoying myself a good deal.

COPE. It's a wonderful place, it certainly is. (*To Nadine*) Are we going to have our walk? (*He looks at Mrs. Boynton*) But perhaps . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. Oh, don't mind leaving me. Nadine didn't go on the expedition this morning. She ought to have a little exercise.

COPE. You're always so considerate, Mrs. Boynton. (*To Nadine*) Shall we start? (*He crosses to the slope* L)

MRS. BOYNTON. (*to Nadine*) Just give me my medicine first, dear.

NADINE. I'll get it.

(NADINE *exits to the marquee*)

MRS. BOYNTON. A tired heart, you know. A tired heart. It has to be constantly stimulated. Never any good making a fuss. One must think of others—not oneself.

(NADINE *enters from the marquee, carrying a glass of medicine*)

NADINE (*moving to Mrs. Boynton*) Here it is.

(MRS. BOYNTON *takes the glass and drinks the medicine*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Isn't it rather stronger than usual? (*She puts the glass on the table*)

NADINE. I don't think so.

COPE. Shall we go now?

NADINE. (*moving to the slope* L) Yes, we'll go now.

(COPE *exits up the slope*)

(*She goes up the slope a few steps, then stops*) Good-bye, Mother.

MRS. BOYNTON. Good-bye.

(NADINE *exits up the slope.* MRS. BOYNTON *chuckles a little as she is left to herself. She examines the contents of Gerard's case, takes out a bottle or two and looks at them.* LENNOX *enters* R *and crosses toward the marquee. He has a book in his hand but walks like one in a dream*)

Lennox.

(LENNOX *does not hear*)

(*Louder*) *Lennox.* Come here.

(LENNOX *moves to* R *of Mrs. Boynton*)

What have you been doing, son?

(LENNOX *acts throughout as though it took a long time for words to reach him*)

LENNOX. I've been reading.

MRS. BOYNTON. What have you been reading?

LENNOX. I can't remember. Was Nadine here?

MRS. BOYNTON. Yes, she's gone for a walk with Mr. Cope.

LENNOX. Oh.

(MRS. BOYNTON *looks at Lennox for a moment or two*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Has it ever occurred to you that your wife's in love with Jefferson Cope?

LENNOX. (*rather quicker*) Nadine—in love with Cope?

MRS. BOYNTON. He's certainly in love with *her*. I think you ought to be prepared, son, for the possibility that Nadine might—leave you.

LENNOX. Leave me—Nadine.

MRS. BOYNTON. He's a very charming man, you know, and they've always been great friends—and it's been a dull life for Nadine. I'm afraid you haven't been able to be much of a companion to her.

LENNOX. Nadine. I—I couldn't live without Nadine. (*He crosses down* L)

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm afraid you may have to live without her—whether you want to or not.

LENNOX. She said she might go . . . (*He breaks off*) She asked me . . . What did she ask me?

MRS. BOYNTON. How should I know?

LENNOX. I couldn't do it, though, could I? I mean—where should I go? How should I live?

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm afraid you could never support yourself, my poor boy.

(LENNOX *moves to* L *of the table. His manner is now definitely odd*)

LENNOX. It's you who are stopping me, isn't it? Can't you let me go? Please let me go.

MRS. BOYNTON. You can't go. (*She watches him closely*) You can't go, Lennox. You're no good. I'm afraid you're going to be very unhappy.

LENNOX. (*muttering*) Unhappy. (*He sits* L *of the table, his foot stepping on the bottle dropped by Raymond*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Pick that up.

(LENNOX *picks up the bottle and stares at it*)

It will be very quiet without Nadine—very quiet and very lonely.

LENNOX. There's something I could do—if I could only remember. (*He rises and looks at the bottle*) Something quite easy. (*He looks suddenly at Mrs. Boynton*) Are *you* my enemy?

MRS. BOYNTON. What a very odd thing to say, dear boy.

(*Voices are heard off* R)

Give me that bottle, it belongs in here.

(LENNOX *hands the botttle to Mrs. Boynton, then exits to the marquee.* MRS. BOYNTON *looks at the bottle and puts it on the table.* HIGGS *enters* R. MISS PRYCE *follows him on, catches her scarf on something and is held*)

MISS PRYCE. Oh dear.

HIGGS. Are ye fast? I mean, are yer stuck? (*He moves to Miss Pryce and detaches her*)

MISS PRYCE. Thank you so much. I'm quite loose now. (*She moves* RC)

(LADY WESTHOLME *enters* R)

LADY WESTHOLME. Now where is Mahommed? (*She crosses to the marquee*) That man is never about when one wants him.

(LADY WESTHOLME *exits to the marquee*)

HIGGS. (*crossing to* C) What is that lad's name? Mahommed or Abraham?

MISS PRYCE. Lady Westholme says she always calls her dragoman Mahommed.

HIGGS. What, even when it isn't 'is name?

MISS PRYCE. Apparently.

HIGGS. Well! I wonder they stand for it. *Ah* wouldn't.

MISS PRYCE. But then you're such a masterful man, Mr. Higgs.

HIGGS. Ay. Ah know my rights and I stands oop for 'em.

MISS PRYCE. I can see that.

HIGGS. And them as doan't is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red 'errin'.

MISS PRYCE. And he's such a nice man—and *so clean.* (*Confidentially*) He changes his shirt every day.

HIGGS. 'E needs to in this climate. Eh, I wasn't 'alf in a muck sweat meself this morning.

MISS PRYCE. (*reprovingly*) *Mr.* Higgs!

HIGGS. Ah doan't 'old much with foreigners. I shared a cabin with one comin' over and one mornin' I caught 'im usin' my toothbrush.

MISS PRYCE. How revolting.

HIGGS. And d'yer know what 'e said? He said, "Ah thought it was a ship's toothbrush—for us all like." (*He laughs uproariously*)

(MISS PRYCE *winces*)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*off; calling*) Mahommed.

HIGGS. (*calling*) P'raps 'e's oop on second floor, Lady Breastbone.

(LADY WESTHOLME *appears at the entrance to the marquee*)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*furiously*) What did you say, Mr. Higgs?

HIGGS. Ah said p'raps 'e's oop on second floor, Lady Fishbone.

LADY WESTHOLME. You may find out to your cost, my good man, that my name is Westholme.

HIGGS. Ay. An' 'is isn't Mahommed.

(LADY WESTHOLME *flounces back into the marquee and is heard again calling defiantly*)

LADY WESTHOLME (*off; callling*) *Ma-hom-med.*

HIGGS. (*chuckling*) Eh! That's a grand voice for electioneering. She wouldn't need loud-speaker van.

MISS PRYCE. You know, I think all the servants must be asleep.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*off; calling*) *Mahommed.*

HIGGS. (*chuckling*) Not after that.

MISS PRYCE. (*getting confidential again*) I do hope we're safe here. Those servants look so wild and *fierce*. Suppose they were to murder us all one night.

HIGGS. Ah could understand 'em murderin' 'er ladyship—but what 'ave we done?

MISS PRYCE. They might rob us.

HIGGS. Well, they're doin' *that* already without murderin' us. (*With maliciously asssumed appprehension*) Of course, they could kidnap us and 'old us to ransom.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters quietly* R)

MISS PRYCE. Kidnap us! How dreadful.

DRAGOMAN. (*moving suddenly between Miss Pryce and Higgs; with a beaming smile*) You ready go nice walk, ladies and gentlemen?

MISS PRYCE. (*startled*) Oh!

LADY WESTHOLME. (*off; calling*) Mahommed.

(LADY WESTHOLME *enters from the marquee*)

There you are. (*She moves below the table*) Didn't you hear me calling?

DRAGOMAN. Abraham hear someone call *Mahommed.*

HIGGS. (*moving* LC; *to Lady Westholme*) And 'e put 'is telescope to 'is blind ear.

(SARAH *and* RAYMOND *enter* R *and stand down* R. LADY WESTHOLME *ignores Higgs and crosses below him to* C)

LADY WESTHOLME. And *where* are all the servants?

DRAGOMAN. (*moving to* R *of Lady Westholme*) Bedouin all sleep now. Later wake up, make dinner. But Abraham Christian. Abraham understand Christian ladies and gentlemen like afternoon instructive walk and then drink afternoon tea. You come now?

HIGGS. Ay, we're coomin'. Coom on, ladies, and be kidnapped.

MISS PRYCE. *Mr. Higgs.* Don't say such dreadful things.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*crossing to* R) If you intend to accompany us, Mr. Higgs, I trust that you will curb your facetiousness and allow those *better educated* than yourself to enjoy the archaeological and historical interests of this place.

(LADY WESTHOLME *stalks out* R. MISS PRYCE *follows her off.* HIGGS *stands for a moment, nonplussed, scratching his head. He can think of no riposte. He chuckles and shakes his head*)

HIGGS. Nay—she got me *that* time.

(HIGGS *exits* R. *The* DRAGOMAN *follows him off*)

SARAH. What a circus! Oof! I want a drink. (*To Raymond*) Do you think you can find one?

(RAYMOND *crosses and exits to the marquee. There is a silence during which* SARAH *crosses to* R *of Mrs. Boynton*)

This really is a fantastic place.

(MRS. BOYNTON *does not answer*)

(*She looks at Mrs. Boynton, smiles and shrugs her shoulders*) Your son and I have had a very pleasant walk.

(MRS. BOYNTON *taps with her stick and does not answer.* RAYMOND *enters from the marquee carrying a glass of lime juice which he hands to Sarah*)

Thank you.

(SARAH *crosses and exits with the drink* R. RAYMOND *moves a step or two after her*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Ray, my dear, it won't do.

RAYMOND. (*stopping* C *and turning*) What won't do?

MRS. BOYNTON. That girl. I encouraged you to go for a walk with her this afternoon against my better judgement—but I don't like her. I don't like the way she runs after you. I should just be barely civil to her and nothing more in future, if I were you.

RAYMOND. That's impossible.

MRS. BOYNTON. Oh, no, Raymond. You'll do what I say.

RAYMOND. (*moving* RC) I tell you it's impossible. Sarah and I are friends.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*moving a little and fixing him with her eye*) You won't be friends if I don't want you to be.

RAYMOND. But I shall—I must.

MRS. BOYNTON. You won't be friends if I don't want you to be.

RAYMOND. (*crossing down* L) You—you can't make me do things like that.

MRS. BOYNTON. Nonsense! You've always done what I wanted. (*Firmly*) You always will. You can't help yourself.

RAYMOND. But Sarah—it's different . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. It isn't different, Son. You've got to give up Sarah.

RAYMOND. No.

MRS. BOYNTON. You are going to give up Sarah.

RAYMOND. (*moving to* L *of the table; his voice high and hysterical*) No—no—I won't do it.

MRS. BOYNTON. I always know what's best for you. (*Forcefully*) You'll keep out of her way in future.

RAYMOND. No. I . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. *You'll keep out of her way.* You'll be rude to her.

RAYMOND. No . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. (*with force*) *You'll do what I want.*

RAYMOND. I—I . . .

MRS. BOYNTON. You'll do what I tell you.

RAYMOND. (*after a pause; dully*) Yes. Yes, I suppose so. (*He sits* L *of the table*)

(SARAH *enters* R)

MRS. BOYNTON. You'll avoid Sarah King.

RAYMOND. I'll avoid Sarah King.

MRS. BOYNTON. So that's settled. You understand? You're giving up Sarah King.

RAYMOND. I'm giving up Sarah King. (*He buries his face in his hands*)

SARAH. (*crossing and standing above the table*) Extraordinarily interesting. I'm glad I heard it. Cheer up, Ray—I'm not giving *you* up.

MRS. BOYNTON. Tell her to go away.

RAYMOND. I . . . Please go away.

SARAH. I'm not going.

MRS. BOYNTON. Tell her to leave you alone.

RAYMOND. I . . . You'd better—leave me alone.

SARAH. Your mother and I are going to have a talk.

RAYMOND. I . . . (*He looks at Mrs. Boynton*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Go away, Raymond.

SARAH. Yes, please go away, Ray.

(RAYMOND *rises and exits slowly to the marquee.* SARAH *and* MRS. BOYNTON *look at each other*)

What an extraordinary futile and silly old woman you are.

(MRS. BOYNTON *quivers*)

Yes, you didn't expect that. But it's true. (*She moves to* L *of the table*) You like to make yourself out a kind of ogre. Really, you're ludicrous —almost pathethic. Why don't you give up this silly sadistic business?

MRS. BOYNTON. How dare you speak to me like that?

SARAH. It's time someone did. It's time someone showed you what you really are. You've wanted to feel powerful, haven't you—you've enjoyed hurting and torturing people? It's made you feel grand and important. But you're only a petty little domestic tyrant. You've acquired a certain amount of hypnotic influence over your family. But the influence can be broken.

MRS. BOYNTON. Who's going to break it?

SARAH. I am.

MRS. BOYNTON. You think you'll get Raymond, do you? I know the sort of girl you are—man mad. Pretending to be professional and all the time running after some man or other.

SARAH. (*sitting* L *of the table; calmly*) Saying things like that won't upset me. I'm going to fight you, Mrs. Boynton.

MRS. BOYNTON. You'll lose.

SARAH. No, I shall win.

MRS. BOYNTON. You little fool. I've got Raymond—I've got all of them, like *that*. (*She makes a gesture with her thumb*)

(LENNOX *enters* R *and sits in the deck chair down* R)

SARAH. You really are quite incredible—like something in a medical textbook. I shall win all right. I've two strong weapons on my side.

MRS. BOYNTON. And what are they?

SARAH. Youth and sex.

MRS. BOYNTON. Aren't you ashamed to say a thing like that?

SARAH. I love Raymond. I'll fight for him with every weapon I've got.

MRS. BOYNTON. I'm stronger than you are. I've experience behind me—years of experience. (*With force*) I can do things to people's minds.

SARAH. Yes, you've got knowledge—a lot of evil knowledge. But you haven't got—very long to use it.

MRS. BOYNTON. What do you mean?

SARAH. There's something else on my side—time. (*She rises*)

MRS. BOYNTON. Time?

SARAH. I'm a doctor and I know what I'm talking about. (*Slowly*) You haven't got long to live. I give you—at the most—six months.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*badly shaken*) Six months? Rubbish!

SARAH. Ask Dr. Gerard if you don't believe me.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*stricken*) Six months . . .

SARAH. It's the truth. You've got an appointment—an appointment you'll have to keep—an appointment with death. When you're dead, your family will be free. So you see, death's on my side, as well as life.

MRS. BOYNTON. (*convulsed with rage*) Get out of my sight. Go away.

SARAH. Can't you stop hating? It's not too late for that.

MRS. BOYNTON. Get out! Get out! Get out! (*She strikes the table with her stick*)

(SARAH *looks at Mrs. Boynton, shakes her head, shrugs her shoulders and exits to the marquee.* COPE *and* NADINE *enter down the slope* L, COPE *leading*)

NADINE. (*as she enters*) It's too hot to walk far. (*She moves down* L)

(COPE *moves to the marquee entrance.* MRS. BOYNTON *says nothing. She sits glaring in front of her and shaking with rage*)

LENNOX. Nadine.

NADINE. Yes? (*She signs to Cope to go*)

(COPE *exits to the marquee*)

LENNOX. (*rising*) Nadine.

(NADINE *crosses to Lennox.* MRS. BOYNTON *fumbles with the bottles on the table*)

Is it true—that you're going away with Cope?

NADINE. Yes.

(NADINE *looks at Lennox, then turns, crosses and exits to the marquee. There is a pause. The* ARAB BOY *enters from the marquee. He carries a tray with a cup and saucer on it*)

BOY. (*moving to Mrs. Boynton*) I bring you tea, lady, tea.

(MRS. BOYNTON *strikes the table with her stick*)

(*He squeals, drops the tray on the ground and runs to the marquee entrance*) *Allah Kerim!* Very bad devil. Very bad devil . . .

(*The* ARAB BOY *runs into the marquee.* RAYMOND *enters from the marquee, looks at Mrs. Boynton then crosses to Lennox*)

LENNOX. (*quietly*) That's it. One of us has got to kill her.

MRS BOYNTON } (*together*) { Raymond. Come and help me back up there.
LENNOX } { One of us has got to kill her.

(RAYMOND *stares at Lennox, then crosses to* MRS. BOYNTON, *who rises.* RAYMOND *helps her up on the rock up* R *and settles her on the stool outside the cave.* LENNOX *stares out front.* RAYMOND *comes down and stands slightly behind Lennox*)

RAYMOND. What did you say?

CURTAIN

## Scene II

SCENE—*The same. Three hours later.*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises, it is just before sunset.* MRS. BOYNTON *is seated at the mouth of the cave up* R, *but the cave is now in very deep shadow.* GINEVRA *enters cautiously from the marquee, hears voices off* R *and slips back again. The* DRAGOMAN, HIGGS *and* LADY WESTHOLME *trail in* R *in single file. They are tired, hot and cross.* HIGGS *crosses and collapses into the chair* L *of the table.* LADY WESTHOLME *crosses and sits in the chair* R *of the table. The* DRAGOMAN *stands* C.

HIGGS. (*mopping his brow*) Well, I reckon we've earned our supper. Ah reckon Miss Pryce knew what she was about, turning back wi' headache. I'm fagged out, I am.

LADY WESTHOLME. I never feel fatigue.

HIGGS. I see—you're as strong as a horse.

DRAGOMAN. Yes. You very strong lady. You walk up, down over—you just like goat.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*indignantly*) Mahommed!

HIGGS. (*laughing*) Aye, that's it, Abraham, like a goat.

(LADY WESTHOLME *freezes, and if looks could kill . . .*)

(*He mops his brow*) Eh, but I'm in muck sweat.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*at last finding her tongue again*) Your sense of humour, Mr. Higgs, is only equalled by your choice of epithet. "Muck sweat" is applied to *horses.*

HIGGS. Now I come to think of it, you look more like a horse than a goat. (*To the Dragoman*) Bring a big bottle of beer along to my tent, Abraham—aye, and take the same along to 'er ladyship, and charge it oop ter me. That'll show there's no ill feeling.

LADY WESTHOLME. Thank you—but I prefer a pot of tea.

DRAGOMAN. Too late make tea, lady. Supper now.

LADY WESTHOLME. Nonsense, there must be a kettle on the boil.

DRAGOMAN. No, lady, kettle him not boil now.

HIGGS. (*rising*) That's the best o' beer, yer doan't 'ave ter boil it. Yer know, I doan't reckon much to this afternoon—why, we didn't see nowt.

DRAGOMAN. (*crossing to Higgs*) Oh, yes, please. You see maiden hairy-fern, all hang down.

HIGGS. Well, ah can see that hanging oop in me green-'ouse at 'ome. Ah doan't want to come abroad to 'eathen parts to see it 'angin' down.

DRAGOMAN. Very good, I get beer.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *crosses and exits to the marquee.* HIGGS *crosses to* RC)

HIGGS. (*looking up at Mrs. Boynton*) And I see we've got our 'eathen idol with us still. Sitting oop there for all the world like summat out of Old Testament. Moloch, was it, as they used to sacrifice children to? How their parents fell for it beats me. Ee, they moost 'ave been daft.

LADY WESTHOLME. It was an age of crude superstition. Nowadays . . .

HIGGS. Nowadays there's still sacrifices going on. I've kept my eyes open since I've been 'ere, and I tell you my 'eart bleeds for those kids of 'ers. That old image up there sees to it they're sacrificed all right. She's what them psycho-whatnots call a bluddy sadist.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*rising*) Mr. Higgs—oh!

(LADY WESTHOLME, *limping from a blistered foot, crosses and exits* R)

HIGGS. (*sniffing*) Ee, there's a champion smell of *animal* sacrifice. Now let's 'ope it won't be a burnt offerin'.

(HIGGS *exits* R. GINEVRA *enters cautiously from the marquee, and moves up* C. *She has a long sharp knife in her hand. She is taken unawares by*

*hearing* GERARD's *voice off. She moves quickly to the table, conceals the knife under Gerard's medical case, then picks up Sarah's hypodermic case as though that had been her business at the table.* GERARD *enters from the marquee.* GINEVRA *moves quickly* C)

GERARD. (*noting her confusion*) What have got there? (*He crosses to* L *of Ginevra*)

GINEVRA. Nothing.

GERARD. Give that to me. (*He takes the case from her and opens it*) What have you done with the hypodermic?

GINEVRA. I don't know. I haven't touched it.

(GERARD *frowns, moves to the table, puts Sarah's case on it, then moves his own case preparatory to opening it and discovers the knife*)

GERARD. (*picking up the knife*) Aha! (*He moves down* R *of the table*)

(GINEVRA *springs forward and tries to take the knife from him*)

What is this?

GINEVRA. Give it me. I must have it.

GERARD. Where did you get it from?

GINEVRA. (*pointing to the marquee*) From in there. I want it—to defend myself—*against them.*

GERARD. Listen, *mon enfant,* you must give up all this make-believe. (*He puts the knife on the table*)

GINEVRA. You say that—but you know that it's true. (*She moves close to him*) You followed me here, didn't you? From Jerusalem. You're here to protect me. I know you are.

GERARD. (*taking her hands*) Listen, Ginevra, I want to help you . . .

GINEVRA. I knew—I knew. (*Sweetly*) You're in love with me, aren't you?

GERARD. I'm nearly old enough to be your father.

GINEVRA. But I like you very much. (*She smiles at him*) Dr. Gerard, I don't want to die. (*Angrily*) You must believe me—you must. (*Confidentially*) Listen, yesterday, they put poison in my food.

GERARD. (*firmly*) No, your food was quite all right.

GINEVRA. You—you do know that I don't really belong to them? You know that that's true. You can see, can't you, that I'm different?

GERARD. We would all like to be different.

GINEVRA. I can't tell you who I am. I promised. (*Grandly*) My lips are sealed.

GERARD. (*firmly*) You are Ginevra Boynton.

GINEVRA. I hate you. I hate you. (*She crosses to the chair* R *of the table, sits and cries*)

GERARD. (*moving behind her*) Don't you understand, Ginevra, that what you are doing is dangerous? The way of escape you have found for yourself is no real escape. You must face reality, not lose yourself in a world of fantasy.

GINEVRA. I thought you would help me to escape.

GERARD. That is what I want to do. (*He moves to* L *of the table*)

GINEVRA. You will take me away with you—to France—to Paris?

GERARD. I would like to take you to France. (*He sits* L *of the table*)

GINEVRA. You have a house there?

(GERARD *nods*)

A castle?

GERARD. (*with a smile*) No, a clinic.

GINEVRA. (*doubtfully*) Oh. (*With curiosity*) Should I like it there?

GERARD. Yes, you would do real things with your mind—and the unreal things would not be interesting any more.

GINEVRA. Real things. You wouldn't tell me that I am ill all the time?

GERARD. No, for you are not ill.

GINEVRA. (*with a gesture towards Mrs. Boynton*) She says I am ill. She—she wants me to be ill—she makes me ill. She says—she says—they are going to shut me up—(*her voice rises*) to shut me up. (*She rises and moves* RC)

GERARD. (*rising and moving above the table to* C) No, no, you must be calm.

GINEVRA. I want to come with you.

GERARD. I know.

GINEVRA. Why can't I? Because she won't let me go?

GERARD. For the moment, that is true.

GINEVRA. She won't let me go.

(GERARD *moves to Ginevra and puts a hand on her shoulder*)

GERARD. You must hold on, Jinny—hold on. Do you understand? It is just a question of waiting—perhaps not waiting very long.

GINEVRA. (*drawing away; emphatically*) When she is dead, I can go. That is what you mean, isn't it? When she is dead. When she is dead we can all go.

GERARD. Don't talk like that.

GINEVRA. Why not? (*She crosses to* L) *They did.*

GERARD. Who did?

(GINEVRA *looks at him sideways and laughs*)

GINEVRA. I heard them. They didn't know I was there. They said that she'd got to be killed—that it was the only way.

GERARD. (*crossing to her*) Who said that? (*He takes both her hands in his*)

GINEVRA. They said one of us would have to do it—for the sake of the others.

GERARD. Who said so?

GINEVRA. Lennox and Raymond.

GERARD. You're inventing again.

GINEVRA. No, this is really true.

GERARD. So you admit the other isn't?

GINEVRA. (*angrily*) I hate you. Let me go. Let me go.

(GINEVRA *twists away from him, runs across and exits* R. NADINE *enters* R *as Ginevra exits*)

NADINE. (*crossing to* C) What's the matter with Jinny?

(GERARD *picks up the knife and shows it to Nadine*)

What's that? A knife. That's bad—that's very bad.

GERARD. Yes, the case grows serious. (*He puts the knife on the table*)

NADINE. (*moving* LC) But it's not too late. She could have treatment.

GERARD. Yes, there is still time, but you understand—not much.

NADINE. (*crossing down* L) Do you believe in the Devil, Dr. Gerard?

GERARD. You mean, do I believe in Evil, positive Evil? Yes, I do.

NADINE. So do I.

(GERARD *and* NADINE *look up at Mrs. Boynton*)

GERARD. And we can do nothing.

NADINE. Don't be too sure of that.

(COPE *enters* R *and crosses to* C. *He looks radiant*)

COPE. Must be nearly supper time.

GERARD. Yes, I must go and wash. (*He picks up his case of drugs and crosses to* R)

COPE. It seems almost chilly after the heat of the afternoon.
GERARD. Yes, there is a sharp fall of temperature at sunset.

(GERARD *exits* R)

COPE. (*crossing to Nadine*) Hadn't I better get you a wrap, Nadine?
NADINE. No, thank you, it will be hot in the marquee. Jeff, I was just—talking about Jinny to Dr. Gerard.
COPE. (*his face becoming worried*) Oh—Jinny. I was talking to Dr. Gerard yesterday, and he was quite confident that by treatment in his sanatorium he could effect a perfect cure. It's a well-known place and bears the highest reputation. I said as much to Mrs. Boynton.
NADINE. So you talked to her about it. What did she say?
COPE. She said a mother's care was worth all the new-fangled doctors' cures put together.
NADINE. (*crossing to* RC) She isn't Jinny's mother.
COPE. Why, no, that's true. (*He moves* LC) But I know she's only anxious for Jinny's good.
NADINE. (*impatiently yet tenderly*) Oh, Jeff—the worst of a nice person like you—you're so—so trusting.
COPE. I trust in you.
NADINE. Don't.
COPE. You haven't—changed your mind?
NADINE. (*moving to him*) Why should you think I have? What's the good of staying with Lennox? I must start a new life—with you. (*She gives him her hand*)
COPE. It shall be a happy life, I promise you.
NADINE. Can anybody promise that?

(RAYMOND *enters* R, *moves to the deck chair down* R *and sits lost in a brown study*)

COPE. I feel I ought to speak to Lennox. I don't want to be anything but straightforward about this business.
NADINE. No, Jeff—please. No, I mean it.
DRAGOMAN. (*off; calling*) Dinner, him ready.
NADINE. You go on.

(COPE *hesitates then exits to the marquee.* LENNOX *enters* R *and crosses to Nadine*)

LENNOX. Nadine.
NADINE. Yes.

LENNOX. You took me by surprise this afternoon. Wait until we get back to Jerusalem. Things may be different then.

NADINE. (*turning to look at him*) Different? How should they be different?

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters from the marquee. He holds a gong which he beats with enjoyment*)

DRAGOMAN. Dinner, him ready.

(NADINE *exits to the marquee.* LENNOX *follows her off. The* ARAB BOY *enters from the marquee. He has a tray of drinks which he puts on the table. He then exits to the marquee.* HIGGS *enters* R)

HIGGS. (*to the Dragoman*) Steady on, lad, we're not deaf.

DRAGOMAN. Dinner, him ready.

HIGGS. All right, we 'eard yer first time.

(LADY WESTHOLME *enters* R. *The* DRAGOMAN *crosses and exits* R)

LADY WESTHOLME. (*crossing and sitting* R *of the table*) Perfectly barbarous! Really, natives are just like children.

HIGGS. (*moving above the table*) Aye, my kids at 'ome love bangin' gong. (*He pours drinks for Lady Westholme and himself*) 'Ave you got any kids, Lady Westholme?

LADY WESTHOLME. No.

HIGGS. Soom'ow I didn't think you 'ad. (*He sits* L *of the table*)

(GERARD *enters* R *and moves to Raymond*)

LADY WESTHOLME. Indeed!

(LADY WESTHOLME *and* HIGGS *sip their drinks*)

GERARD. (*to Raymond*) Lost in thought?

RAYMOND. I was thinking of our expedition this morning—to the place of sacrifice.

GERARD. Yes.

RAYMOND. You know, I think one can attach too much regard to life. Death isn't really as important as we make out. Sometimes, I think a sacrifice is really necessary.

GERARD. You mean—the sacrifice of human life?

RAYMOND. Yes.

GERARD. It is expedient that one man should die for the people? Is that your idea?

RAYMOND. Yes, there's a great truth there.

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters on to the rock from* R *and unsuccessfully tries to rouse Mrs. Boynton*)

GERARD. A man may lay down his life, that is one thing—to be forcibly deprived of it is another. I doubt if that has ever advanced human progress or human happiness.

RAYMOND. (*rising; excitedly*) I don't agree with you. It might be the only thing to do. There are deaths that would result only in good—deaths that would set people free—deaths that would save misery and disaster. The kind of death that would only mean advancing the clock a little. All that is needed is courage—yes, courage.

(*The* ARAB BOY *comes down to Gerard and whispers in his ear.* GERARD *and the* ARAB BOY *exit* R. *During the ensuing lines,* GERARD *enters on to the rock from* R *and bends over Mrs. Boynton.* LADY WESTHOLME *finishes her drink, rises and exits to the marquee.* LENNOX *enters* R *and moves to Raymond*)

HIGGS. (*to Raymond*) Courage is a funny thing, young man. There's men as'll face machine-guns and run from mother-in-law.

(MISS PRYCE *enters* R)

MISS PRYCE. Oh, I do hope you haven't been waiting for me.

HIGGS. (*rising and placing a chair for Miss Pryce*) 'Ow's t'eadache? (*He pours a drink for Miss Pryce*)

MISS PRYCE. (*crossing and sitting* R *of the table*) Quite gone now, thank you.

HIGGS. Sorry you 'ad ter come back this afternoon. (*He resumes his seat*) But yer didn't miss mooch—except a bit of an argument with 'er 'oity-toityness and old father Abraham.

MISS PRYCE. Oh—what about?

HIGGS. Everything. And she was always right and he was always wrong.

MISS PRYCE. And do you agree, Mr. Higgs?

HIGGS. Ah doan't know. Ancient 'Istory isn't mooch in my line. I started at ten sixty-six and went t'other way.

(SARAH *enters* R, *crosses and stands above the table*)

SARAH. (*yawning*) Ooh—I've been asleep.

HIGGS. Pleasant dreams, I 'ope.

SARAH. No dreams at all.

HIGGS. Ah 'ad a peculiar dream once.

MISS PRYCE. Oh, do tell us, Mr. Higgs.

HIGGS. (*chuckling*) Ah dreamt there was three of me—and only one glass of beer.

MISS PRYCE. Oh, Mr. Higgs! Well, I really did have a peculiar dream once. I dreamed that I was going to tea with the Archbishop of Canterbury—so I took a ticket to Walham Green, of all places—and then I found I was in my nightdress.

(GERARD *comes down from the rock to Lennox*)

GERARD. Mr. Boynton. I fear I have some very bad news for you. Your mother—(*he pauses*) is dead.

CURTAIN

# Act Three

## Scene I

SCENE: *The same. The following morning.*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises, the* DRAGOMAN *is asleep in the chair* R *of the table. The* ARAB BOY *enters from the marquee, sweeping a small pile of rubbish before him with a long broom. He is not looking where he is going and the broom strikes the Dragoman's feet. The* DRAGOMAN *wakes with a yell and chases the* ARAB BOY *off* R. SARAH *and* RAYMOND *enter down the slope* L, *during this and watch with amusement. They move down* C *as the* DRAGOMAN *and the* ARAB BOY *exit to the marquee.*

RAYMOND. Is it true, Sarah? Is it really true? You *do* care for me?

SARAH. Idiot!

(RAYMOND *takes Sarah in his arms and they kiss*)

RAYMOND. (*crossing below the table*) The whole thing is like a dream. It seems rather awful in a way—so soon after last night.

SARAH. (*moving to* R *of him*) Don't be morbid. What's the good of hypocrisy?

RAYMOND. All the same, you know, Sarah, it's rather dreadful to be *glad* anyone is dead.

SARAH. Yes, I know. Your stepmother was not only an unpleasant woman, but a dangerous woman. It's a mercy she died as she did. Frankly, it's almost too good to be true.

RAYMOND. I know. I feel the same. It's like coming out of the shadow into sunlight. (*In a soft voice*) We're—free.

SARAH. It's terrible that one human being should have been able to acquire such power over others.

RAYMOND. We shouldn't have let it happen.

SARAH. My dear, you hadn't any choice. She started in on you as young children. Believe me, I do know what I'm talking about.

(*They lean on the downstage side of the table*)

RAYMOND. My learned physician.

SARAH. (*anxiously*) You don't mind my being a doctor, do you?

RAYMOND. Of course not, darling. Who am I to mind?

SARAH. Well, I rather imagined, you were going to be my husband—but, of course, you haven't really asked me.

RAYMOND. Sarah. (*He catches at her*)

(SARAH *eludes Raymond.* NADINE *and* LENNOX *enter* R. *They look quietly happy*)

NADINE. Oh, there you are, Sarah. I wanted to see you. I have been talking to Dr. Gerard about Ginevra.

SARAH. Yes?

NADINE. We are arranging for her to go into his clinic near Paris for treatment.

SARAH. Yes, indeed. Dr. Gerard is absolutely at the top of the tree as a psychiatrist. You couldn't have a better man. He's absolutely first class.

NADINE. He tells us that she will be absolutely all right—a perfectly normal girl.

SARAH. I think so, too. There's nothing fundamentally in the least wrong with Jinny. It was sheer escapism that was driving her into fantasy. But fortunately it's not too late.

NADINE. No, it's not too late. (*She looks up at the cave mouth*) The shadow's gone.

LENNOX. It's like waking up from a dream.

NADINE. One just deosn't believe it can be true.

RAYMOND. But it is. She can't harm us now. She can't stop us from doing what we want.

(SARAH *and* RAYMOND *move slowly up* C *during the following speech*)

(*Seriously*) Look here, Sarah, I've got to do something with my life. I've got to work at something—something that matters. And I don't even know what capabilities I've got—I don't know what I can do—I don't even know if I've got any brains at all.

(SARAH *and* RAYMOND *exit up* L)

LENNOX. (*catching Nadine's hand*) Nadine. You aren't going to leave me?

NADINE. You think not?

LENNOX. I shan't let you go.

NADINE. Why did you never say that before?

LENNOX. Why? Why? I can't imagine. (*He crosses to* L) What's been the

matter with me? Why could I feel like I feel today? How did she do it? Why did she have that effect on me—on all of us? Just an ordinary, rather tyrannical old woman.

NADINE. No, Lennox, she was more than that. She had—(*gropingly*) *power.* There is such a thing as positive Evil. We've seen it in the world—working on nations. This was a small private instance that happened in a family—but it's the same thing—a lust for power, a delight in cruelty and torture . . . (*She breaks off*)

LENNOX. (*tenderly*) Nadine—my dear. It's all over. We've escaped.

NADINE. Yes, we've escaped. She can't harm us now.

(COLONEL CARBERY *enters on the rock from* R. *He is a tall, middle-aged Englishman in uniform. He has a vacant face and seems the huntin', shootin' and fishin' type, but every now and then shows disturbing shrewdness. He is carrying a small sheaf of papers. He examines the stools on the rock, looks into the cave and makes some notes. The* DRAGOMAN *enters from the marquee*)

DRAGOMAN. (*crossing to* LC) Good morning, sir and lady. I hope you sleep well in spite of sad and tragic occurrence. Very old lady, heat too much for her. You try not grieve too much. You have very fine funeral in Jerusalem—very nice cemetery there, very expensive. I take you to high class monumental shop, have very nice memorial. You have big stone angel with wings? Or big slab Jerusalem stone and very fine text from Bible. My friend he make you very special price if I ask him. He very big man—all best dead people go to him.

NADINE. (*indicating Carbery*) Who is that up there?

DRAGOMAN. That Colonel Carbery. Carbery Pasha. Big man Transjordania. He head of Transjordanian police.

(CARBERY *exits up* R)

NADINE. (*sharply*) *Police.*

DRAGOMAN. (*smiling*) I send policeman off last night—made report. Any death got to be reported.

LENNOX. Eh? Oh, yes, of course.

DRAGOMAN. So Carbery Pasha he come himself, arrange everything. (*He beams*) All ver' official and first class.

LENNOX. (*slowly*) I think—I ought to go and speak to him.

NADINE. Yes—yes. I'll come with you.

(LENNOX *and* NADINE *cross and exit* R. HIGGS *strolls on from the marquee*)

HIGGS. Ee, what's to do?

DRAGOMAN. Make arrangements take back old lady's body. Get horses for others. We leave camp this afternoon.

HIGGS. We do, do we? Ee, lad, I paid down me money for four days. I'll want a rebate on that.

DRAGOMAN. Very sad circumstances alter cases.

HIGGS. Ee, I've not noticed anybody looking sad.

(LADY WESTHOLME *and* MISS PRYCE *enter* R. LADY WESTHOLME *crosses to* C)

(*To Lady Westholme*) This chap says we're going back this afternoon.

DRAGOMAN. (*moving between Lady Westholme and Miss Pryce*) I take you two ladies and gentleman nice walk this morning. Show you interesting architecture and more maiden hairy-fern. You see best of Petra before you go back.

LADY WESTHOLME. I think it would be extremely *bad taste* to go on an expedition this morning.

DRAGOMAN. (*concerned*) Something you eat taste bad? You tell Abraham. Abraham scold cook.

HIGGS. No use kicking our heels here. Might as well do a bit of sightseeing. Coom on. (*He moves to* L *of Lady Westholme and takes her arm*)

(LADY WESTHOLME *jerks her arm away*)

You like your money's worth as well as another, I'll bet you do and all.

LADY WESTHOLME. Kindly allow me to know my own mind, Mr. Higgs.

DRAGOMAN. (*nudging Lady Westholme*) Very nice expedition——

(LADY WESTHOLME *glares at the Dragoman*)

—(*coaxingly*) Very antique. Two hundred B.C. before Christ.

LADY WESTHOLME. No, Mahommed.

DRAGOMAN. Very nice expedition. Not difficult climb. Not get tired at all.

LADY WESTHOLME. I am *never* tired.

HIGGS. Well, if you ask me, I think it's just ploom foolishness not to see all we can. We've paid our money, 'aven't we?

LADY WESTHOLME. Unfortunately, yes. But there are certain decencies to be respected, though I am sure that it's no good my attempting to explain them to *you*, Mr. Higgs.

HIGGS. You don't think I'd understand them? I would, though. All I say is, we've paid our money.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*crossing to the deck chair down* R) There is really no need to go into it again. (*She sits*)

HIGGS. It isn't that you liked the old woman. Coom to that, nobody did. I've not noticed any signs of grieving in her family. Coom into a bit of brass, they 'ave, by the look of them.

MISS PRYCE. I so often think these things are a merciful release.

HIGGS. You bet *they* see it that way. And why Lady W. here should be so cut up . . .

LADY WESTHOLME. Not at all. It is simply a question of not going off sight-seeing just after a sudden and unexpected death. I have no feeling of *regret*. Mrs. Boynton was not even an acquaintance and I am strongly of the opinion that she *drank*.

MISS PRYCE. (*to Lady Westholme*) No, Arethusa. That is really a most *uncharitable* thing to say—and quite *untrue*.

LADY WESTHOLME. Don't be a fool, Amabel. I know alcohol when I see it.

HIGGS. So do I. (*Wistfully*) Ah wouldn't mind seein' some now—but I suppose it's a bit early.

MISS PRYCE. I feel most strongly that one shouldn't speak evil of the dead. At any rate, my lips are sealed.

HIGGS. (*to the Dragoman*) Hi, Abraham, ah'm coomin' on expedition. (*He crosses to Miss Pryce*) You'd best come, too.

(MISS PRYCE *really wants to go, but has one eye on Lady Westholme*)

MISS PRYCE. Well, really—I hardly know—it seems . . .

DRAGOMAN. I take you very nice walk. See place where Natabeans buried. Very *sad*—very *suitable*.

MISS PRYCE. A cemetery? I really think, Arethusa, *that* would be *quite* all right.

LADY WESTHOLME. *You* can do as you *please*, but I shall stay here.

HIGGS. (*to Miss Pryce*) Coom on then, lass.

MISS PRYCE. I hardly know . . .

(HIGGS *takes* MISS PRYCE *by the arm and leads her to the slope* L)

HIGGS. Ee—coom on. I'll look after yer. (*He stops on the slope and turns*) And look 'ere, Abraham, I don't want any maidenhair fern—'angin' *oop* or *down*.

(MISS PRYCE, HIGGS *and the* DRAGOMAN *exit up the slope* L. CARBERY *enters* R)

LADY WESTHOLME. Ah, Colonel Carbery, I wanted to speak to you.

CARBERY. (*moving* RC) Yes, Lady Westholme?

LADY WESTHOLME. I do hope you understand that there must be no *unpleasantness* about this business.

CARBERY. (*very vague*) Now what d'you mean by unpleasantness, Lady Westholme?

LADY WESTHOLME. I am speaking *diplomatically*. These people are Americans. Americans are very touchy and prone to take offence. They may resent any sign of officialdom.

CARBERY. (*mildly*) Well, you know, sudden death and all that—I have my duty to do.

LADY WESTHOLME. Quite. But the whole thing is perfectly straightforward. The heat here was intense yesterday. Radiation off these rocks. Old Mrs. Boynton was obviously in poor health. (*She lowers her voice*) Betweeen ourselves, she *drank*.

CARBERY. Indeed? Do you happen to know that as a *fact*?

LADY WESTHOLME. I am positive of it.

CARBERY. But you've no evidence—eh?

LADY WESTHOLME. *I* don't *need* evidence.

CARBERY. Unfortunately, I do.

LADY WESTHOLME. A sudden heat stroke is not in the least surprising under the circumstances.

CARBERY. No, no. Perfectly natural thing to happen, I agree. (*He moves above the table.*)

LADY WESTHOLME. So we shan't be held up here?

CARBERY. No, no, I assure you, Lady Westholme. Horses will be along this afternoon, and arrangements made for removing the—er—body. We can all leave together.

(LENNOX *and* NADINE *enter* R)

Sit down, Mrs. Boynton. (*He indicates the chairs* R *of the table for Nadine and* L *of it for Lennox*)

(NADINE *sits* R *of the table,* LENNOX L *of it. There is a pause*)

*He looks at Lady Westholme*) That's all right, then, Lady Westholme.

(LADY WESTHOLME *rises and stamps off* R)

(*He watches her go, smiling to himself*) Masterful woman. (*He sits above the table*) Thinks she runs the British Empire. (*His manner changes*) Now, Mr. Boynton, I shall want a certain amount of details from you. (*He taps his papers*) Forms, you know. Curse of our age. Don't want to worry you more than we can help.

NADINE. Of course, we quite understand.

LENNOX. Yes, we understand.

CARBERY. Deceased's name and age?

LENNOX. Ada Caroline Boynton. She was sixty-two.

CARBERY. (*making notes*) And her health hadn't been too good, eh?

NADINE. She had congestive cardiac failure. We all knew that death might occcur at any moment.

CARBERY. You put it quite professionally.

NADINE. I—I had a certain amount of nursing training before my marriage.

CARBERY. Oh, I see.

LENNOX. My mother was a sick woman—a very sick woman.

CARBERY. (*gently; with something significant in his voice*) Rather a strenuous trip, this, to bring a very sick woman, wasn't it?

NADINE. You didn't know my mother-in-law. She was a very determined woman. If she wanted to do a thing—(*she shrugs her shoulders*) well she just did it. We had to give in.

CARBERY. I know, I know. Awfully obstinate, some of these old people. Just won't listen to reason. (*He pauses*) You did all you could to dissuade her, I suppose?

NADINE. (*quickly*) Of course.

CARBERY. Very distressing. (*He shoots a quick sideways glance at them*) I quite realize the—er—shock—and—er—grief—it must be to you.

LENNOX. It was a great shock, yes.

CARBERY. Quite, quite.

(*There is a pause*)

LENNOX. Is that all?

CARBERY. All?

NADINE. There are no further formalities to go through?

CARBERY. I'll fix up everything as far as I can. We've got to get back to civilization first. There will probably have to be an autopsy.

LENNOX. (*rising; sharply*) Is that necessary?

CARBERY. Well, under the circumstances—sudden death, you know. Not being attended by a doctor.

NADINE. But there are two doctors here in camp.

CARBERY. (*very vague*) Well, yes, that's true, of course.

NADINE. Surely one of them could certify the death?

CARBERY. (*rising and moving down* L) Well, I don't know—they weren't exactly attending her, were they?

NADINE. I believe Miss King did—talk to my mother-in-law about her state of health.

CARBERY. Did she now? Well, that might help. (*Sharply*) You don't like the idea of an autopsy?

LENNOX. Frankly, no. It—it would upset us all very much.

CARBERY. Of course I understand your feeling. Still—she was only your stepmother, wasn't she, Mr. Boynton?

LENNOX. No—yes . . .

NADINE. (*rising*) They were so young when their father remarried that it was like their own mother.

CARBERY. I see. I see.

NADINE. So you will do what you can?

CARBERY. I'll do what I can.

(LENNOX *and* NADINE *cross and exit* R)

(*He moves above the table, raises his eyebrows and purses his lips*) I wonder now. I wonder. Interestin'.

(RAYMOND *and* SARAH *enter quickly from the marquee, talking. They look happy and animated*)

Oh, Dr. King.

SARAH. (*moving to* L *of Carbery*) Yes?

CARBERY. Just wanted a word. (*He indicates the chair* L *of the table*)

(SARAH *sits* L *of the table*)

(*To Raymond*) About your mother's state of health, Mr. Boynton. Perhaps Dr. King could help us there.

RAYMOND. (*moving to* L *of Sarah*) In what way?

CARBERY. (*sitting above the table; to Sarah*) I understand that you had a talk with Mrs. Boynton on the subject of her health yesterday.

SARAH. Ye-es. It wasn't a consultation, though.

CARBERY. You mean she didn't call you in?

SARAH. No. (*She pauses. Embarrassed*) Actually, I spoke to her. I—I warned her.

CARBERY. Warned her?

SARAH. Oh—of the state of her health. I—I didn't think she took it seriously enough.

CARBERY. It was serious, then?

SARAH. Yes.

CARBERY. So you weren't surprised when she died?

SARAH. (*slowly*) No, I wasn't surprised—not really.

CARBERY. Excuse me, Dr. King, but what do you mean by "not really"?

SARAH. I just meant—that it came so soon after my warning her.

CARBERY. What did you warn her about—tell her not to overdo it—that sort of thing?

SARAH. (*after a pause*) Not quite. (*With a rush*) I told her I didn't think she had very long to live.

(CARBERY *whistles*)

CARBERY. Do you modern doctors usually say that sort of thing?

SARAH. No. It was—quite unprofessional.

CARBERY. But you had a reason, eh?

SARAH. I thought—she ought to know.

CARBERY. Well, of course, I'm no judge of medical etiquette, but . . .

(GERARD *enters quickly* R. *He is upset*)

GERARD. (*moving* RC) Colonel Carbery, can I speak to you?

CARBERY. (*rising; to Sarah and Raymond*) Would you mind?

(SARAH *rises and exits with* RAYMOND *to the marquee*)

(*He moves to* L *of Gerard*) Well, Dr. Gerard, what is it?

GERARD. It is my duty, clearly my duty, to put certain facts before you. (*He pauses*) I have with me a small travelling medicine case containing certain drugs.

CARBERY. Yes?

GERARD. This morning, on looking into it, I have discovered that one of the drugs is missing.

CARBERY. (*sharply*) What drug is it?

GERARD. Digitoxin.

CARBERY. Digitoxin is a heart poison, isn't it?

GERARD. Yes, it is obtained from *digitalis purpurea*, the common foxglove. It is official in France—though not in your British Pharmacopia.

CARBERY. I see. (*He moves* L) What would be the effect, Dr. Gerard, of digitoxin administered to a human being? (*He moves to the table*)

GERARD. If a large dose—a lethal, not a therapeutic dose—if digitoxin were thrown suddenly on the circulation, say by intravenous injection—it would cause suddden death by palsy of the heart.

CARBERY. And Mrs. Boynton had a weak heart?

GERARD. Yes, as a matter of fact, she was actually taking medicine containing digitalin.

CARBERY. Then in that case the digitoxin wouldn't hurt her.

GERARD. Oh, my dear sir, that is the layman speaking. There is a difference, as I have said, between a lethal dose and a therapeutic dose. Besides, digitalin may be considered a cumulative drug.

CARBERY. That's interesting. (*He moves above the table*) What about post-mortem appearance?

GERARD. (*significantly*) The active principles of the digitalis may destroy life and leave no appreciable sign.

CARBERY. Then she may have died of the cumulative effects of digitalis legitimately given to her. By using the same drug, it means that it would be almost impossible to prove anything satisfactorily to a jury. Yes, somebody's been rather clever.

GERARD. You think that?

CARBERY. It's very possible. Rich old woman whom nobody loves. (*He pauses*) When did you last see this stuff of yours?

GERARD. Yesterday afternoon. I had my case here. (*He moves to* R *of the table*) I got out some quinine for one of the natives.

CARBERY. And you can swear that the digitoxin was there then?

GERARD. Yes. There were no gaps.

CARBERY. And this morning it was gone.

GERARD. Yes. You must have a search made. If it has been thrown away . . .

CARBERY. (*taking a small phial from his pocket*) Is this it?

GERARD. (*astonished*) Yes. Where did you find it?

(CARBERY *shakes his head at Gerard, goes to the marquee and calls*)

CARBERY (*calling*) Mr. Boynton. (*He moves below the table*)

(RAYMOND *and* SARAH *enter from the marquee and move to* L *of Carbery*)

(*He hands the phial to Raymond*) Have you ever seen this before?

RAYMOND. (*wonderingly*) No.

CARBERY. And yet one of my Arab fellows found it in the pocket of the clothes you were wearing yesterday.

RAYMOND. (*utterly taken aback*) In my pocket?

CARBERY. (*his manner now quite different; no longer vague*) That's what I said.

RAYMOND. I simply don't understand what you are talking about. What is this thing?

CARBERY. It's got a label on it.

RAYMOND. (*reading*) "Digitoxin."

CARBERY. Digitoxin is a heart poison.

SARAH. What are you driving at, Colonel Carbery?

CARBERY. I'm just anxious to know how that phial of digitoxin got from Dr. Gerard's case into Mr. Boynton's pocket.

RAYMOND. I know nothing about it.

RAYMOND. Certainly I do. I've never seen it before. (*He tips the phial*)

CARBERY. You deny taking it from Dr. Gerard's case?

Anyway, it's nearly empty.

GERARD. It was quite full—yesterday afternoon. (*He takes the phial from Raymond and moves* C)

RAYMOND. (*turning a startled face on Gerard*) You mean . . . ?

CARBERY. (*quickly*) Dr. King. Do you own a hypodermic syringe?

SARAH. Yes.

CARBERY. Where is it?

SARAH. In my tent. Shall I get it?

CARBERY. If you please.

(SARAH *crosses and exits* R)

RAYMOND. What you're suggesting is impossible—quite impossible.

CARBERY. I'm not aware that I've suggested anything.

RAYMOND. What sort of a fool do you take me for? The inference is perfectly plain. You think my mother was—(*he swallows*) poisoned?

CARBERY. I haven't said so.

RAYMOND. Then what do you mean?

CARBERY. I just want to know why Dr. Gerard's phial was in your pocket.

RAYMOND. It wasn't.

CARBERY. One of my fellows found it there.

RAYMOND. I tell you I never touched the . . . (*He stops, suddenly assailed by a sudden memory*)

CARBERY. Sure about that?

(SARAH *enters* R *and crosses to Carbery. She carries her hypodermic case*)

SARAH. Here you are. (*She hands the case to Carbery*)

CARBERY. Thank you, Dr. King. (*He opens the case, looks at Raymond, then at Sarah*)

SARAH. What . . . ?

(CARBERY *holds the case out*)

(*She sees the case is empty*) Empty?

CARBERY. Empty.

SARAH. But—how extraordinary. I'm sure I never . . . (*She stops, beginning to be frightened*)

GERARD. That is the hypodermic case you offered to me yesterday afternoon. You are sure it was in the case then?

SARAH. Yes.

CARBERY. (*crossing to Gerard*) Any idea when it was taken out, Gerard?

GERARD. (*upset*) I do not believe . . . (*He breaks off*)

CARBERY. Now what don't you believe?

GERARD. (*moving* RC) *C'est impossible. C'est impossible.*

SARAH. Jinny?

CARBERY. Jinny? Is that your sister, Mr. Boynton?

(RAYMOND *does not answer*)

Perhaps you would ask her to come here.

GERARD. (*sharply*) No.

CARBERY. (*turning a mildly surprised eye at him*) She may be able to clear up the matter. If you'd just fetch her, Mr. Boynton.

(RAYMOND *crosses and exits* R. CARBERY *crosses above the table to* L *of it*)

GERARD. You do not understand. You do not understand the very first principles. Listen, my dear sir, this girl will not be able to clear anything up.

CARBERY. But she handled this case—yesterday afternoon. (*He puts the case on the table*) That's right, isn't it? That's what's worrying you?

GERARD. Jinny couldn't possibly have used that hypodermic. It would be entirely out of character. I—ah, *mon Dieu*, how am I to make you understand?

CARBERY. (*sitting* L *of the table*) Just go on telling me.

GERARD. (*crossing and standing up* R *of the table*) Ginevra Boynton is at

the moment in a highly abnormal mental condition. Dr. King will bear me out.

SARAH. (*moving* RC) Dr. Gerard is one of the greatest living authorities on this subject.

CARBERY. (*amiably*) I know. I know all about him.

(SARAH *moves to the deck chair down* R *and sits*)

GERARD. If Ginevra Boynton took that syringe from Dr. King's case, she certainly did not take it for the reason you are suggesting.

CARBERY. (*plaintively*) But I'm not suggesting anything. It's *you* people who are doing all the suggesting.

(RAYMOND *and* GINEVRA *enter* R. GINEVRA *crosses to* LC. CARBERY *rises and indicates the chair* R *of the table.* GINEVRA *thanks him with a little royal inclination of her head and sits* R *of the table*)

(*He resumes his seat*) Just want to ask you something, Miss Boynton. There's a hypodermic syringe missing from this case. Do you know anything about it?

GINEVRA. (*shaking her head*) No—oh, no.

CARBERY. Are you sure you didn't take it?

GINEVRA. Why should I take it?

CARBERY. Well—(*he smiles at her*) I'm asking *you.*

GINEVRA. (*leaning forward*) Are you on my side?

CARBERY. (*startled*) Eh, what's that?

GINEVRA. Or are you one of them?

(GERARD *makes a gesture of frustration*)

(*She turns swiftly and looks at Gerard*) Ask him. *He* knows. He came here—he followed me from Jerusalem—to protect me. To keep me safe from my enemies.

CARBERY. What enemies, Miss Boynton?

GINEVRA. I mustn't say. No, I mustn't say. It isn't safe.

CARBERY. What do you know about this hypodermic?

GINEVRA. I know who took it. (*She nods*)

CARBERY. Who?

GINEVRA. It was meant for *me.* They were going to kill me. After dark. I should have been asleep. I shouldn't have cried out. They knew, you see, that I'd not got the knife.

CARBERY. What knife?

GINEVRA. I stole a knife. *He—(she looks at Gerard)* took it away from me. I ought to have had it—to protect myself with. They were plotting to kill me.

GERARD. (*moving behind Ginevra and shaking her by the shoulders*) You must stop this play-acting—none of that that you please yourself by imagining is real. You know in your heart that it is not real.

GINEVRA. It's true—it's all true.

GERARD. (*kneeling by her*) No, it is not true. Listen, Ginevra, your mother is dead and you will lead now a new life. You must come out of this world of shadows and fancies. You are free now—free.

GINEVRA. (*rising*) Mother is dead—I am free—free. (*She crosses to* RC) Mother is dead. (*She turns suddenly to Carbery*) Did I kill her?

GERARD. (*rising and moving up* C) Ah! *Mon Dieu!*

SARAH. (*rising; fiercely*) Of course you didn't kill her.

GINEVRA. (*turning a mad lovely smile on Sarah*) How do you know?

(GINEVRA *exits* R)

SARAH. (*After a moment's stunned pause*) She doesn't know what she's saying.

CARBERY. (*rising*) The question seems to be, did she know what she was doing.

SARAH. She didn't do anything. (*She moves* RC)

CARBERY. I wonder.

(LENNOX *and* NADINE *enter* R. *Their faces are anxious*)

NADINE. (*moving* RC) What have you beeen doing to Jinny? She said—she said . . .

CARBERY. What did she say, Mrs. Boynton?

NADINE. She said, "They think I killed mother". She was smiling. Oh!

GERARD. It all fits in. It is the instinct to dramatize herself. You have given her a new role, that is all.

NADINE. (*crossing to* R *of the table*) You don't understand, Colonel Carbery. My sister-in-law is not well. She is suffering from a kind of nervous breakdown. It's all so fantastic. Just because my mother-in-law unfortunately died . . .

CARBERY. Unfortunately?

NADINE. What do you mean?

CARBERY. It was, if you'll excuse me for saying it, not such a very unfortunate death for all of you, was it?

LENNOX. (*crossing to* R *of Nadine*) What are you hinting at? What are you trying to say?

CARBERRY. We'd better have it quite clear. (*He pauses, moves down* LC *a little then speaks in a dry official voice*) Cases of sudden death, Mr. Boynton, are always investigated if there has been no physician attending the deceased who can give a death certificate. There will have to be an inquest on Mrs. Boynton. The object of that inquest will be to determine how the deceased came to her death. There are several possibilities. First, there is death from natural causes—well, that's perfectly possible. Mrs. Boynton was suffering from a heart complaint. But, there are other possibilities. There's accidental death. She was taking digitalin. Could she have taken by some mistake—an overdose. (*He pauses*) Or could she have been given—(*significantly*) by mistake, an overdose.

NADINE. I. . .

CARBERRY. I understand, Mrs. Boynton, that it was you who habitually administered digitalin to your mother-in-law.

NADINE. Yes.

CARBERRY. Is there any possibility that you might have given her an overdose?

NADINE. No. (*Clearly*) Neither by accident nor, Colonel Carbery, by intention.

CARBERRY. Come come, now, I never suggested that.

NADINE. It is what you meant.

CARBERRY. I was just considering the posssibilities of accident. (*He crosses to* LC.) So we come to the third possibility. (*Sharply*) Murder. Yes, just that, murder. And we have got certain evidence to support that view. First, the digitoxin that disappeared from Dr. Gerard's case and reapppeared in Raymond Boynton's pocket.

(GERARD *moves to* L *of the table*)

RAYMOND. I tell you I know nothing about that—nothing.

CARBERY. Secondly, the hypodermic needle that is missing from Dr. King's case.

SARAH. (*crossing to* R) If Ginevra took it, it was play-acting, nothing more.

CARBERY. (*to Lennox*) And thirdly, Mr. Boynton, we come to *you*.

LENNOX. (*starting*) To me?

SARAH. One of your Arab fellows has found something else, I suppose?

CARBERY. One of my Arab fellows—as you put it, Dr. King—*saw* something else.

LENNOX. Saw?

CARBERY. Yes. Yesterday afternoon most people were out walking or else resting from a walk, Mr. Boynton. There was no-one, or you thought there was no-one about. You went up to your mother as she was sitting up there. (*He nods towards the cave*) You took her hand and bent over her wrist. I don't know exactly what you did, Mr. Boynton, and my Arab fellow couldn't see what you did, but your mother cried out.

LENNOX. (*agitated*) I can explain. I—she—her bracelet had come undone. She asked me to fasten it. I did. But I was clumsy—I caught the flesh of her wrist in the hinge at the back. That's what made her cry out.

CARBERY. I see. That's your story.

LENNOX. It's the truth.

NADINE. I know that bracelet. It was tight fitting. It wasn't at all easy to fasten.

(CARBERY *nods quietly*)

LENNOX. (*shrilly*) What do you think I did?

CARBERY. I was wondering whether you gave her a rapid injection. (*To Gerard*) Death would result, I think you said, very quickly from rapid palsy of the heart.

GERARD. That is correct.

CARBERY. She would cry out and try to rise—and that would be all.

GERARD. That would be all.

LENNOX. It's not true. You can't prove it.

CARBERY. There is a mark on her wrist. It is the mark of a hypodermic needle—not a mark caused by the hinge of a bracelet. I don't like murder, Mr. Boynton.

LENNOX. She wasn't murdered.

CARBERY. I think she was.

SARAH. It's fantastic. You built up all this from what a few Arabs have pretended to find or to see. They're probably lying.

CARBERY. My men don't lie to me, Dr. King. They've found what they say they've found where they said they found it. An they've seen what they said they've seen. And they've heard what they've said they heard. (*He pauses*)

GERARD. Heard?

CARBERY. (*crossing down* L *and turning*) Yes—heard. Don't you remember. "One of us has got to kill her."

CURTAIN

## Scene II

SCENE—*The same. The same afternoon.*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises, the four Boyntons are sitting on the rock up* R, *which is now in shadow. They are quite still and are lost in a stupor of despair.* NADINE *and* GINEVRA *are seated on stools with their backs to the audience.* LENNOX *is leaning on the rock* L *of the cave mouth.* RAYMOND *is seated half way up the steps.* SARAH *is pacing up and down* RC. *Her hands are clenched and she is obviously fighting misery and doubt.* COPE *enters down the slope* L. *He is fatigued and despondent. He looks at the group on the rock then moves.* C.

SARAH. Have you got a cigarette?

COPE. (*moving to Sarah*) Why certainly. (*He proffers his case*)

SARAH. (*taking a cigarette*) Thanks.

COPE. (*lighting her cigarette*) I suppose we shall be leaving before long.

SARAH. (*crossing and sitting* R *of the table*) I suppose so. I wish we had never come here.

COPE. (*crossing and sitting* L *of the table*) Amen to that. I'm the kind of guy who's born to be a stooge. As soon as the old lady went west I knew my number was up. Why the heck did she have to die just then? Now—well, Nadine will never leave her husband now. She'll stand by him now, whatever he's done.

SARAH. (*sharply*) Do you think *he*— did it?

COPE. Lennox is a queer guy. I've never been able to size him up properly. You'd say, to look at him, that he wouldn't have the guts to do anything violent—but, well, you never know what a man's like underneath. I'd still like to think that the old lady died a natural death. After all, she *was* a very sick woman.

SARAH. (*rising and looking up at the Boyntons*) Look at them.

COPE. (*staring up at the Boyntons*) You mean—they don't think so? (*He rises and moves to* L *of her*) It—yes, it sort of gets you, the way they sit there, not saying anything. Almost Wagnerian, isn't it? The twilight of the gods. Symbolical in a way, sitting in that shadow.

SARAH. *Her* shadow.

COPE. Yes—yes, I see what you mean.

SARAH. (*crossing down* L; *desperately*) She's got them still. Her death hasn't set them free after all.

COPE. (*shaking his head*) I guess this has been a very trying day for all of us. Oh, well, I guess I might as well let Abraham show me where the Natabeans are buried.

(COPE *crosses and exits* R. GERARD *enters down* R)

SARAH. (*crossing to Gerard*) When we get back to civilization, what will happen?

GERARD. It will depend largely on the result of the autopsy.

SARAH. There's a very strong chance that it won't be conclusive.

GERARD. I know.

SARAH. (*desperately*) Why can't we *do* something?

GERARD. What do you want to do?

SARAH. That's easy. I want Raymond. It was a battle between me and that old she-devil. This morning I thought I'd won. Now—look at them.

(GERARD *looks up at the Boyntons, then studies Sarah*)

GERARD. (*after a pause*) Do you think he killed her?

SARAH. (*fiercely*) No. (*She crosses to* L *of the table*)

GERARD. You don't *think* so, but you're not *sure*.

SARAH. I *am* sure.

GERARD. One of them killed her.

SARAH. Not Raymond.

GERARD. (*shrugging his shoulders*) *Eh*n, you are a woman. (*He crosses to* R *of the table*)

SARAH. It's not that. (*With courage*) Oh, well, perhaps it is. But they didn't plan to kill her. (*She moves down* L) They may have *thought* of killing her, but it's not the same thing. We all—think of things.

GERARD. Very true. All the same, one of them did more than think.

SARAH. Yes.

GERARD. The question is, which of them? One can make out a case against any one of them. Raymond actually had the digitoxin in his possession.

SARAH. (*moving and sitting* L *of the table*) That's a point in his favour. If he had used it he wouldn't be so idiotic as to leave the bottle in his pocket.

GERARD. I don't know. He may have been quite confident that her death would be attributed to natural causes—as it would have been but for my discovery of the missing phial.

SARAH. It wasn't Raymond. I watched his face when Colonel Carbery produced that bottle.

GERARD. *Eh bien!* (*He sits* R *of the table*) Then there is Nadine Boynton. She has plenty of nerve and efficiency, that quiet young woman. Nothing easier for her than to administer a lethal dose of digitoxin in Mrs. Boynton's medicine. Then she slips the bottle in Raymond's pocket.

SARAH. You are making her out a revolting character.

GERARD. Women are unscrupulous. She plants suspicion against her brother-in-law in order to be sure that no suspicion falls on her husband.

SARAH. Suspicion did fall on him.

GERARD. Yes. Is his story of the bracelet true? Myself I do not believe it.

SARAH. (*rising*) What do you mean is that you don't want it to be your precious Jinny.

GERARD. (*rising; excitably*) Of course it was not Jinny. I tell you it is psychologically impossible.

SARAH. (*crossing to* R) You Frenchmen! It is not at all psychologically impossible that Jinny should kill someone—and you know it.

GERARD. (*following her; excitedly*) Yes, but not in that way. If she killed, she would kill flamboyantly, spectacularly. With the knife—that, yes, I can imagine it. But she would have to *dramatize* her act.

SARAH. Couldn't it be someone outside altogether?

GERARD. (*moving* LC) It would be pleasant to think so—but you know only too well that what you say is unsound. After all, who is there? The good Jefferson Cope. But the death of the tyrannical old woman deprives him of the lady of his affection.

SARAH. Oh, it isn't Jefferson Cope. As you say, he's no motive. Nor have the others. But there's you—and there's me. You know, Dr. Gerard, I had a motive—and it is my syringe that is missing.

GERARD. And the digitoxin is mine. All the same we did not kill her.

SARAH. That's what you say.

GERARD. We are doctors. We save life—we do not take it.

SARAH. "Doctors differ—and patients die." What years ago it seems when you said that to me in Jerusalem.

GERARD. Courage, *mon enfant.* And if I can help, remember that we are colleagues.

(GERARD *exits to the marquee,* SARAH *moves towards the rock up* R)

SARAH. Raymond. (*She moves nearer. Imperiously*) Raymond.

(RAYMOND *turns his head and looks at Sarah*)

Come down here.

(RAYMOND *rises, but does not come down. His manner is apathetic and he does not look at Sarah*)

RAYMOND. Yes, Sarah?

SARAH. Why don't you stay down here and—talk to me? Why do you all sit up there by that cave?

RAYMOND. It seems—the right place for us.

(SARAH *reaches up and takes Raymond's hand*)

SARAH. I never heard such nonsense.

RAYMOND. (*sighing*) You don't understand. (*He turns away*)

SARAH. Raymond—(*she goes up to him*) do you think I believe you killed her? I don't. I don't.

RAYMOND. One of us killed her.

SARAH. You don't even know that.

RAYMOND. Yes, I do. (*Thoughtfully*) We all know.

SARAH. But *you* didn't kill her. You yourself didn't kill her.

RAYMOND. No, I didn't kill her. (*He looks at the others*)

SARAH. Well then, that's all that *matters.* Surely you see that?

RAYMOND. No, it's you who don't see. I suggested killing her. One of us acted on that suggestion. I don't know which of us. I don't want to know. But there it is. We're all in it together.

SARAH. You won't even fight?

RAYMOND. (*turning and smiling at her*) There's no-one to fight. Don't you understand, Sarah? One can't fight the dead. (*He sits on the steps*)

SARAH. (*moving down* C) Oh, what shall I do?

LADY WESTHOLME. (*off* L) I can only tell you, Colonel Carbery, that I shall take it up with the Foreign Office.

(SARAH *moves wearily to* R *of the table and sits.* LADY WESTHOLME *and* CARBERY *enter from the marquee. They cross to* C, CARBERY L *of* LADY WESTHOLME)

CARBERY. This is my territory, Lady Westholme, and I am responsible for its administration. To put it plainly, an old woman has been coldbloodedly murdered, and you are suggesting that I should refrain from enquiring into the matter.

LADY WESTHOLME. There are wider diplomatic considerations to be observed. The whole thing must be dropped.

CARBERY. I don't take my orders from you, Lady Westholme.

LADY WESTHOLME. I assure you that I shall pull strings—and that I can pull strings. Once I get to a telegraph office.

CARBERY. You will get to a telegraph office tomorrow, and you can send wires to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the President of the United States and play cats' cradle with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries if it pleases you. In the meantime, I run my own show.

LADY WESTHOLME. You will find, Colonel Carbery, that I am more influential than you think.

(LADY WESTHOLME *exits angrily* R)

CARBERY. Phew! What a tartar! (*He moves above the table*) The worst of it is—(*he smiles ruefully at Sarah*) the damn woman's quite right.

SARAH. What do you mean?

CARBERY. The whole thing will have to be dropped.

SARAH. Why?

CARBERY. Because there's no evidence. One of 'em did it, all right, but as the evidence lies there's no earthly chance of proving which one. Oh, that's a very common state of affairs in police work. Knowledge without proof. And in this case the Westholme woman is quite right—there is an international aspect. Can't bring an accusation against an American subject unless you've got sufficient evidence. We haven't.

SARAH. (*slowly*) So the whole thing will be dropped.

CARBERY. Yes. There'll be an inquest and all that. But the result's a foregone conclusion. They'll go scot free. (*He gives her a quick glance*) That please you?

SARAH. I don't know.

CARBERY. (*moving to* L *of the table*) Well—(*he jerks his thumb towards the Boyntons*) it ought to please *them.*

SARAH. Ought it?

CARBERY. Don't you think so?

SARAH. (*rising and moving* RC; *explosively*) No, no, no!

CARBERY. You're very emphatic, Miss King.

SARAH. Don't you see—it's the most awful thing that could happen to them? They don't know *themselves* which one of them it was—and now they'll never know.

CARBERY. May have been all in it together. (*He sits* L *of the table*)

SARAH. No, they weren't. That's just the awful part of it. Three of them are innocent—but they're all four of them in the shadow together—and now they'll never get out of the shadow.

CARBERY. Yes, that's the worst of the verdict not proven. The innocent suffer. (*He coughs*) You've got—a special interest, I gather.

SARAH. Yes.

CARBERY. I'm sorry. I wish I could help you.

SARAH. You see—he won't fight for himself.

CARBERY. So you've got to fight for him?

SARAH. (*moving to* R *of the table*) Yes—it began when she was alive. I fought her. I thought I'd win, too. This morning I thought I had won. But now—they're back again—back in her shadow. That's where she sat, you know. In the mouth of the cave there—like an obscene old idol. Gloating in her own power and her cruelty. I feel as though she's sitting there now, holding them still, laughing because she's got them where she wants them, knowing that they'll never escape her now. (*She speaks up to the cave*) Yes, you've won, you old devil. You've proved that death is stronger than life. It oughtn't to be—it oughtn't to be. (*She breaks down and sinks on to the chair* R *of the table*)

(*There is a pause.* CARBERY *realizes there is nothing he can do, rises and exits to the marquee.* HIGGS *enters from the marquee*)

HIGGS. Aye, but it's warm. (*He crosses to* C)

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters down the slope* L)

DRAGOMAN. Horses coming over pass. Be here in a few moments.

HIGGS. Then hurry oop and get some beer—ah'm in a muck sweat again.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *exits to the marquee.* MISS PRYCE *enters down the slope.*)

MISS PRYCE. What a wonderful place this is.

SARAH. I think it's a damnable place.

MISS PRYCE. (*crossing to* RC) Oh, really—Miss King . . .

SARAH. Sorry.

MISS PRYCE. Oh, I quite understand. Such tragic associations. And then, of course, you are so young.

(MISS PRYCE *exits* R)

SARAH. (*bitterly*) Yes, I'm young. What's the good of being young? It ought to be some good. Youth means strength. It means life. Life ought to be stronger than death.

HIGGS. (*seriously*) So it is, lass. Make no mistake about that.

SARAH. It isn't. (*She indicates the Boyntons*) Look at them. Sitting in the shadow of death.

HIGGS. (*considering them*) Aye! They look as though they'd been given a life sentence.

SARAH. That's just what they have been given. (*She rises*) Of course. *That's* it. (*She crosses to* RC) That's what *she* wanted.

HIGGS. What's oop?

SARAH. (*laughing wildly*) I think I've got a touch of the sun. But the sun lets in light, doesn't it?

HIGGS. (*crossing to the marquee and calling*) Hey, Doctor, here's a patient for you out here.

(GERARD *enters from the marquee.* HIGGS *jerks his thumb at Sarah and exits to the marquee*)

GERARD. (*moving* LC) Are you ill?

SARAH. (*moving to* R *of Gerard*) No, I'm not ill. Listen, Dr. Gerard. I know who killed Mrs. Boynton. I know it quite certainly—(*she touches her forehead*) here. What I must do—what you must help me to do—is to get proof.

GERARD. You know which of them killed her?

SARAH. None of them killed her.

(GERARD *is about to interrupt*)

Wait. I know what you are going to say—that they themselves think so. That's what she wanted.

GERARD. *Comment?*

SARAH. Listen. Yesterday I lost my temper—I told her what was the truth, that she couldn't live long. I told her that when she died, they'd be free. You know what she was like—the lust for power and cruelty had grown—she wasn't quite sane, was she?

GERARD. She was a sadist—yes. She specialized in mental cruelty.

SARAH. She couldn't bear what I told her, she couldn't face the thought of their being free—and happy. And she saw a way to keep them in prison for ever.

GERARD. *Mon Dieu,* you mean . . .

SARAH. Yes, don't you see? She took the digitoxin from your case. She took my syringe. She slipped the empty bottle into Raymond's pocket, and she asked Lennox to fasten her bracelet and then cried out when she knew someone was watching them. It was clever—damnably clever—just enough suspicion against each of them. Not enough to convict one but enough to keep them believing all their lives that one of them *had* killed her.

GERARD. And then she committed suicide. Yes, she had the courage for that.

SARAH. She'd got *guts* all right. And hate.

GERARD. (*crossing to* R *as he works it out*) After filling the syringe she slipped the empty bottle into Raymond's pocket—yes, she could have done that as he was helping her up to the cave. Then later she called Lennox, pretended her bracelet was undone. Yes, that too. But she made no attempt to incriminate Nadine or Jinny.

SARAH. Nadine would come under suspicion because of always giving her medicine, and she could pretty well trust Jinny to incriminate herself with her wild talk.

GERARD. (*crossing to* R *as he works it out*) After filling the syringe she there is no-one to see, she plunges the needle into her wrist—so—and dies. But no, that will not do—for in that case what happened to the hypodermic needle? It would have been found by the body. There would have been only a minute or two—not time enough for her to get up and hide it. There is a flaw there.

SARAH. (*moving up* C) I tell you I know what happened. She's laughing at me—somewhere—now, taunting me because I can't prove it—to *him.*

GERARD. (*following Sarah*) That is all you are thinking of—to prove it to Raymond? And you think he will not believe you without proof.

SARAH. Do you?

GERARD. No.

SARAH. Then I must get proof. I must. I must. Oh, God, I *must.*

(*The jingle of harness is heard off* L. MISS PRYCE *enters* R, *crosses to the slope* L *and looks off*)

GERARD. You do well to invoke God. It is a miracle you need. (*He crosses and sits on the case down.*)

SARAH. Miracles don't happen, and there's no time—no time.

MISS PRYCE. (*turning and moving* LC) Were you talking about *miracles?*

SARAH. (*bitterly*) I was saying that miracles don't happen.

MISS PRYCE. Oh, but they do. A friend of mine had the most wonderful results from a bottle of water from Lourdes—really quite *remarkable.*

SARAH. (*to herself*) I must go on fighting. I won't give in.

MISS PRYCE. The doctors were really quite astonished. They said . . . (*She breaks off*) Is anything the matter, dear?

SARAH. Yes, that she-devil, Mrs. Boynton.

MISS PRYCE. (*shocked*) Oh, really, Miss King, I don't think . . . After all, we must remember she is *dead.*

SARAH. *De mortuis.*

MISS PRYCE. Quite—quite.

SARAH. Death doesn't make people good who have been wicked.

MISS PRYCE. Wicked is rather a *strong* word, dear. I always feel people who take drugs are to be pitied rather than blamed.

SARAH. I know what I'm talking about and . . . (*She stops*) What did you say? Mrs. Boynton didn't take drugs.

MISS PRYCE. (*confused*) Oh, really, I never meant—I mean, I thought you, being a doctor, had probably noticed the signs. I'm sure *I* don't want to say anything against the poor old woman.

SARAH. Mrs. Boynton didn't take drugs. Why do you think she did?

MISS PRYCE. Oh, but I'm afraid she was a drug addict, my dear. Lady Westholme goes about saying she *drank,* which of course wasn't so at all, but I haven't liked to contradict her because saying that anyone is a *dope fiend* is *worse.*

SARAH. (*slowly but excited*) Why do you think Mrs. Boynton was a dope fiend?

MISS PRYCE. I should not dream of saying.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters down the slope* L)

There is such a thing as Christian charity.

DRAGOMAN. Abraham good Christian dragoman. All my ladies and gentleman say Abraham first-class Christian dragoman. You come now, ladies, horses all ready.

(SARAH *seizes* MISS PRYCE *by the arm and sits her in the chair* R *of the table*)

SARAH. You don't leave here until you tell me why you think Mrs. Boynton took drugs. You can't just hint things like that out of your imagination.

MISS PRYCE. (*indignantly*) Not at all. It was not imagination. I saw her . . . (*She stops*)

SARAH. You saw what?

DRAGOMAN. You come now.

SARAH. (*sharply*) Shut up, Abraham.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *exits to the marquee*)

MISS PRYCE. (*upset and rather on her dignity*) Really, I did not want to mention the occurrence, it seems so unkind. But since you have accused me of imagining—well, it was yesterday afternoon.

SARAH. Yes?

MISS PRYCE. I came out of my tent—at least, not right out—I just pushed back the flap and tried to remember where I had left my book. Was it in the marquee, I said to myself, or was it in the deck chair.

SARAH. Yes—yes.

MISS PRYCE. And then I noticed Mrs. Boynton. She was sitting up there quite alone and she rolled up her sleeve and injected the dope into her arm, looking about her first, you know, in a most *guilty* manner.

(GERARD *rises and exchanges glances with* SARAH)

SARAH. You're quite sure? What happened then?

MISS PRYCE. My dear, it was quite like a *novel*. She unscrewed the knob of her stick and put the hypodermic needle inside. So of course, I knew then that it was *drugs*—not *drink* as Lady Westholme said.

(CARBERY *and* LADY WESTHOLME *enter* R. CARBERY *beckons to the Boyntons.* NADINE *and* GINEVRA *rise and group with* RAYMOND *and* LENNOX *at the foot of the rock up* R)

CARBERY. (*moving* RC) Miss King—Pryce. We're starting.

SARAH. (*crossing to* L *of Carbery*) Colonel Carbery, Miss Pryce has something to tell you.

(MISS PRYCE *rises*)

When she was alone in camp yesterday, she saw Mrs. Boynton inject something into her own arm.

CARBERRY. What's that?

(NADINE *and* LENNOX *move down* R)

SARAH. (*to Miss Pryce*) That's quite true, isn't it?

MISS PRYCE. Yes, indeed.

SARAH. After that Mrs. Boynton concealed the hypodermic needle in her stick, the head of which unscrews.

CARBERY. (*calling sharply*) Aissa.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters from the marquee*)

(*To the Dragoman*) *Tal a hinna. Fee bataga.*

(*The* DRAGOMAN *exits to the marquee*)

SARAH. (*to Raymond*) Oh, Ray!

(RAYMOND *moves to* L *of Sarah*)

We've found out the truth.

(*The* DRAGOMAN *enters from the marquee with Mrs. Boynton's stick. He crosses to* CARBERRY *who takes the stick, unscreens the knob and produces the hypodermic needle, handling it carefully with his handkerchief*)

She did it *herself.* (*She catches Raymond's arm excitedly*) Do you understand? She did it herself.

CARBERY. Well, that seems to clinch matters. There will be traces of digitoxin in the barrel, and in all probability deceased's fingerprints. That, and Miss Pryce's evidence, seems conclusive. Mrs. Boynton took her own life.

RAYMOND. Sarah!

SARAH. (*half crying*) Miracles do happen. Darling Miss Pryce, you're better than any Lourdes water.

CARBERY. Well, we must getting along. The plane is waiting at Ain Musa. (*He moves up* C)

(*The* ARAB BOY *enters from the marquee. He carries a cablegram which he hands to Carbery*)

GINEVRA. (*moving to Gerard*) Dr. Gerard—I—I did invent those things. Sometimes—(*confusedly*) I really thought they were true. You will help me, won't you?

GERARD. Yes, *cherie,* I will help you.

CARBERY. (*handing the cablegram to Lady Westholme*) Lady Westholme, there's a cable they brought along for you.

(LADY WESTHOLME *opens the cable reads it.* HIGGS *enters from the marquee*)

LADY WESTHOLME. Dear me. Sir Eric Hartly-Witherspoon is dead.

HIGGS. So's Queen Anne.

LADY WESTHOLME. (*radiant*) This is *most* important. I must return to England at once.

CARBERY. A near relation?

LADY WESTHOLME. No relation at all. Sir Eric was Member for Market Spotsbury. (*Pronounced Spurry*) That means a by-election. I am the prospective Conservative candidate and I may say that when I get into the House again . . .

HIGGS. Yer seem mighty sure about it.

LADY WESTHOLME. Market Spotsbury has *always* returned a Conservative.

HIGGS. Aye—but times is changin' and "always" 'as a 'abit of becomin' "never no more". 'Oo's yer opponent?

LADY WESTHOLME. I believe some Independent candidate.

HIGGS. What's 'is name?

LADY WESTHOLME. (*nonplussed*) I've no idea. Probaby someone *quite* unimportant.

HIGGS. Ah'll tell yer 'is name—it's Alderman 'Iggs—and if I can keep you out of the first floor in Jerusalem—by gum—I'll keep yer out of the ground floor in Westminster.

CURTAIN

*(continued from front flap)*

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*Agatha Christie* *Photo ... Bean*