

Samuel French Acting Edition

And Then There Were None

by Agatha Christie

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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AND THEN THERE WERE NONE was first presented by Bertie Neyer at the St. James's Theatre, London, on the 17th November 1943. It was directed by Irene Hentschel with sets by Clifford Pember. The cast was as follows:

ROGERS	William Murray
MRS. ROGERS	Hilda Bruce-Potter
FRED NARRACOTT	Reginald Barlow
VERA CLAYTHORNE	Linden Travers
PHILIP LOMBARD	Terence De Marney
ANTHONY MARSTON	Michael Blake
WILLIAM BLORE	Percy Walsh
GENERAL MACKENZIE	Eric Cowley
EMILY BRENT	Henrietta Watson
SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE	Allan Jeayes
DR. ARMSTRONG	Gwyn Nicholls

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE opened at the Broadhurst Theatre in New York City under the title *TEN LITTLE INDIANS* on June 27, 1944. On January 6, 1945, it transferred to the Plymouth Theatre where it ran until June 30, 1945. It was directed by Albert de Courville with sets by Howard Bay. The cast was as follows:

ROGERS	Neil Fitzgerald
MRS. ROGERS	Georgia Harvey
FRED NARRACOTT	Patrick O'Connor
VERA CLAYTHORNE	Claudia Morgan
PHILIP LOMBARD	Michael Whalen
ANTHONY MARSTON	Anthony Kemble Cooper
WILLIAM BLORE	James Patrick O'Malley
GENERAL MACKENZIE	Nicholas Joy
EMILY BRENT	Estelle Winwood
SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE	Halliwell Hobbes
DR. ARMSTRONG	Harry Worth

CHARACTERS

ROGERS
MRS. ROGERS
FRED NARRACOTT
VERA CLAYTHORNE
PHILIP LOMBARD
ANTHONY MARSTON
WILLIAM BLORE
GENERAL MACKENZIE
EMILY BRENT
SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE
DR. ARMSTRONG

NOTES ON CASTING

FRED NARRACOTT may double with **ANTHONY MARSTON**.

Minimum number of performers: 10.

SETTING & TIME

The living room of a house on Soldier Island, off the coast of
Devon, England.

ACT I

A summer evening in August.

ACT II

Scene One: The following morning.

Scene Two: The same day. Afternoon.

ACT III

Scene One: The same day. Evening.

Scene Two: The following afternoon.

NOTES ON SENSITIVE TERMINOLOGY

Language used by the author in her stage directions and by her characters to describe religion, gender, sexuality, race and class is of the period in which the play was first performed. We are confident that the author's intention was to be neutral within the stage directions – not to convey anything other than the facts of the characteristics relevant to a character's portrayal. The dialogue, however, is the embodiment of the character speaking and must express his or her intentions at that point in the play. This means that the author will have chosen terminology to be spoken with varying degrees of precision, sensitivity and, possibly, deliberate insensitivity according to the character and the circumstances in which he or she is speaking.

In our published version, therefore, we have applied the following logic:

- In stage directions, we have used terminology which is as neutral and factual as can be conceived, knowing that this will sometimes still fail.
- In dialogue, we have preserved the author's words as originally written.

We license this play on the basis that terms used in dialogue relevant to the religion, gender, sexuality, race and class of these characters may be changed in production to whichever best convey the author's intention for the audience. Sometimes this will be a neutral term, sometimes it will be a term which reflects the character's personality and/or the context in which they are speaking. Which of these applies is for directors and actors to interpret.

NOTE BY MATHEW PRICHARD ABOUT THE ENDING

My grandmother's play has been performed successfully all over the world since its première in 1943 with an ending which is unique to the play and is not that of the novel on which it is based. There is much evidence that this was not her initial intention but was instead the result of what was perceived to be the needs of audiences at a very dark time in history. My grandmother never shied from taking notice of others' input and the success then and since of the play vindicates her approach and their views.

In recent years enterprising producers presenting to, perhaps, more inquiring audiences have experimented with incorporating the novel's ending in the play. This, too, has been well received leading to a controversy as to which is the "real" ending. I have no intention of settling this controversy. Instead, on the 125th anniversary of my grandmother's birth, I wish to make the choice available to all producers and directors to express their view as to the writer's intention by enabling them to choose from the 1943 (play) ending and the 1939 (novel) ending.

Drawing on papers and correspondence at the time of production and on archive material, I have commissioned a dramatic version of the novel's close. Both dramatic endings begin their unraveling with Lombard's line to Vera: "You – young, lovely, and quite, quite mad". After that, readers, producers and directors face the same choice that my grandmother faced.

Torquay, England
September, 2015.

ACT I

*(The scene is the living room of the house on Soldier Island. It is a bright sunlit evening. Nearly the whole of the back of the room is a window looking directly out to sea. French windows open onto a balcony with chairs. It should give the impression of the deck of a liner almost overhanging the sea. The main approach to the house is presumed to be up steps on the side of the balcony. Inside there is a door to the dining room and a door to the study. There is also a door to the hall with a bell pull rope hanging by it. The room is very modern, and luxuriously but sparsely furnished with a sofa, chairs and a cocktail cabinet. There is a fireplace, over which hangs a reproduction of the "Ten Little Soldier Boys" nursery rhyme. On the mantelpiece is a group of ten china soldier boy figures. They are not spaced out, but clustered so that the exact number is not easily seen. Before the fireplace is a big white bearskin rug with a bear's head. **ROGERS** is seen putting the final touches to the room. He is a competent middle-aged manservant. Not a butler, but a house-parlour man. Quick and deft. Just a trifle suspicious and shifty. The noise of seagulls and a motorboat horn is heard off. **MRS. ROGERS** enters from dining room. She is a thin, worried, frightened looking woman. **NARRACOTT** enters from the balcony. He carries a market basket filled with packages.)*

NARRACOTT. First lot to be arriving in Jim's boat. Another lot not far behind.

MRS. ROGERS. Good evening, Fred.

NARRACOTT. Good evening, Mrs. Rogers.

MRS. ROGERS. Is that the boat?

NARRACOTT. Yes.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, dear, already? Have you remembered everything?

(NARRACOTT gives her the basket.)

NARRACOTT. I think so. Lemons. Slip soles. Cream. Eggs, tomatoes and butter. That's all, wasn't it?

MRS. ROGERS. That's right. So much to do I don't know where to start. No maids till the morning, and all these guests arriving today.

ROGERS. Calm down, Ethel, everything's shipshape now. Looks nice, don't it, Fred?

NARRACOTT. Looks neat enough for me. Kind of bare, but rich folks like places bare, it seems.

MRS. ROGERS. Rich folks is queer.

NARRACOTT. And he was a queer sort of gentleman as built this place. Spent a wicked lot of money on it he did, and then gets tired of it and puts the whole thing up for sale.

MRS. ROGERS. Beats me why the Owens wanted to buy it, living on an island.

ROGERS. Oh, come off it, Ethel, and take all that stuff out into the kitchen. They'll be here any minute now.

MRS. ROGERS. Making that steep climb an excuse for a drink, I suppose. Like some others I know.

(A motorboat horn heard off.)

NARRACOTT. That be young Jim. I'll be getting along. There's two gentlemen arriving by car, I understand.

MRS. ROGERS. I shall want at least five loaves in the morning and eight pints of milk, remember.

NARRACOTT. Right.

(MRS. ROGERS puts basket on the floor then exits to the hall.)

ROGERS. Don't forget the oil for the engine, Fred. I ought to charge up tomorrow, or I'll have the lights running down.

(NARRACOTT goes off towards the balcony.)

NARRACOTT. Twas held up on railway. It's at the station now. I'll bring it across the first thing tomorrow.

ROGERS. And give a hand with the luggage, will you?

NARRACOTT. Right.

(NARRACOTT exits. MRS. ROGERS enters with a list.)

MRS. ROGERS. I forgot to give you the list of guests, Tom.

(ROGERS takes it and looks it over.)

ROGERS. Thanks, old girl. H'mm, doesn't look a very classy lot to me. Miss Claythorne. She'll probably be the secretary.

MRS. ROGERS. I don't hold much with secretaries. Worse than hospital nurses, and them giving themselves airs and graces and looking down on the servants.

ROGERS. Oh, stop grouching, Ethel, and cut along to that lovely up-to-date expensive kitchen of yours.

(MRS. ROGERS picks up the basket and makes for the dining room.)

MRS. ROGERS. Too many new-fangled gadgets for my fancy!

(VERA and LOMBARD are heard outside. ROGERS stands ready to receive them. He is now the well-trained, deferential manservant. VERA and LOMBARD enter onto the balcony. She is a good-looking girl of twenty-five. He is an attractive, lean man of thirty-four, well tanned, with a touch of the adventurer about him. He is already a good deal taken with VERA. He gazes round the room.)

LOMBARD. So this is it!

VERA. How perfectly lovely!

ROGERS. Miss Claythorne!

VERA. You're – Rogers?

ROGERS. Yes. Good evening, Miss.

VERA. Good evening, Rogers. Will you bring up my luggage and Captain Lombard's?

ROGERS. Very good, Miss.

(He exits onto the balcony.)

VERA. You've been here before?

LOMBARD. No – but I've heard a lot about the place.

VERA. From Mr. and Mrs. Owen?

LOMBARD. No, old Johnny Brewer, a pal of mine, built this house – it's a sad and poignant story.

VERA. A love story?

LOMBARD. Yes, ma'am – the saddest of all. He was a wealthy old boy and fell in love with the famous Lily Logan – married her – bought the island and built this place for her.

VERA. Sounds most romantic.

LOMBARD. Poor Johnny! He thought by cutting her off from the rest of the world – without even a telephone as means of communication – he could hold her.

VERA. But of course the fair Lily tired of her ivory tower – and escaped?

LOMBARD. U'huh. Johnny went back to Wall Street, made a few more millions, and the place was sold.

VERA. And here we are. Well, I ought to find Mrs. Owen. The others will be up in a minute.

(VERA makes to the hall door. LOMBARD stops her.)

LOMBARD. It would be very rude to leave me here all by myself.

VERA. Would it? Oh, well, I wonder where she is?

LOMBARD. She'll come along when she's ready. While we're waiting, do you think I could have a drink? I'm very dry.

(LOMBARD goes towards the drinking cabinet and starts preparing drinks.)

VERA. Of course you could.

LOMBARD. It's certainly warm after that steep climb. What's yours?

VERA. No, thanks, not for me – not on duty.

LOMBARD. A good secretary is never off duty.

(VERA looks round the room.)

VERA. Really. This is exciting!

LOMBARD. What?

VERA. All this. The smell of the sea – the gulls – the beach and this lovely house. I am going to enjoy myself.

(LOMBARD makes to VERA, holding up a drink.)

LOMBARD. I think you are. I think we both are. Here's to you – you're very lovely.

(ROGERS enters from the balcony with two suitcases.)

VERA. Where is Mrs. Owen?

ROGERS. Mr. and Mrs. Owen won't be down from London until tomorrow, Miss. I thought you knew.

VERA. Tomorrow – but –

ROGERS. I've got a list here of the guests expected, Miss, if you would like to have it. The second boatload's just arriving.

(VERA takes the list. ROGERS exits to the hall.)

VERA. Thank you. How awful – I say, you will be sweet and help me, won't you?

LOMBARD. I won't move from your side.

VERA. Thank you.

(She reads the list.)

It seems silly to have brought only us in the first boat and all the rest in the second.

LOMBARD. That, I'm afraid, was design, not accident.

VERA. Design? What do you mean?

LOMBARD. I suggested to the boatman that there was no need to wait for any more passengers. That and five shillings soon started up the engine.

VERA. *(Laughing.)* Oh, you shouldn't have done that!

LOMBARD. Well, they're not a very exciting lot, are they?

VERA. I thought the young man was rather nice-looking.

LOMBARD. Callow. Definitely callow. And very, very young.

VERA. I suppose you think a man in his thirties is more attractive.

LOMBARD. I don't think, my darling – I know.

(MARSTON enters from the balcony. He is a good looking young man of twenty-three or so, rich, spoiled and not very intelligent.)

MARSTON. Wizard place you've got here.

(MARSTON greets VERA; they shake hands.)

VERA. I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow.

MARSTON. *(Vaguely.)* Oh, too bad.

VERA. May I introduce Captain Lombard, Mr. – er –

MARSTON. Marston, Anthony Marston.

LOMBARD. Have a drink?

MARSTON. Oh, thank you.

(BLORE comes up onto the balcony. He is a middle-aged, thickset man; wearing rather loud clothes, giving the impression of a gold magnate. His eyes dart about, making notes of everything.)

LOMBARD. What will you have? Gin, whiskey, sherry?

MARSTON. Whiskey, I think.

(LOMBARD and MARSTON go to the drinking cabinet. BLORE makes directly to VERA, seizes her hand and wrings it heartily.)

BLORE. Wonderful place you have here.

VERA. I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow.

LOMBARD. Say when!

MARSTON. Oh, wizard!

(BLORE makes for the cocktail cabinet.)

BLORE. How are you?

LOMBARD. My name's Lombard. Have a drink, Mr. –

BLORE. Davis. Davis is the name.

LOMBARD. Mr. Davis – Mr. Marston!

BLORE. How are you, Mr. Marston? Pleased to meet you. Thanks, Mr. Lombard. I don't mind if I do. Bit of a stiff climb up here. But whew! What a view and what a height! Reminds me of South Africa, this place.

(LOMBARD stares at BLORE.)

LOMBARD. Does it? What part?

BLORE. Oh – er – Natal, Durban, you know.

LOMBARD. Really?

(LOMBARD hands him a drink.)

BLORE. Well, here's to temperance. Do you – er – know South Africa?

LOMBARD. Me? No.

BLORE. *(Confidently.)* That's where I come from. That's my Natal state – ha ha.

LOMBARD. Interesting country. I should think.

BLORE. Finest country in the world, sir. Gold, silver, diamonds, oranges, everything a man could want. Talk about a land flowing with beer and skittles.

(GENERAL MACKENZIE arrives on the balcony. He is an upright, soldierly old man with a gentle, tired face.)

MACKENZIE. Er – How do you do?

VERA. General MacKenzie, isn't it? I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow. Can I introduce Captain Lombard – Mr. Marston and Mr. –

(BLORE approaches him and shakes hands.)

BLORE. Davis, Davis is the name.

LOMBARD. Whiskey and soda, sir?

MACKENZIE. Er – thanks.

(MACKENZIE studies LOMBARD.)

You in the service?

LOMBARD. Formerly in the King's African Rifles. Too tame for me in peace time. I chucked it.

MACKENZIE. Pity. When.

(MISS EMILY BRENT arrives. She is a tall, thin spinster with a disagreeable, suspicious face. She speaks sharply to VERA.)

EMILY. Where is Mrs. Owen?

VERA. Miss Brent, isn't it? I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid.

LOMBARD AND VERA. And won't be down until tomorrow.

(They trail off, rather embarrassed.)

EMILY. Indeed. Extraordinary. Did she miss the train?

VERA. I expect so. Won't you have something? May I introduce Captain Lombard – General MacKenzie – Mr. Marston. I think you all met on the boat. And Mr. –

BLORE. Davis, Davis is the name. May I take your case?

LOMBARD. Do let me give you a drink? A dry martini? A glass of sherry? Whiskey and soda?

EMILY. *(Coldly.)* I never touch alcohol.

LOMBARD. You never touched alcohol!

EMILY. I suppose you know, young man, that you left us standing there on the wharf?

VERA. I'm afraid, Miss Brent, I was to blame for that. I wanted to –

EMILY. It seems to me most extraordinary that Mrs. Owen should not be here to receive her guests.

VERA. *(Smiling.)* Perhaps she's the kind of person who just can't help missing trains.

BLORE. *(Laughs.)* That's what I reckon she is.

EMILY. Not at all. Mrs. Owen isn't the least like that.

LOMBARD. *(Lightly.)* Perhaps it was her husband's fault.

EMILY. *(Sharply.)* She hasn't got a husband.

(VERA stares. ROGERS enters from the dining room.)

I should like to go to my room.

VERA. Of course. I'll take you there.

ROGERS. You'll find Mrs. Rogers upstairs, Miss. She will show you the room.

*(VERA, EMILY, and ROGERS exit to the hall.
WARGRAVE enters from the balcony; LOMBARD comes to greet him.)*

LOMBARD. I'm afraid our host and hostess haven't arrived, sir. My name's Lombard.

WARGRAVE. Mine's Wargrave. How do you do?

LOMBARD. How do you do? Have a drink, sir?

WARGRAVE. Yes, please. A whiskey.

BLORE. How are you? Davis, Davis is the name. I say, wonderful place you've got here. Quite unique.

WARGRAVE. As you say – quite unique.

(LOMBARD prepares Wargrave's drink.)

BLORE. Your drink, sir.

(WARGRAVE puts his coat on the sofa, takes his drink and sits to watch the proceedings.

MARSTON turns to LOMBARD.)

MARSTON. Old Badger Berkeley rolled up yet?

LOMBARD. Who did you say?

MARSTON. Badger Berkeley. He roped me in for this show. When's he coming?

LOMBARD. I don't think he is coming. Nobody of the name of Berkeley.

MARSTON. *(Flabbergasted.)* The dirty old double-crosser! He's let me down. Well, it's a pretty wizard island. Rather a wizard girl, that secretary. She ought to liven things up a bit. I say, old man, what about dressing for dinner if there's time?

LOMBARD. Let's go and explore.

MARSTON. How wizard!

LOMBARD. Things are a bit at sixes and sevens with the Owens not turning up.

MARSTON. Tricky, what? I say, wizard place for a holiday, what?

(MARSTON and LOMBARD exit to the hall. BLORE wanders out onto the balcony, looks back sharply into room, then presently exits. WARGRAVE continues to sit like a Buddha. He observes MACKENZIE, who is standing looking rather lost, absentmindedly pulling his moustache. MACKENZIE is carrying a shooting stick. He looks at it wistfully, half opens and closes it.)

WARGRAVE. Aren't you going to sit down?

MACKENZIE. Well, to tell you the truth, you seem to be in my chair.

WARGRAVE. I am sorry. I didn't realise you were one of the family.

MACKENZIE. Well, it's not that exactly. To tell you the truth, I've never been here before. But you see I live at the

Benton Club – have for the last ten years. And my seat is just about there. Can't get used to sitting anywhere else.

WARGRAVE. It becomes a bit of a habit.

(WARGRAVE rises and MACKENZIE takes his seat.)

MACKENZIE. Yes, it certainly does. Thank you – Well, it's not quite as good as the Club's, but it's a nice chair. To tell you the truth, I was a bit surprised when I got this invitation. Haven't had anything of the kind for well over four years. Very nice of them, I thought.

(ROGERS enters from the hall and picks up Wargrave's coat from the sofa.)

ROGERS. Can I have your keys, sir?

WARGRAVE. Is Lady Constance Culmington expected here, can you tell me?

(WARGRAVE gives him his keys.)

ROGERS. *(Surprised.)* Lady Constance Culmington? I don't think so, sir. Unless she's coming down with Mr. and Mrs. Owen.

WARGRAVE. Oh.

ROGERS. Allow me, sir.

(ROGERS takes MACKENZIE's coat.)

Can I have your keys, sir?

MACKENZIE. No, thanks. I'll unpack for myself.

ROGERS. Dinner is at eight o'clock, sir. Shall I show you to your room?

MACKENZIE. Please.

(ROGERS holds open the hall door for MACKENZIE. WARGRAVE follows looking around room in an unsatisfied fashion. They exit. The sound of seagulls can be heard. DR. ARMSTRONG arrives on the balcony, followed by NARRACOTT carrying his suitcase.)

ARMSTRONG is a fussy, good looking man of forty-four. He looks rather tired.)

NARRACOTT. Here you are, sir. I'll call Rogers.

(NARRACOTT exits to the hall. ARMSTRONG looks round and nods his approval. NARRACOTT returns and ARMSTRONG tips him. He exits to the balcony and ARMSTRONG sits. BLORE comes along the balcony; pausing at the sight of ARMSTRONG.)

BLORE. How are you? Davis. Davis is the name.

ARMSTRONG. Mine's Armstrong.

BLORE. Doctor Armstrong, I believe.

ARMSTRONG. Yes.

BLORE. Thought so. Never forget a face.

ARMSTRONG. Don't tell me I've forgotten one of my patients!

BLORE. No, no, nothing like that, but I once saw you in Court giving expert evidence.

ARMSTRONG. Oh, really? Are you interested in the law?

BLORE. Well, you see, I'm from South Africa. Naturally, legal processes in this country are bound to interest a colonial.

ARMSTRONG. Oh, yes, of course.

BLORE. Have a drink?

ARMSTRONG. No, thanks. I never touch it.

BLORE. Do you mind if I do? Mine's empty.

ARMSTRONG. Not a bit.

(BLORE pours himself a drink.)

BLORE. I've been having a look round the island. It's a wonderful place, isn't it?

ARMSTRONG. Wonderful. I thought as I was coming across the mainland what a haven of peace this was.

(BLORE moves to him, putting his face close to his.)

BLORE. Too peaceful for some, I daresay.

(ARMSTRONG moves away.)

ARMSTRONG. Wonderfully restful. Wonderful for the nerves. I'm a nerve specialist, you know.

BLORE. Yes, I know that. Did you come down by train?

(BLORE approaches him again. ARMSTRONG moves.)

ARMSTRONG. No, I motored down. Dropped in on a patient on the way. Great improvement – wonderful response.

(BLORE follows once more.)

BLORE. Best part of two hundred miles, isn't it? How long did it take you?

(ARMSTRONG moves away again.)

ARMSTRONG. I didn't hurry. I never hurry. Bad for the nerves. Some mannerless young fellow nearly drove me into the ditch near Amesbury. Shot past me at about eighty miles an hour. Disgraceful bit of driving. I'd like to have had his number.

(BLORE moves to him a final time.)

BLORE. Yes, and if only more people would take the numbers of these young road hogs.

ARMSTRONG. Yes. You must excuse me. I must have a word with Mr. Owen.

(ARMSTRONG bustles out to the hall. BLORE follows calling after him.)

BLORE. Oh, but – Mr. Owen isn't coming down –

(BLORE finishes his drink then rings the bell rope by the hall door. ROGERS enters almost immediately.)

ROGERS. You rang, sir?

BLORE. Yes, take my hat, will you?

(BLORE hands him his cap.)

What time's supper?

ROGERS. Dinner is at eight o'clock, sir. *(Pauses.)* In a quarter of an hour. I think tonight dressing will be optional.

BLORE. *(Familiarly.)* Got a good place, here.

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, sir.

BLORE. Been here long?

ROGERS. Just under a week, sir.

BLORE. Is that all? *(Pause.)* So I don't suppose you know much about this crowd that's here?

ROGERS. No, sir.

BLORE. All old friends of the family?

ROGERS. I really couldn't say, sir.

BLORE. Oh, well – Oh, Rogers –

ROGERS. Yes, sir?

BLORE. Rogers, do you think you could put some sandwiches and a bottle of beer in my room at night? I get an 'el of an appetite with this sea air.

ROGERS. I'll see what I can do, sir.

BLORE. Rogers – I'll see you won't lose by it. Where's my room?

ROGERS. I'll show you, sir.

BLORE. Good, I can do with a wash and brush up straightaway.

(BLORE exits to the hall with ROGERS. MRS. ROGERS enters from the dining room. She picks up glasses and tidies. ROGERS quickly enters from the dining room with tray of eight glasses.)

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, there you are, Rogers. You ought to clear these dirty glasses. You're always leaving the dirty work to me.

(MRS. ROGERS takes glasses off the tray and ROGERS puts on the dirty ones.)

Here I am with a four-course dinner on my hands and no one to help me. You might come and give me a hand

with the dishing up. Who was it that you were talking to, by the way?

ROGERS. Davis. South African gentleman. No class if you ask me – and no money either.

MRS. ROGERS. I don't like him – Don't like any of 'em much. More like that bunch we had in the boarding house, I'd say.

ROGERS. Davis gives out he's a millionaire or something. You should see his underwear! Cheap as they make 'em.

MRS. ROGERS. Well, as I said, it's not treating us right. All these visitors arriving today and the maids not coming till tomorrow. What do they think we are?

ROGERS. Now, then – Anyway, the money's good.

MRS. ROGERS. So it ought to be! Catch me going into service again unless the money was good.

ROGERS. Well, it is good, so what are you going on about?

MRS. ROGERS. Well, I can tell you this, Rogers. I'm not staying any place where I'm put upon. Cooking's my business! I'm a good cook –

ROGERS. (*Soothingly.*) First rate, old girl.

MRS. ROGERS. But the kitchen's my place and housework's none of my business. All these guests! I've a good mind to put my hat and coat on and walk out now and go straight back to Plymouth.

ROGERS. (*Grinning.*) You can't do that, old girl,

MRS. ROGERS. (*Belligerently.*) Who says I can't? Why not, I should like to know?

ROGERS. Because you're on an island, old girl. Had you forgotten that?

MRS. ROGERS. Yes, and I don't know as I fancy being on an island.

ROGERS. Don't know that I do, either, come to that. No slipping down to a pub, or going to the pictures. Oh, well, it's double wages on account of the difficulties. And there's plenty of beer in the house.

MRS. ROGERS. That's all you ever think about – beer.

ROGERS. Now, now, stop your nagging. You get back to the kitchen or your dinner will be spoilt.

MRS. ROGERS. It'll be spoilt anyway, I expect. Everybody's going to be late. Wasted on them, anyway. Thank goodness, I didn't make a soufflé.

(VERA enters from the hall.)

Oh, dinner won't be a minute, Miss. Just a question of dishing up.

(MRS. ROGERS exits to the dining room.)

VERA. Is everything all right, Rogers? Can you manage between the two of you?

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, Miss. The Missus talks a lot, but she gets it done.

(ROGERS exits to the dining room as EMILY enters from the hall, having changed.)

VERA. What a lovely evening!

EMILY. Yes, indeed. The weather seems very settled.

VERA. How plainly one can hear the sea.

EMILY. A pleasant sound.

VERA. Hardly a breath of wind – and deliciously warm. Not like England at all.

EMILY. I should have thought you might feel a little uncomfortable in that dress.

(VERA doesn't take the point.)

VERA. Oh, no.

EMILY. *(Nastily.)* It's rather tight, isn't it?

VERA. *(Innocently.)* Oh, I don't think so.

(EMILY sits and takes out her knitting.)

EMILY. You'll excuse me, my dear, but you're a young girl and you've got your living to earn.

VERA. Yes?

EMILY. A well-bred woman doesn't like her secretary to appear flashy. It looks, you know, as though you were trying to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

VERA. And would you say I do attract them?

EMILY. That's beside the point. A girl who deliberately sets out to get the attention of men won't be likely to keep her job long.

VERA. (*Laughing.*) Ah! Surely that depends on who she's working for?

EMILY. Really, Miss Claythorne!

VERA. Aren't you being a little unkind?

EMILY. (*Spitefully.*) Young people nowadays behave in the most disgusting fashion.

VERA. Disgusting?

EMILY. (*Fanatically.*) Yes. Low-backed evening dresses. Lying half naked on beaches. All this so-called sunbathing. An excuse for immodest conduct, nothing more. Familiarity! Christian names – drinking cocktails! And look at the young men nowadays. Decadent! Look at that young Marston. What good is he? And that Captain Lombard!

VERA. What do you object to in Captain Lombard? I should say he was a man who'd led a very varied and interesting life.

EMILY. The man's an adventurer. All this younger generation is no good – no good at all.

VERA. You don't like youth – I see.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

VERA. I was just remarking that you don't like young people.

EMILY. And is there any reason why I should, pray?

VERA. Oh, no – (*Pauses.*) but it seems to me that you must miss an awful lot.

EMILY. You're very impertinent.

VERA. I'm sorry, but that's just what I think.

EMILY. The world will never improve until we stamp out immodesty.

VERA. *(Quietly.)* Quite pathological.

EMILY. *(Sharply.)* What did you say?

VERA. Nothing.

(ARMSTRONG and LOMBARD enter from the hall.)

LOMBARD. What about the old boy –

ARMSTRONG. He looks rather like a tortoise, don't you think so?

LOMBARD. All judges look like tortoises. They have that venomous way of darting their heads in and out. Mr. Justice Wargrave is no exception.

ARMSTRONG. I hadn't realised he was a judge.

LOMBARD. Oh, yes. *(Cheerfully.)* He's probably been responsible for sending more innocent people to their death than anyone in England.

(WARGRAVE enters and looks at him. LOMBARD turns to VERA.)

Hello, you. Do you two know each other? Mr. Armstrong – Miss Claythorne. Armstrong and I have just decided that the old boy –

VERA. Yes, I heard you and so did he, I think.

(WARGRAVE moves over to EMILY who rises as he approaches.)

EMILY. Oh, Sir Lawrence.

WARGRAVE. Miss Brent, isn't it?

EMILY. There's something I want to ask you. Will you come out here?

(She indicates she wants to talk on the balcony. WARGRAVE nods his assent.)

WARGRAVE. A remarkably fine night!

(MARSTON enters from the hall with BLORE. They are in conversation.)

MARSTON. Absolutely wizard car – a super-charged Sports Varletti Carlotta. You don't see many of them on the road. I can get over a hundred out of her.

(**VERA** *sits.*)

BLORE. Did you come from London?

MARSTON. Yes, two hundred and eight miles and I did it in a bit over four hours.

(**ARMSTRONG** *turns and looks at him.*)

Too many cars on the road, though, to keep it up. Touched ninety going over Salisbury Plain. Not too bad, eh?

ARMSTRONG. I think you passed me on the road.

MARSTON. Oh, yes?

ARMSTRONG. You nearly drove me into the ditch.

MARSTON. (*Unmoved.*) Did I? Sorry.

ARMSTRONG. If I'd seen your number, I'd have reported you.

MARSTON. But you were footling along in the middle of the road.

ARMSTRONG. Footling? Me footling?

(**BLORE** *attempts to relieve the atmosphere.*)

BLORE. Oh, well, what about a drink?

MARSTON. Good idea.

(*They make to the drinks cabinet.*)

Will you have one, Miss Claythorne?

VERA. No, thank you.

(**LOMBARD** *sits beside VERA.*)

LOMBARD. Good evening, Mrs. Owen.

VERA. Why Mrs. Owen?

LOMBARD. You'd make the most attractive wife for any wealthy businessman.

VERA. Do you always flirt so outrageously?

LOMBARD. Always.

VERA. Oh! Well, now we know.

(She turns away, smiling.)

LOMBARD. Tell me, what's old Miss Brent talking to the Judge about? She tried to buttonhole him upstairs.

VERA. I don't know. Funny – she seemed so definite that there wasn't a Mr. Owen.

LOMBARD. You don't think that Mrs. Owen – I mean that there isn't – that they aren't –

VERA. What, married you mean?

(ROGERS enters from the dining room. He switches on the lights, draws the curtains and exits to the study. MARSTON moves to VERA.)

MARSTON. Damn shame we don't know each other. I could have given you a lift down.

VERA. Yes, that would have been grand.

MARSTON. Like to show you what I can do across Salisbury Plain. Tell you what – maybe we can drive back together?

(WARGRAVE and EMILY enter from the balcony. MACKENZIE enters from the hall and sits.)

VERA. *(Surprised.)* But I –

MARSTON. But it seems damn silly. I've got an empty car.

LOMBARD. Yes, but she likes the way she's going back and –

(VERA rises awkwardly and makes to fireplace. MARSTON and LOMBARD scowl at each other.)

VERA. Look! Aren't they sweet? Those ten little china soldiers. Oh, and there's the old nursery rhyme.

LOMBARD. What are you talking about? What figures? What nursery rhyme?

(VERA points at the figures and the rhyme.)

VERA. *(Reading.)* "Ten little soldier boys going out to dine. One choked his little self and then there were nine –"

(**ROGERS** enters from the study. **VERA** continues reading.)

"Nine little soldier boys sat up very late. One overslept himself and then there were eight."

BLORE. "Eight little soldier boys travelling in Devon. One got left behind and then there were seven –"

(*Very slowly and clearly a VOICE is heard off.*)

VOICE. Ladies and Gentlemen, silence, please!

(*Everybody stops talking and stares round at each other. As each name is mentioned that person reacts by a sudden movement or gesture.*)

You are charged with these indictments: that you did respectively and at diverse times commit the following: Edward Armstrong, that you did cause the death of Louisa Mary Clees. William Henry Blore, that you brought about the death of James Stephen Landor. Emily Caroline Brent, that you were responsible for the death of Beatrice Taylor. Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, that you killed Peter Ogilvie Hamilton.

(**VERA** sits.)

Philip Lombard, that you were guilty of the deaths of twenty-one men, members of an East African tribe. John Gordon MacKenzie, that you sent your wife's lover, Arthur Richmond, to his death.

(**MACKENZIE** sits.)

Anthony James Marston, that you were guilty of the murder of John and Lucy Combes. Thomas Rogers and Ethel Rogers, that you brought about the death of Jennifer Brady. Lawrence John Wargrave, that you were guilty of the murder of Edward Seton. Prisoners at the bar, have you anything to say in your defence?

(*There is a momentary paralysed silence, then a scream is heard outside the dining room door. LOMBARD springs across the room.*)

Indignant murmurs break out as people recover from the initial shock. The dining room door opens to show MRS. ROGERS in a fallen heap. MARSTON springs across to LOMBARD. They pick up MRS. ROGERS and carry her in. ARMSTRONG looks her over.)

ARMSTRONG. It's nothing much. She's fainted, that's all. She'll be round in a minute. Get some brandy.

BLORE. Rogers, get some brandy.

(ROGERS, shaking all over, exits to the dining room.)

VERA. Who was that speaking? It sounded –

(MACKENZIE pulls at his moustache nervously, his hands shaking.)

MACKENZIE. What's going on here? What kind of practical joke was that? –

(BLORE wipes his face with a handkerchief. WARGRAVE stands thoughtfully stroking his chin, his eyes peering suspiciously from one to the other.)

LOMBARD. Where the devil did that voice come from?

(They stare all round. LOMBARD exits into the study.)

Here we are.

VOICE. You are charged with these indictments –

VERA. Turn it off! Turn it off! It's horrible!

(LOMBARD switches it off. MRS. ROGERS groans.)

ARMSTRONG. A disgraceful and heartless practical joke.

WARGRAVE. *(Significantly.)* So you think it's a joke, do you?

ARMSTRONG. What else could it be?

WARGRAVE. At the moment I'm not prepared to give an opinion.

(ROGERS enters from the dining room with brandy and a glass on a tray. He puts it down then goes to MRS. ROGERS.)

MARSTON. Who the devil turned it on, though? And set it going?

WARGRAVE. We must enquire into that.

(WARGRAVE looks significantly at ROGERS. LOMBARD enters from the study with gramophone record in his hands. MRS. ROGERS begins to move and twist.)

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me!

(The others move nearer. ROGERS turns to ARMSTRONG.)

ROGERS. Allow me, sir. If I speak to her – Ethel – Ethel. It's all right. All right, do you hear? Pull yourself together.

(MRS. ROGERS begins to gasp and moan. She tries to pull herself up; her frightened eyes stare round the room.)

ARMSTRONG. You'll be all right now, Mrs. Rogers. Just a nasty turn.

MRS. ROGERS. Did I faint, sir?

ARMSTRONG. Yes.

MRS. ROGERS. It was the voice – the awful voice – like a judgment –

(ROGERS shifts anxiously. MRS. ROGERS eyelids flutter as if she might collapse again.)

ARMSTRONG. Where's the brandy?

(They draw back a little. BLORE pours out a brandy and gives the glass to ARMSTRONG.)

Drink this, Mrs. Rogers.

(She sips a little, revives and sits up again.)

MRS. ROGERS. I'm all right now. I just – gave me a turn.

ROGERS. (*Quickly.*) Of course it did. Gave me a turn too.
Wicked lies it was. I'd like to know –

(**ROGERS** stops as **WARGRAVE** deliberately
clears his throat.)

WARGRAVE. Who was it put that record on the gramophone?
Was it you, Rogers?

ROGERS. I was just obeying orders, sir, that's all.

WARGRAVE. Whose orders?

ROGERS. Mr. Owen's.

WARGRAVE. Let me get this quite clear. Mr. Owen's orders
were – what exactly?

ROGERS. I was to put a record on the gramophone in the
study. I'd find the records in the drawer in there. I was
to start with that one, sir. I thought it was just to give
you all some music.

WARGRAVE. (*Sceptically.*) A very remarkable story.

ROGERS. (*Hysterically.*) It's the truth, sir. Before Heaven,
it's the truth. I didn't know what it was – not for a
moment. It had a name on it. I thought it was just a
piece of music.

(**WARGRAVE** looks toward **LOMBARD**, who
examines the record.)

WARGRAVE. Is there a title?

LOMBARD. (*Grinning.*) A title? Yes, sir. It's entitled "Swan
Song."

(*It amuses him, but the others react
nervously.*)

MACKENZIE. The whole thing is preposterous –
preposterous! Slinging accusations about like this.
Something must be done about it. This fellow Owen,
whoever he is –

EMILY. That's just it. Who is he?

WARGRAVE. (*Authoritatively.*) That is exactly what we
must go into very carefully. I should suggest that you
get your wife to bed, Rogers. Then come back here.

ROGERS. Yes, sir.

ARMSTRONG. I'll give you a hand.

VERA. Will she be all right, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. Yes, quite all right.

(ARMSTRONG and ROGERS help MRS. ROGERS up and take her out to the hall. MARSTON turns to WARGRAVE.)

MARSTON. Don't know about you, sir, but I feel I need another drink.

WARGRAVE. I agree.

MARSTON. I'll get them.

MACKENZIE. *(Muttering.)* Preposterous – that's what it is – preposterous.

MARSTON. Whiskey for you, Sir Lawrence?

EMILY. I should like a glass of water, please.

VERA. Yes, I'll get it. I'll have a little whiskey too.

(VERA takes a glass of water to EMILY. They sip their drinks, eyeing each other warily. ARMSTRONG enters from the hall.)

ARMSTRONG. She'll be all right. I've given her a sedative.

BLORE. Now, then, Doctor, you'll want a drink after all this.

ARMSTRONG. No, thank you. I never touch it.

BLORE. Oh, so you said. You have this one, General?

(BLORE takes a drink to MACKENZIE. MARSTON and LOMBARD refill their glasses. ROGERS enters from the hall. Everyone focuses attention on him. WARGRAVE takes charge.)

WARGRAVE. Now, then, Rogers, we must get to the bottom of this. Tell us what you know about Mr. Owen.

ROGERS. He owns this place, sir.

WARGRAVE. I am aware of that fact. What I want you to tell me is what you yourself know about the man.

ROGERS. I can't say, sir. You see, I've never seen him.

(There is a stir of interest.)

MACKENZIE. What d'you mean, you've never seen him?

ROGERS. We've only been here just under a week, sir, my wife and I. We were engaged by letter through a registry office. The Regina, in Plymouth.

BLORE. That's a high-class firm. We can check on that.

WARGRAVE. Have you got the letter?

ROGERS. The letter engaging us? Yes, sir.

(ROGERS hunts for it. After a moment he hands it to WARGRAVE who looks over it.)

WARGRAVE. Go on with your story.

ROGERS. We arrived here like the letter said, on the 4th. Everything was in order, plenty of food in stock and everything very nice. Just needed dusting and that.

WARGRAVE. What next?

ROGERS. Nothing, sir. That is, we got orders to prepare the rooms for a house party – eight. Then yesterday, by the morning post, I received another letter saying Mr. and Mrs. Owen might be detained and, if so, we was to do the best we could, and it gave the instructions about dinner and putting on the gramophone record. Here it is, sir.

(ROGERS hands over letter.)

WARGRAVE. Hmm. Headed Ritz Hotel and typewritten.

(BLORE takes the letter.)

BLORE. Coronation machine Number Five. Quite new. No defects. Ensign paper – most common make. We shan't get much out of this. We might try it for fingerprints, but it's been handled too much.

LOMBARD. Quite the little detective.

(WARGRAVE turns and looks at him sharply. BLORE's manner has completely changed, so has his voice. MARSTON takes the letter.)

MARSTON. Got some fancy Christian names, hasn't he? Ulick Norman Owen. Quite a mouthful.

(WARGRAVE takes the letter from MARSTON and looks around the room in his court manner.)

WARGRAVE. I am obliged to you, Mr. Marston. You have drawn my attention to a curious and suggestive point. I think the time has come for all of us to pool our information. It would be well for everybody to come forward with all the information they have regarding our unknown host. We are all his guests. I think it would be profitable if each one of us were to explain exactly how that came about.

(There is a pause.)

EMILY. There's something very peculiar about all this. I received a letter with a signature that was not very easy to read. It purported to be from a woman whom I had met at a certain summer resort two or three years ago. I took the name to be Ogden. I am quite certain that I have never met or become friendly with anyone of the name of Owen.

WARGRAVE. Have you got that letter, Miss Brent?

EMILY. Yes. I will fetch it for you.

(EMILY exits to the hall.)

WARGRAVE. Miss Claythorne?

VERA. I never actually met Mrs. Owen. I wanted a holiday post and I applied to a secretarial agency. Miss Grenfell's in London. I was offered this post and accepted.

WARGRAVE. And you were never interviewed by your prospective employer?

VERA. No. This is the letter.

(VERA hands it to him and WARGRAVE reads.)

WARGRAVE. "Soldier Island, Sticklehaven, Devon. I have received your name from Miss Grenfell's Agency. I understand she knows you personally. I shall be glad to pay you the salary you ask, and shall expect you to take up your duties on August 8th. The train is the 12:10

from Paddington and you will be met at Oakbridge Station. I enclose five pounds for expenses. Yours truly,
Una Nancy Owen"

(**MARSTON** *makes to the balcony.*)

Mr. Marston?

MARSTON. Don't actually know the Owens. Got a wire from a pal of mine, Badger Berkeley. Told me to roll up here. Surprised me a bit because I had an idea the old horse had gone to Norway. I haven't got the wire.

WARGRAVE. Thank you. Doctor Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG. In the circumstances, I think I may admit that my visit here was professional. Mr. Owen wrote me that he was worried about his wife's health – her nerves, to be precise. He wanted a report without her being alarmed. He therefore suggested that my visit should be regarded as that of an ordinary guest.

WARGRAVE. You had no previous acquaintance with the family?

ARMSTRONG. No.

WARGRAVE. But you had no hesitation in obeying the summons?

ARMSTRONG. A colleague of mine was mentioned and a very handsome fee was suggested. I was due for a holiday, anyway.

(**EMILY** *re-enters and hands a letter to*
WARGRAVE, *who reads.*)

WARGRAVE. "Dear Miss Brent: I do hope you remember me. We were together at Bell Haven Guest House in August some years ago and we seemed to have so much in common. I am starting a guest house of my own on an island off the coast of Devon. I think there is really an opening for a place where there is good plain English cooking, and a nice old-fashioned type of person. None of this nudity and gramophones half the night. I shall be very glad if you could see your way to spending your summer holiday on Soldier Island – as

my guest, of course. I suggest August 8th, 12:40 from Paddington to Oakbridge. Yours sincerely, U.N." Hmm. Yes, the signature is slightly ambiguous.

(LOMBARD speaks quietly to VERA.)

LOMBARD. I like the nudity touch!

(WARGRAVE takes a letter from his pocket.)

WARGRAVE. Here is my own decoy letter. From an old friend of mine, Lady Constance Culmington. She writes in her usual vague, incoherent way, urges me to join her here and refers to her host and hostess in the vaguest of terms.

(ARMSTRONG, MARSTON and MACKENZIE look at the letter. LOMBARD stares at BLORE.)

LOMBARD. *(Excitedly.)* Look here, I've just thought of something –

WARGRAVE. In a minute.

LOMBARD. But I –

WARGRAVE. We will take one thing at a time, if you don't mind, Captain Lombard. General MacKenzie?

(BLORE sits. MACKENZIE pulls at his moustache.)

MACKENZIE. Got a letter – from this fellow Owen – thought I must have met him sometime at the Club – mentioned some old cronies of mine who were to be here – hoped I'd excuse informal invitation. Haven't kept the letter, I'm afraid.

WARGRAVE. And you, Captain Lombard?

LOMBARD. Same sort of thing. Invitation mentioning mutual friends. I haven't kept the letter either.

(There is a pause. WARGRAVE turns his attention to BLORE; he looks at him for some time. When he speaks, his voice is silky and dangerous.)

WARGRAVE. Just now we had a somewhat disturbing experience. An apparently disembodied voice spoke to us all by name, uttering certain definite accusations against us. We will deal with those accusations presently. At the moment I am interested in a minor point. Amongst the names received was that of William Henry Blore. But as far as we know, there is no one named Blore amongst us. The name of Davis was not mentioned. What have you to say about that, Mr. Davis?

BLORE. Cat's out of the bag, it seems. I suppose I'd better admit my name isn't Davis.

WARGRAVE. You are William Henry Blore?

BLORE. That's right.

LOMBARD. I will add something to that. Not only are you here under a false name, Mr. Blore, but in addition I've noticed this evening that you're a first-class liar. You claim to have come from Natal, South Africa. I know South Africa and Natal well, and I'm prepared to swear that you've never set foot there in your life.

(They all turn to BLORE.)

BLORE. You gentlemen have got me wrong. I'm an ex - C.I.D. man.

LOMBARD. Oh, a copper!

BLORE. I've got my credentials and I can prove it. I run a detective agency in Plymouth. I was put onto this job.

WARGRAVE. By whom?

BLORE. Why, Mr. Owen. Sent a very nice money order for expenses, and said I was to join the house party, posing as a guest. He also sent a list of all your names and said I was to keep an eye on you all.

WARGRAVE. Any reason given?

BLORE. Said Mrs. Owen had got some valuable jewels. *(Pause.)* Mrs. Owen, my foot! I don't believe there's any such person.

(WARGRAVE looks down at the letters.)

WARGRAVE. Your conclusions are, I think, justified. Ulick Norman Owen, Una Nancy Owen. Each time, that is to say. U.N. Owen. Or, by a slight stretch of fancy, Unknown.

VERA. But it's fantastic! Mad!

WARGRAVE. Oh, yes, I've no doubt in my own mind that we have been invited here by a madman – probably a dangerous homicidal lunatic.

(There is an appalled silence.)

ROGERS. Oh, my gawd!

WARGRAVE. Whoever it is who has enticed us here, that person has taken the trouble to find out a great deal about us. *(Pause.)* A very great deal. And out of his knowledge concerning us, he has made certain definite accusations.

(Everybody speaks at once.)

BLORE. It's all very well to make accusations.

MACKENZIE. A pack of damn lies! Slander!

VERA. It's iniquitous! Wicked!

ROGERS. A lie – a wicked lie – we never did, neither of us –

MARSTON. Don't know what the damned fool was getting at –

(WARGRAVE raises a hand for silence.)

WARGRAVE. I wish to say this. Our unknown friend accuses me of the murder of one Edward Seton. I remember Seton perfectly well. He came up before me for trial in June, 1930. He was charged with the murder of an elderly woman. He was very ably defended and made a good impression on the jury in the witness box. Nevertheless, on the evidence he was certainly guilty. I summed up accordingly and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. In passing sentence of death, I fully concurred with this verdict. The appeal was lodged on the grounds of misdirection. The appeal was dismissed and the man was duly executed. *(Pause.)* I wish to say

before you all that my conscience is perfectly clear on the matter. I did my duty and nothing more. I passed sentence on a rightly convicted murderer.

ARMSTRONG. Did you know Seton at all? I mean, personally.

(WARGRAVE looks at him; he hesitates a moment.)

WARGRAVE. I knew nothing of Seton previous to the trial.

(LOMBARD speaks in a low voice to VERA.)

LOMBARD. The old boy's lying. I'll swear he's lying.

MACKENZIE. Fellow's a madman. Absolute madman. Got a bee in his bonnet. Got hold of the wrong end of the stick all round. Best really to leave this sort of thing unanswered. However, feel I ought to say – no truth – no truth whatever in what he said about – er – young Arthur Richmond. Richmond was one of my officers. I sent him on reconnaissance in 1917. He was killed. Also like to say – resent very much – slur on my wife. Been dead a long time. Best woman in the world. Absolutely – Caesar's wife.

MARSTON. I've just been thinking – John and Lucy Combes. Must have been a couple of kids I ran over near Cambridge. Beastly bad luck.

WARGRAVE. *(Acidly.)* For them or for you?

MARSTON. Well, I was thinking – for me – but, of course, you're right, sir. It was damned bad luck for them too. Of course, it was pure accident. They rushed out of some cottage or other. I had my license suspended for a year. Beastly nuisance.

ARMSTRONG. This speeding's all wrong – all wrong. Young men like you are a danger to the community.

(MARSTON wanders to the window and picks up his glass, which is half-full.)

MARSTON. Well, I couldn't help it. Just an accident.

ROGERS. Might I say a word, sir?

LOMBARD. Go ahead, Rogers.

ROGERS. There was a mention, sir, of me and Mrs. Rogers, and of Miss Jennifer Brady. There isn't a word of truth in it. We were with Miss Brady when she died. She was always in poor health, sir, always from the time we came to her. There was a storm, sir, the night she died. The telephone was out of order. We couldn't get the doctor to her. I went for him, sir, on foot. But he got there too late. We'd done everything possible for her, sir. Devoted to her, we were. Anyone will tell you the same. There was never a word said against us. Never a word.

BLORE. Came into a nice little something at her death, I suppose. Didn't you?

ROGERS. (*Stiffly.*) Miss Brady left us a legacy in recognition of our faithful service. And why not, I'd like to know?

LOMBARD. What about yourself, Mr. Blore?

BLORE. What about me?

LOMBARD. Your name was on the list.

BLORE. I know, I know. Landor, you mean? That was the London & Commercial Bank robbery.

(**WARGRAVE** *lights his pipe.*)

WARGRAVE. I remember the name, though it didn't come before me. Landor was convicted on your evidence. You were the police officer in charge of the case.

BLORE. I was, M'lud.

WARGRAVE. Landor got penal servitude for life and died in Dartmoor a year later. He was a delicate man.

BLORE. He was a crook. It was him put the night watchman out. The case was clear from the start.

WARGRAVE. (*Slowly.*) You were complimented, I think, on your able handling of the case.

BLORE. I got my promotion. (*Pause.*) I was only doing my duty.

LOMBARD. Convenient word – duty. What about you, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. I'm at a loss to understand the matter. The name meant nothing to me – what was it? Close? Close? I really don't remember having a patient of that name – or its being connected with a death in any way. The thing's a complete mystery to me. Of course, it's a long time ago. *(Pause.)* It might possibly be one of my operation cases in hospital. They come too late, so many of these people. Then, when the patient dies, it's always the surgeon's fault.

LOMBARD. And then it's better to take up nerve cases and give up surgery. Some, of course, give up drink.

ARMSTRONG. I protest. You've no right to insinuate such things. I never touch alcohol.

LOMBARD. My dear fellow, I never suggested you did. Anyway, Mr. Unknown is the only one who knows all the facts.

(WARGRAVE turns to VERA.)

WARGRAVE. Miss Claythorne?

(She starts. She has been sitting, staring in front of her. She speaks without feeling.)

VERA. I was nursery governess to Peter Hamilton. We were in Cornwall for the summer. He was forbidden to swim out far. One day, when my attention was distracted, he started off – as soon as I saw what happened I swam after him. I couldn't get there in time –

WARGRAVE. Was there an inquest?

VERA. Yes, I was exonerated by the Coroner. His mother didn't blame me either.

WARGRAVE. Thank you. Miss Brent?

EMILY. I have nothing to say.

WARGRAVE. Nothing?

EMILY. Nothing.

WARGRAVE. You reserve your defence?

EMILY. *(Sharply.)* There is no question of defence. I have always acted according to the dictates of my conscience.

LOMBARD. What a law-abiding lot we seem to be! Myself excepted –

WARGRAVE. We are waiting for your story, Captain Lombard.

LOMBARD. I haven't got a story.

WARGRAVE. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

(**LOMBARD** grins; apparently enjoying himself.)

LOMBARD. I'm sorry to disappoint all of you. It's just that I plead guilty. It's perfectly true. I left those natives alone in the bush. Matter of self-preservation.

(*His words cause a sensation. VERA looks at him unbelievably.*)

MACKENZIE. (*Sternly.*) You abandoned your men?

LOMBARD. (*Coolly.*) Not quite the act of a proper gentleman, I'm afraid. But after all, self-preservation's a man's first duty. And natives don't mind dying, you know. They don't feel about it as Europeans do –

(*There is a pause. LOMBARD looks around at everyone with amusement. WARGRAVE clears throat disapprovingly.*)

WARGRAVE. Our inquiry rests there. Now, Rogers, who else is there on this island besides ourselves and you and your wife?

ROGERS. Nobody, sir. Nobody at all.

WARGRAVE. You're sure of that?

ROGERS. Quite sure, sir.

WARGRAVE. Thank you.

(**ROGERS** turns to go.)

Don't go, Rogers. I am not yet clear as to the purpose of our unknown host in getting us to assemble here. But in my opinion he's not sane in the accepted sense of the word. He may be dangerous. In my opinion, it would

be well for us to leave this place as soon as possible. I suggest that we leave here tonight.

(There is general agreement from the group.)

ROGERS. I beg your pardon, sir, but there's no boat on the island.

WARGRAVE. No boat at all?

ROGERS. No, sir.

WARGRAVE. Why don't you telephone to the mainland?

ROGERS. There's no telephone. Fred Narracott, he comes over every morning, sir. He brings the milk and the bread and the post and the papers, and takes the orders.

(MARSTON picks up his drink, raising his voice.)

MARSTON. A bit unsporting, what? Ought to ferret out the mystery before we go. Whole thing's like a detective story. Positively thrilling.

WARGRAVE. *(Acidly.)* At my time of life, I have no desire for thrills.

MARSTON. The legal life's narrowing. I'm all for crime.

(He raises his glass.)

Here's to it.

(He drinks it off with a gulp then suddenly chokes and gasps. He convulses violently and falls, the glass drops from his hand.)

ARMSTRONG runs over to him and feels his pulse.)

ARMSTRONG. My God, he's dead!

(The others can hardly take it in. ARMSTRONG sniffs the glass then nods.)

MACKENZIE. Dead? D'you mean the fellow just choked and died?

ARMSTRONG. You can call it choking if you like. He died of asphyxiation, right enough.

MACKENZIE. Never knew a man could die like that – just of a choking fit.

EMILY. In the middle of life we are in death.

ARMSTRONG. A man doesn't die of a mere choking fit, General MacKenzie. Marston's death isn't what we call a natural death.

VERA. Was there something in the whiskey?

ARMSTRONG. Yes. By the smell of it, cyanide. Probably potassium cyanide. Acts pretty well instantaneously.

LOMBARD. Then he must have put the stuff in the glass himself.

BLORE. Suicide, eh? That's a rum go.

VERA. You'd never think he'd commit suicide. He was so alive. He was enjoying himself.

(EMILY picks up the remains of a soldier.)

EMILY. Oh! Look – here's one of the little soldiers off the mantelpiece – broken.

(She holds it up.)

ACT II

Scene One

(The following morning. The windows are open and the room has been tidied. It is a fine morning. There are only eight soldiers on the mantelpiece. Suitcases are piled up on the balcony and all are waiting for the boat to arrive. MACKENZIE is sitting in his chair, looking definitely a little queer. EMILY is knitting with her hat and coat on. WARGRAVE stands a little apart, thoughtful. His manner is judicial throughout the scene. VERA stands restlessly by the window. She comes into the room as if to speak but no one takes any notice. She sits. ARMSTRONG and BLORE come up onto the balcony.)

ARMSTRONG. We've been up to the top. No sign of that boat yet.

VERA. It's very early still.

BLORE. Oh, I know. Still the fellow brings the milk and the bread and all that. I should have thought he'd have got here before this.

(BLORE opens the door to the dining room and looks in.)

No sign of breakfast yet. Where's that fellow Rogers?

VERA. Oh, don't let's bother about breakfast.

WARGRAVE. How's the weather looking?

BLORE. The wind has freshened a bit. Rather a mackerel sky. Old boy in the train yesterday said we were due for dirty weather. Shouldn't wonder if he wasn't right –

ARMSTRONG. (*Nervously.*) I wish that boat would come. The sooner we get off this island the better. It's absurd not keeping a boat on the island.

BLORE. No proper harbor. If the wind comes to blow from the southeast, a boat would get dashed to pieces against the rocks.

EMILY. But a boat would always be able to make us from the mainland?

BLORE. No, Miss Brent – that's just what it wouldn't.

EMILY. Do you mean we should be cut off from the land?

BLORE. Yes. Condensed milk, ryvita and tinned stuff till the gale has blown itself out. But you needn't worry. The sea's only a bit choppy.

EMILY. I think the pleasures of living on an island are rather overrated.

ARMSTRONG. (*Restless.*) I wonder if that boat's coming. Annoying the way the house is built slap up against the cliff. You can't see the mainland until you've climbed to the top. Shall we go up there again?

BLORE. (*Grinning*) It's no good. Doctor. A watched pot never boils. There wasn't a sign of a boat putting out when we were up there just now.

ARMSTRONG. What can this man Narracott be doing?

BLORE. (*Philosophically.*) They're all like that in Devon. Never hurry themselves.

ARMSTRONG. And where's Rogers? He ought to be about.

BLORE. If you ask me, Master Rogers was pretty badly rattled last night.

ARMSTRONG. I know. (*Shivers.*) Ghastly – the whole thing.

BLORE. Got the wind up properly. I'd take an even bet that he and his wife did do that old lady in.

WARGRAVE. (*Incredulous.*) You really think so?

BLORE. Well, I never saw a man more scared. Guilty as hell, I should say.

ARMSTRONG. Fantastic – the whole thing – fantastic.

BLORE. I say, suppose he's hopped it?

ARMSTRONG. Who, Rogers? But there isn't any way he could. There's no boat on the island. You've just said so.

BLORE. Yes, but I've been thinking. We've only Rogers' word for that. Suppose there is one and he's nipped off in it the first thing.

MACKENZIE. Oh! No. He wouldn't be allowed to leave the island.

(His tone is so strange they stare at him.)

BLORE. Sleep well, General?

MACKENZIE. I dreamed – yes, I dreamed –

BLORE. I don't wonder at that.

MACKENZIE. I dreamed of Lesley – my wife, you know.

BLORE. *(Embarrassed.)* Oh – er – yes – I wish Narracott would come.

MACKENZIE. Who is Narracott?

BLORE. The bloke who brought us over yesterday afternoon.

MACKENZIE. Was it only yesterday?

BLORE. *(Determinedly cheerful.)* Yes, I feel like that, too. Batty gramophone records – suicides – it's about all a man can stand. I shan't be sorry to see the back of Soldier Island, I give you my word.

MACKENZIE. So you don't understand. How strange!

BLORE. What's that, General?

(MACKENZIE nods his head gently. BLORE looks questioningly at ARMSTRONG, then taps his forehead significantly.)

ARMSTRONG. I don't like the look of him.

BLORE. I reckon young Marston's suicide must have been a pretty bad shock to him. He looks years older.

ARMSTRONG. Where is that poor young fellow now?

BLORE. In the study – put him there myself.

VERA. Doctor Armstrong, I suppose it was suicide?

ARMSTRONG. *(Sharply.)* What else could it be?

VERA. I don't know. But suicide –

BLORE. You know, I had a pretty funny feeling in the night. This Mr. Unknown Owen, suppose he's on the island. Rogers mayn't know. Or he may have told him to say so. Pretty nasty thought, isn't it?

ARMSTRONG. But would it have been possible for anyone to tamper with Marston's drink without our seeing him?

BLORE. Well, it was standing up there. Anyone could have slipped a dollop of cyanide in it if they'd wanted to.

ARMSTRONG. But that –

(ROGERS comes running up onto the balcony. He is out of breath and makes straight to

ARMSTRONG.)

ROGERS. Oh, there you are, sir. I've been all over the place looking for you. Could you come up and have a look at my wife, sir?

ARMSTRONG. Yes, of course. Is she feeling under the weather still?

ROGERS. She's – she's –

(ROGERS swallows convulsively then exits to the hall. ARMSTRONG turns back to the others.)

ARMSTRONG. You won't leave the island without me?

(He exits.)

VERA. I wish the boat would come. I hate this place.

WARGRAVE. Yes. I think the sooner we can get in touch with the police the better.

VERA. The police?

WARGRAVE. The police have to be notified in a case of suicide, you know, Miss Claythorne.

VERA. Oh, yes – of course.

(VERA looks toward the door of the study and shivers. BLORE opens the door to the dining room.)

BLORE. What's going on here? No sign of any breakfast.

VERA. Are you hungry, General?

(MACKENZIE does not answer; she speaks louder.)

Feeling like breakfast?

(MACKENZIE turns sharply.)

MACKENZIE. Lesley – Lesley – my dear.

VERA. No – I'm not – I'm Vera Claythorne.

(MACKENZIE passes a hand over his eyes.)

MACKENZIE. Of course. Forgive me. I took you for my wife.

VERA. Oh.

MACKENZIE. I was waiting for her, you see.

VERA. But I thought your wife was dead – long ago.

MACKENZIE. Yes. I thought so, too. But I was wrong. She's here. On this island.

(There is a pause. LOMBARD enters from the hall.)

LOMBARD. Good morning.

BLORE. Good morning, Captain Lombard.

LOMBARD. Good morning. Seem to have overslept myself.
Boat here yet?

BLORE. No.

LOMBARD. Bit late, isn't it?

BLORE. Yes.

(LOMBARD turns to VERA.)

LOMBARD. Good morning. You and I could have had a swim before breakfast. Too bad all this.

VERA. Too bad you overslept yourself.

BLORE. You must have good nerves to sleep like that.

LOMBARD. Nothing makes me lose my sleep.

(VERA goes to the mantelpiece.)

BLORE. Didn't dream of African natives, by any chance, did you?

LOMBARD. No. Did you dream of convicts on Dartmoor?

BLORE. (*Angrily*) Look here, I don't think that's funny, Captain Lombard.

LOMBARD. Well, you started it, you know. I'm hungry. What about breakfast?

BLORE. The whole domestic staff seems to have gone on strike.

LOMBARD. Oh, well, we can always forage for ourselves.

(*VERA is examining the soldier figures.*)

VERA. Hullo, that's strange.

LOMBARD. What is?

VERA. You remember we found one of these little fellows smashed last night?

LOMBARD. Yes – that ought to leave nine.

VERA. That ought to leave nine. I'm certain there were ten of them here when we arrived.

LOMBARD. Well?

VERA. There are only eight.

(*LOMBARD goes to mantelpiece.*)

LOMBARD. So there are.

VERA. I think its queer, don't you?

LOMBARD. Probably only nine to begin with. We assumed there were ten because of the rhyme.

(*ARMSTRONG enters from the hall. He is upset, but striving to appear calm. He shuts the door and leans heavily against it.*)

Hullo, Armstrong, what's the matter?

ARMSTRONG. Mrs. Rogers is dead.

(*WARGRAVE rises.*)

BLORE AND VERA. No? How?

ARMSTRONG. Died in her sleep. Rogers thought she was still under the influence of the sleeping draught I gave her and came down without disturbing her. He lit the

kitchen fire and did this room. Then, as she hadn't appeared, he went up, was alarmed by the look of her and went hunting for me. *(Pause.)* She's been dead about five hours, I should say.

BLORE. What was it? Heart?

ARMSTRONG. Impossible to say. It may have been.

BLORE. After all, she had a pretty bad shock last night.

ARMSTRONG. Yes.

WARGRAVE. She might have been poisoned, I suppose, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. It is perfectly possible.

WARGRAVE. With the same stuff as young Marston?

ARMSTRONG. No, not cyanide. It would have to have been some narcotic or hypnotic. One of the barbiturates, or chloral. Something like that.

BLORE. You gave her some sleeping powders last night, didn't you?

ARMSTRONG. Yes, I gave her a mild dose of Luminal.

BLORE. Didn't give her too much, did you?

ARMSTRONG. Certainly not. What do you mean?

BLORE. All right – no offence, no offence. I just thought that perhaps if she'd had a weak heart –

ARMSTRONG. The amount I gave her could not have hurt anyone.

LOMBARD. Then what exactly did happen?

ARMSTRONG. Impossible to say without an autopsy.

WARGRAVE. If, for instance, this death had occurred in the case of one of your private patients, what would have been your procedure?

ARMSTRONG. Without any previous knowledge of the woman's state of health, I could certainly not give a certificate.

VERA. She was a very nervous-looking creature. She had a bad fright last night. Perhaps it was heart failure.

ARMSTRONG. Her heart certainly failed to beat – but what caused it to fail?

EMILY. Conscience.

(There is a pause. They all look at her.)

ARMSTRONG. What exactly do you mean by that, Miss Brent?

EMILY. You all heard – she was accused, together with her husband, of having deliberately murdered her former employer – an old lady.

BLORE. And you believe that's true, Miss Brent?

EMILY. Certainly. You all saw her last night. She broke down completely and fainted. The shock of having her wickedness brought home to her was too much for her. She literally died of fear.

ARMSTRONG. *(Doubtfully.)* It is a possible theory. One cannot adopt it without more exact knowledge of her state of health. If there was a latent cardiac weakness –

EMILY. Call it, if you prefer, An Act of God.

(Everyone is shocked.)

BLORE. Oh, no, Miss Brent.

EMILY. *(Emphatically.)* You regard it as impossible that a sinner should be struck down by the wrath of God? I do not.

(WARGRAVE strokes his chin.)

WARGRAVE. My dear lady, in my experience of ill doing, Providence leaves the work of conviction and chastisement to us mortals – and the process is often fraught with difficulties. There are no short cuts.

BLORE. Let's be practical. What did the woman have to eat and drink last night after she went to bed?

ARMSTRONG. Nothing.

BLORE. Nothing at all? Not a cup of tea? Or a glass of water? I'll bet you she had a cup of tea. That sort always does.

ARMSTRONG. Rogers assures me she had nothing whatever.

BLORE. He might say so.

LOMBARD. So that's your idea?

BLORE. Well, why not? You heard that accusation last night.

What if it's true? Miss Brent thinks it is, for one. Rogers and his missus did the old lady in. They're feeling quite safe and happy about it –

VERA. Happy?

BLORE. Well – they know there's no immediate danger to them. Then, last night some lunatic goes and spills the beans. What happens? It's the woman cracks. Goes to pieces. Did you see him hanging round her when she was coming to? Not all husbandly solicitude? Not on your sweet life. He was like a cat on hot bricks. And that's the position. They've done a murder and got away with it. But if it's all going to be raked up again now, it's the woman will give the show away. She hadn't got the nerve to brazen it out. She's a living danger to her husband, that's what she is, and him – he's all right. He'll go on lying till the cows come home, but he can't be sure of her. So what does he do? He drops a nice little dollop of something into a nice cup of tea, and when she's had it, he washes up the cup and saucer and tells the doctor she ain't had nothing.

VERA. Oh, no. That's impossible. A man wouldn't do that – not to his wife.

BLORE. You'd be surprised, Miss Claythorne, what some husbands would do.

(ROGERS enters from the dining room. He is dead white and speaks to VERA like an automaton.)

ROGERS. Excuse me, Miss, I'm getting on with breakfast. I'm not much of a hand as a cook, I'm afraid. It's lunch that's worrying me. Would cold tongue and gelatine be satisfactory? And I could manage some fried potatoes. And then there's tinned fruit and cheese and biscuits.

VERA. That will be fine, Rogers.

BLORE. Lunch? Lunch? We shan't be here for lunch! And when the hell's that boat coming?

EMILY. Mr. Blore!

BLORE. What?

ROGERS. (*Fatalistically.*) You'll pardon me, sir, but the boat won't be coming.

BLORE. What?

ROGERS. Fred Narracott's always here before eight. (*Pause.*) Is there anything else you require, Miss?

VERA. No, thank you, Rogers.

(**ROGERS** exits to the dining room.)

BLORE. And it's not Rogers! His wife lying dead upstairs and there he's cooking breakfast and calmly talking about lunch! Now he says the boat won't be coming. How the 'ell does he know?

EMILY. Mr. Blore!

BLORE. What?

VERA. Oh, don't you see? He's dazed. He's just carrying on automatically as a good servant would. It's – it's pathetic, really.

BLORE. He's pulling a fast one, if you ask me.

WARGRAVE. The really significant thing is the failure of the boat to arrive. It means that we are being deliberately cut off from help.

MACKENZIE. That's very little time – very little time.

BLORE. What's that, General?

MACKENZIE. Very little time. We mustn't waste it talking about things that don't matter.

(**MACKENZIE** rises and turns to the window. They all look at him dubiously before resuming.)

LOMBARD. Why do you think Narracott hasn't turned up?

WARGRAVE. I think the ubiquitous Mr. Owen has given orders.

LOMBARD. You mean, told him it's a practical joke or something of that kind?

BLORE. He'd never fall for that, would he?

LOMBARD. Why not? Soldier Island's got a reputation for people having crazy parties. This is just one more crazy idea, that's all. Narracott knows there's plenty of food and drink in the island. Probably thinks it's all a huge joke.

VERA. Couldn't we light a bonfire up on the top of the island? So that they'd see it?

LOMBARD. That's probably been provided against. All signals are to be ignored. We're cut off all right.

VERA. (*Impatiently.*) But can't we do something?

LOMBARD. Oh, yes, we can do something. We can find the funny gentleman who's staged this little joke, Mr. Unknown Owen. I'll bet anything you like he's somewhere on the island, and the sooner we get hold of him the better. Because, in my opinion, he's mad as a hatter. And as dangerous as a rattlesnake.

WARGRAVE. Hardly a very good simile, Captain Lombard. The rattlesnake at least gives warning of its approach.

LOMBARD. Warning? My God, yes!

(**LOMBARD** indicates the nursery rhyme then reads.)

That's our warning. "Ten little soldier boys –" There were ten of us after Narracott went, weren't there?

"Ten little soldier boys going out to dine; One went and choked himself.."

Marston choked himself, didn't he? And then –

"Nine little soldier boys sat up very late. One overslept himself..."

Overslept himself – the last part fits Mrs. Rogers rather well, doesn't it?

VERA. You don't think –? Do you mean that he wants to kill us all?

LOMBARD. Yes, I think he does.

VERA. And each one fits with the rhyme!

ARMSTRONG. No, no, it's impossible. It's coincidence. It must be coincidence.

LOMBARD. Only eight little soldier boys here. I suppose that's coincidence too. What do you think, Blore?

BLORE. I don't like it.

ARMSTRONG. But there's nobody on the island.

BLORE. I'm not so sure of that.

ARMSTRONG. This is terrible.

MACKENZIE. None of us will ever leave this island.

BLORE. Can't somebody shut up Grandpa?

LOMBARD. Don't you agree with me, Sir Lawrence?

WARGRAVE. (*Slowly.*) Up to a point – yes.

LOMBARD. Then the sooner we get to work the better. Come on, Armstrong. Come on, Blore. We'll make short work of it.

BLORE. I'm ready. Nobody's got a revolver, by any chance? I suppose that's too much to hope for.

LOMBARD. I've got one.

(**LOMBARD** takes a revolver from his pocket.

BLORE's eyes open rather wide; an idea occurs to him and not a pleasant one.)

BLORE. Always carry that about with you?

LOMBARD. Usually. I've been in some tight places, you know.

BLORE. Oh. Well, you've probably never been in a tighter place than you are today. If there's a homicidal maniac hiding on this island, he's probably got a whole arsenal on him – and he'll use it.

ARMSTRONG. You may be wrong there, Blore. Many homicidal maniacs are very quiet, unassuming people.

WARGRAVE. Delightful fellows!

ARMSTRONG. You'd never guess there was anything wrong with them.

BLORE. If Mr. Owen turns out to be one of that kind, we'll leave him to you, Doctor. Now, then, let's make a start. I suggest Captain Lombard searches the house while we do the island.

LOMBARD. Right. House ought to be easy. No sliding panels or secret doors.

BLORE. Mind he doesn't get you before you get him!

LOMBARD. Don't worry. But you two had better stick together – remember – "One got left behind."

BLORE. Come on, Armstrong.

(LOMBARD exits to the study. BLORE and ARMSTRONG exit onto the balcony.)

WARGRAVE. A very energetic young man, Captain Lombard.

VERA. Don't you think he's right? If someone is hiding on the island, they'll be bound to find him. It's practically bare rock.

WARGRAVE. I think this problem needs brains to solve it. Rather than brawn.

(WARGRAVE goes towards the balcony.)

VERA. Where are you going?

WARGRAVE. I'm going to sit in the sun – and think, my dear young lady.

EMILY. Where did I put that skein of wool?

VERA. Did you leave it upstairs? Shall I go and see if I can find it?

EMILY. No, I'll go. I know where it's likely to be.

(EMILY exits to the hall.)

VERA. I'm glad Captain Lombard has got a revolver.

MACKENZIE. They're all wasting time – wasting time.

VERA. Do you think so?

MACKENZIE. Yes, it's much better to sit quietly – and wait.

VERA. Wait for what?

MACKENZIE. For the end, of course.

(He rises then opens and shuts the hall and the dining room doors.)

I wish I could find Lesley.

VERA. Your wife?

MACKENZIE. Yes. I wish you'd known her. She was so pretty.
So gay –

VERA. Was she?

MACKENZIE. I loved her very much. Of course, I was a lot older than she was. She was only twenty-seven, you know. *(Pause.)* Arthur Richmond was twenty-six. He was my A.D.C. *(Pause.)* Lesley liked him. They used to talk of music and plays together, and she teased him and made fun of him. I was pleased. I thought she took a motherly interest in the boy. Damn fool, wasn't I? No fool like an old fool. *(A long pause.)* Exactly like a book the way I found out. When I was out in France. She wrote to both of us, and she put the letters in the wrong envelope. So I knew –

VERA. Oh, no.

MACKENZIE. It's all right, my dear. It's a long time ago. But you see I loved her very much – and believed in her. I didn't say anything to him – I let it gather inside – here –

(He strikes his chest.)

– a slow, murderous rage – damned young hypocrite – I'd liked the boy – trusted him.

(VERA looks about nervously.)

VERA. I wonder what the others are doing?

MACKENZIE. I sent him to his death.

VERA. Oh –

MACKENZIE. It was quite easy. Mistakes were being made all the time. All anyone could say was that I'd lost my nerve a bit, made a blunder, sacrificed one of my best men. Yes, it was quite easy *(Pause.)* Lesley never knew. I never told her I'd found out. We went on as usual – but somehow nothing was quite real any more. She

died of pneumonia. *(Pause.)* She had a heart-shaped face - and grey eyes - and brown hair that curled.

VERA. Oh, don't.

MACKENZIE. Yes, I suppose in a way - it was murder. Curious, murder - and I've always been such a law-abiding man. It didn't feel like that at the time. "Serves him damn well right!" that's what I thought. But after - *(Pause.)* Well, you know, don't you?

(VERA is at a loss.)

VERA. What do you mean?

(MACKENZIE stares at her as though something puzzles him.)

MACKENZIE. You don't seem to understand - I thought you would. I thought you'd be glad, too, that the end was coming -

(VERA draws back, alarmed; she eyes him warily.)

VERA. I -

(MACKENZIE follows her. VERA looks round for help.)

MACKENZIE. We're all going to die, you know.

VERA. I - I don't know.

MACKENZIE. You're very young - you haven't got to that yet. The relief! The blessed relief when you know that you've done with it all, that you haven't got to carry the burden any longer.

VERA. General -

MACKENZIE. Don't talk to me that way. You don't understand. I want to sit here and wait - wait for Lesley to come for me.

(He goes out onto the balcony, draws up a chair and sits. The back of his head is visible through window. His position does

not change throughout the scene. VERA stares after him. Her composure breaks.)

VERA. I'm frightened – oh! I'm frightened –

(LOMBARD enters from the study.)

LOMBARD. All correct. No secret passage – one corpse.

VERA. *(Tensely.)* Don't!

LOMBARD. I say, you do look low. How about a drink to steady your nerves?

VERA. *(Angrily.)* A drink! Two corpses in the house at nine o'clock in the morning and all you say, "Have a drink!" An old man going quite crackers – "Have a drink!" Ten people accused of murder – that's all right – just have a drink. Everything's fine so long as you have a drink.

LOMBARD. All right. All right – stay thirsty.

VERA. Oh, you – you're nothing but a waster – an adventurer – you make me tired.

LOMBARD. I say, you are het up. What's the matter, my sweet?

VERA. I'm not your sweet.

LOMBARD. I'm sorry. I rather thought you were.

VERA. Well, you can think again.

LOMBARD. Come now – you know you don't really feel like that. We've got something in common, you and I. Rogues and murderers can't fall out.

(He takes her hand, she draws away.)

VERA. Rogues and murderers –!

LOMBARD. Okay. You don't like the company of rogues and murderers – and you won't have a drink. I'll go and finish searching –

(As LOMBARD exits to the hall, EMILY enters almost colliding with him.)

EMILY. Unpleasant young man! I can't find it anywhere.

(EMILY sees VERA's face.)

Is anything the matter?

VERA. (*Low.*) I'm worried about the General. He really is ill, I think.

(**EMILY** looks to **MACKENZIE**, then goes out onto the balcony and stands behind him. She speaks in a loud, cheerful voice, as though talking to an idiot child.)

EMILY. Looking out for the boat, General?

(**MACKENZIE** does not answer. **EMILY** waits a minute, then comes slowly in.)

His sin has found him out.

VERA. (*Angrily.*) Oh, don't.

EMILY. One must face facts.

VERA. Can any of us afford to throw stones?

EMILY. Even if his wife was no better than she should be – and she must have been a depraved woman – he had no right to take judgment into his own hands.

(**VERA** looks at her challengingly.)

VERA. What about – Beatrice Taylor?

EMILY. Who?

VERA. That was the name, wasn't it?

EMILY. You are referring to that absurd accusation about myself?

VERA. Yes.

EMILY. Now that we are alone, I have no objection to telling you the facts of the case – Indeed I should like you to hear them. It was not a fit subject to discuss before gentlemen – so naturally I refused to say anything last night. That girl, Beatrice Taylor, was in my service. I was very much deceived in her. She had nice manners and was clean and willing. I was very pleased with her. Of course, all that was sheerest hypocrisy. She was a loose girl with no morals. Disgusting! It was some time before I found out that she was what they call "in trouble." (*Pause.*) It was a great shock to me. Her parents were decent folks too, who had brought

her up strictly. I'm glad to say they didn't condone her behaviour.

VERA. What happened?

EMILY. (*Self-righteously*) Naturally, I refused to keep her an hour under my roof. No one shall ever say I condoned immorality.

VERA. Did she drown herself?

EMILY. Yes.

VERA. How old was she?

EMILY. Seventeen.

VERA. Only seventeen.

EMILY. Quite old enough to know how to behave. I told her what a low depraved thing she was. I told her that she was beyond the pale and that no decent person would take her into their house. I told her that her child would be the child of sin and would be branded all its life – and that the man would naturally not dream of marrying her. I told her that I felt soiled by ever having her under my roof –

VERA. (*Shuddering.*) You told a girl of seventeen all that?

EMILY. Yes. I'm glad to say I broke her down utterly.

VERA. Poor little devil.

EMILY. I've no patience with this indulgence toward sin.

VERA. And then, I suppose, you turned her out of the house?

EMILY. Of course.

VERA. And she didn't dare go home – What did you feel like when you found she'd drowned herself?

EMILY. (*Puzzled.*) Feel like?

VERA. Yes. Didn't you blame yourself?

EMILY. Certainly not. I had nothing with which to reproach myself.

VERA. I believe – I believe you really feel like that. That makes it even more horrible.

(VERA goes out onto the balcony. EMILY opens her bag and takes out a small Bible. She begins to read it in a low mutter.)

EMILY. That girl's unbalanced. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made –

(She stops and nods her head.)

– In the net which they hid is their own foot taken."

(ROGERS enters from the dining room. EMILY stops and smiles approvingly.)

"The Lord is known by the judgment He executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand."

(ROGERS looks warily at EMILY.)

ROGERS. Breakfast is ready.

(EMILY turns to him sharply.)

EMILY. Be quiet. "The wicked shall be turned into hell."

ROGERS. Do you know where the gentlemen are, Miss? Breakfast is ready.

(VERA enters from the balcony.)

VERA. Sir Lawrence Wargrave is sitting out there in the sun. Doctor Armstrong and Mr. Blore are searching the island. I shouldn't bother about them.

(ROGERS goes out onto the balcony.)

EMILY. "Shall not the isles shake at the sound of the fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?"

VERA. Shall we go in?

EMILY. I don't feel like eating.

(ROGERS approaches MACKENZIE.)

ROGERS. Breakfast is ready.

(He exits off the balcony. EMILY is still reading from the Bible.)

EMILY. "Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their 'brodered garments."

(BLORE enters from the balcony.)

"They shall clothe themselves with trembling, they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee."

(EMILY looks up and sees BLORE, but her eyes are almost unseeing. BLORE watches her with a new interest.)

BLORE. Reading aloud, Miss Brent?

EMILY. It is my custom to read a portion of the Bible every day.

BLORE. Very good habit, I'm sure.

(ARMSTRONG enters from the balcony.)

VERA. What luck did you have?

ARMSTRONG. There's no cover in the island. No caves. No one could hide anywhere.

(LOMBARD enters from the dining room.)

BLORE. That's right. What about the house, Lombard?

LOMBARD. No one. I'll stake my life there's no one in the house but ourselves. I've been over it from attic to cellar.

(ROGERS enters from the balcony. WARGRAVE comes along the balcony, slowly, and in. EMILY is still reading.)

ROGERS. Breakfast is getting cold.

LOMBARD. *(Boisterously.)* Breakfast! Come on, Blore. You've been yelping for breakfast ever since you got up. Let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Or who knows, perhaps, even today!

(EMILY rises and drops her knitting. BLORE picks it up.)

EMILY. You ought to be ashamed of such levity, Captain Lombard.

(LOMBARD continues in the same vein.)

LOMBARD. Come on, General, can't have this. Breakfast, I say, sir –

(He goes out onto the balcony. Stops – stoops and comes slowly back in.)

Good God! One got left behind – there's a knife in Mackenzie's back.

(ARMSTRONG rushes to MACKENZIE.)

ARMSTRONG. He's dead – he's dead.

BLORE. But he can't be – who could have done it? There's only us on the island.

WARGRAVE. Exactly, my dear sir. Don't you realise that this clever and cunning criminal is always comfortably one stage ahead of us? That he knows exactly what we are going to do next, and makes his plans accordingly? There's only one place, you know, where a successful murderer could hide and have a reasonable chance of getting away with it.

BLORE. One place – where?

WARGRAVE. Here in this room – Mr. Owen is one of us!

Scene Two

(There is a storm; the room is much darker. The windows are closed and rain is heard beating down on it. WARGRAVE enters from the dining room, followed by BLORE.)

BLORE. Sir Lawrence?

WARGRAVE. Well, Mr. Blore?

BLORE. I wanted to get you alone. You were right in what you said this morning. This damned murderer is one of us. And I think I know which one.

WARGRAVE. Really?

(BLORE looks over his shoulder towards the dining room.)

BLORE. Ever hear of the Lizzie Borden case? In America. Old couple killed with an axe in the middle of the morning. Only person who could have done it was the daughter, a respectable, middle-aged spinster. Incredible. So incredible that they acquitted her. But they never found any other explanation.

WARGRAVE. Then your answer to the problem is Miss Emily Brent?

BLORE. I tell you that woman is mad as a hatter. Religious mad, I tell you – she's the one. And we must watch her.

WARGRAVE. Really? I had formed the impression that your suspicions were in a different quarter.

BLORE. Yes – but I've changed my mind, and I'll tell you why – she's not scared and she's the only one who isn't. Why? Because she knows quite well she's in no danger – hush

(VERA and EMILY enter from the dining room. VERA is carrying a coffee tray and places it down. EMILY sits.)

VERA. We've made some coffee. Brr – it's cold in here.

BLORE. You'd hardly believe it when you think what a beautiful day it was this morning.

VERA. Are Captain Lombard and Rogers still out?

BLORE. Yes. No boat will put out in this – and it couldn't land, anyway.

VERA. Miss Brent's.

(VERA hands a coffee cup to BLORE.)

WARGRAVE. Allow me.

(WARGRAVE takes the cup and hands it to EMILY.)

VERA. You were right to insist on our going to lunch – and drinking some brandy with it. I feel better.

(WARGRAVE returns and takes his own coffee.)

WARGRAVE. The court always adjourns for lunch.

VERA. All the same, it's a nightmare. It seems as though it can't be true. What – what are we going to do about it?

WARGRAVE. We must hold an informal court of inquiry. We may at least be able to eliminate some innocent people.

BLORE. You haven't got a hunch of any kind, have you, Miss Claythorne?

WARGRAVE. If Miss Claythorne suspects one of us three, that is rather an awkward question.

VERA. I'm sure it isn't any of you. If you ask me who I suspected, I'd say Doctor Armstrong.

BLORE. Armstrong?

VERA. Yes. Because, don't you see, he's had far and away the best chance to kill Mrs. Rogers. Terribly easy for him, as a doctor, to give her an overdose of sleeping stuff.

BLORE. That's true. But someone else gave her brandy, remember.

WARGRAVE. Her husband had a good opportunity of administering a drug.

BLORE. It isn't Rogers. He wouldn't have the brains to fix all this stunt – nor the money. Besides you can see he's scared stiff.

(ROGERS and LOMBARD, in mackintoshes, appear at the window. BLORE lets them in. As he opens the window, there is a swirl of wind and rain. EMILY half screams and turns around.)

LOMBARD. My God, it's something like a storm.

EMILY. Oh, it's only you –

VERA. Who did you think it was? *(Pause.)* Beatrice Taylor?

EMILY. *(Angrily.)* Eh?

LOMBARD. Not a hope of rescue until this dies down. Is that coffee? Good.

(He takes a cup from VERA.)

I'm taking to coffee now, you see.

VERA. Such restraint in the face of danger is nothing short of heroic.

WARGRAVE. I do not, of course, profess to be a weather prophet. But I should say that it is very unlikely that a boat could reach us, even if it knew of our plight, in under twenty-four hours. Even if the wind drops, the sea has still to go down.

(LOMBARD sits. ROGERS pulls off his shoes.)

VERA. You're awfully wet.

BLORE. Is anyone a swimmer? Would it be possible to swim to the mainland?

VERA. It's over a mile – and in this sea you'd be dashed on the rocks and drowned.

(EMILY speaks like one in a trance. She drops her knitting.)

EMILY. Drowned – drowned in the pond –

(WARGRAVE startled, moves and picks it up for her. There is another furious gust of wind and rain.)

WARGRAVE. I beg your pardon, Miss Brent.

BLORE. After dinner nap.

VERA. It's terribly cold in here.

ROGERS. I could light the fire if you like, Miss?

VERA. That would be a good idea.

LOMBARD. Very sound scheme, Rogers.

(ROGERS goes towards the dining room door - but stops.)

ROGERS. Excuse me, but does anybody know what's become of the top bathroom curtain?

LOMBARD. Really, Rogers, are you going bats too?

BLORE. *(Blankly.)* The bathroom curtain?

ROGERS. Yes, sir. Scarlet oilsilk. It's missing.

(They look at each other.)

LOMBARD. Anybody seen a scarlet oilsilk curtain? No good, I'm afraid, Rogers.

ROGERS. It doesn't matter, sir, only I just thought as it was odd.

LOMBARD. Everything on this island is odd.

ROGERS. I'll get some sticks and a few knobs of coal and get a nice fire going.

(ROGERS exits to the dining room.)

VERA. I wonder if he would like some hot coffee. He's very wet.

(VERA runs out after him, calling "Rogers".)

LOMBARD. What's become of Armstrong?

WARGRAVE. He went to his room to rest.

LOMBARD. Somebody's probably batted him one by now!

WARGRAVE. I expect he had the good sense to bolt his door.

BLORE. It won't be so easy now that we're all on our guard.

(There is a rather unpleasant silence.)

WARGRAVE. I advise you, Mr. Blore, not to be too confident. I should like shortly to propose certain measures of safety, which I think we should all adopt.

LOMBARD. Against whom?

WARGRAVE. Against each other. We are all in grave danger. Of the ten people who came to this island, three are definitely cleared. There are seven of us left – seven little soldier boys.

LOMBARD. One of whom is a bogus little soldier boy.

WARGRAVE. Exactly.

BLORE. Well, in spite of what Miss Claythorne said just now, I'd say that you, Sir Lawrence, and Doctor Armstrong are above suspicion. He's a well-known doctor, and you're known all over England.

WARGRAVE. Mr. Blore, that proves nothing at all. Judges have gone mad before now. So have doctors. *(Pause.)* So have policemen.

(VERA enters from the dining room.)

LOMBARD. Hear, hear. Well, does he want some coffee?

VERA. *(Lightly.)* He'd rather make himself a nice cup of tea! What about Doctor Armstrong? Do you think we ought to take him up a cup?

WARGRAVE. I will take it up if you like.

LOMBARD. I'll take it. I want to change.

VERA. Yes, you ought to. You'll catch cold.

WARGRAVE. *(Ironically.)* I think Doctor Armstrong might prefer to see me. He might not admit you, Captain Lombard. He might be afraid of your revolver.

BLORE. Ah, the revolver. I want a word with you about that –

VERA. Do go and change.

(WARGRAVE takes a cup from her and exits to the dining room. LOMBARD turns to BLORE.)

LOMBARD. What were you going to say?

BLORE. I'd like to know why you brought a revolver down here on what's supposed to be a little social visit.

LOMBARD. You do, do you?

(There is a momentary pause.)

I've led a rather adventurous life. I've got into the habit of taking a revolver about with me. I've been in a bit of a jam once or twice. *(Smiling.)* It's a pleasant feeling to have a gun handy. Don't you agree?

(ARMSTRONG enters from the hall.)

BLORE. We don't carry them. Now, then, I want the truth about this gun –

LOMBARD. What a damned suspicious fellow you are, Blore!

BLORE. I know a fishy story when I hear one.

ARMSTRONG. If it's about that revolver, I'd like to hear what you've got to say.

LOMBARD. Oh, well, I got a letter, asking me to come here as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Owen – It would be worth my while. The writer said that he had heard I'd got a reputation for being a good man in a tight place. There might be some danger, but I'd be all right if I kept my eyes open.

BLORE. I'd never have fallen for that.

LOMBARD. Well, I did. I was bored. God, how I was bored back in this tame country. It was an intriguing proposition, you must admit.

BLORE. Too vague for my liking.

LOMBARD. That was the whole charm. It aroused my curiosity.

BLORE. Curiosity killed the cat.

LOMBARD. *(Smiling.)* Yes, quite.

VERA. Oh, do go and change, please!

LOMBARD. I'm going, my sweet, I'm going. The maternal instinct I think it's called.

VERA. Don't be ridiculous –

(**VERA** collects *Emily's cup*. **LOMBARD** exits to the hall.)

BLORE. That's a tall story. If it's true, why didn't he tell it to us last night?

ARMSTRONG. He might have thought that this was exactly the emergency for which he had been prepared.

VERA. Perhaps it is.

(**ARMSTRONG** puts his cup down.)

ARMSTRONG. I hardly think so. It was just Mr. Owen's little bit of cheese to get him into the trap with the rest of us. He must have known him well enough to rely on his curiosity.

BLORE. If it's true, he's a wrong 'un, that man. I wouldn't trust him a yard.

VERA. Are you such a good judge of truth?

(**WARGRAVE** enters from the hall. **ARMSTRONG** has a sudden outburst and starts shaking violently.)

ARMSTRONG. We must get out of here – we must before it is too late.

WARGRAVE. The one thing we must not do is to give away to nerves.

ARMSTRONG. I'm sorry. Rather a case of "Physician, heal thyself." But I've been overworked lately and run down.

WARGRAVE. Sleeping badly?

ARMSTRONG. Yes. I keep dreaming – hospital – operations – a knife at my throat –

WARGRAVE. Real nightmares.

ARMSTRONG. Yes. (*Curiously.*) Do you ever dream you're in court – sentencing a man to death?

WARGRAVE. (*Smiling.*) Are you by any chance referring to a man called Edward Seton? I can assure you I should not lose any sleep over the death of Edward Seton. A particularly brutal and cold-blooded murderer. The jury liked him. They were inclined to let him off. I

could see. However – (*With a quiet ferocity.*) I cooked Seton's goose.

(*Everyone gives a little shiver.*)

BLORE. Brr! Cold in here, isn't it?

VERA. I wish Rogers would hurry up.

BLORE. Yes, where is Rogers? He's been a long time.

VERA. He said he'd got to get some sticks.

(*BLORE is struck by the word.*)

BLORE. Sticks? Sticks? My God, sticks!

ARMSTRONG. My God!

(*He looks at mantelpiece.*)

BLORE. Is another one gone? Are there only six?

ARMSTRONG. (*Bewildered.*) There are only five.

VERA. Five?

(*They stare at each other.*)

WARGRAVE. Rogers and Lombard?

VERA. Oh, no, not Philip!

(*LOMBARD enters from the hall, meeting BLORE as he rushes out calling "Rogers". VERA runs to him.*)

LOMBARD. Where the hell is Blore off to like a madman?

VERA. Oh, Philip, I –

WARGRAVE. Have you seen Rogers?

LOMBARD. No, why should I?

ARMSTRONG. Two more soldiers have gone.

LOMBARD. Two?

VERA. I thought it was you –

(*BLORE enters from the hall. He is only just able to speak.*)

ARMSTRONG. Well, what is it?

BLORE. In the – scullery.

VERA. Is he –?

BLORE. Oh, yes, he's dead all right

VERA. How?

BLORE. With an axe. Somebody must have come up behind him whilst he was bent over the wood box.

VERA. (*Wildly.*) "One chopped himself in half – then there were six."

(*VERA begins laughing hysterically.*)

LOMBARD. Stop it. Vera – Stop it!

(*LOMBARD sits her down firmly, then turns to the others.*)

She'll be all right. What next, boys? Bees? Do they keep bees on the island?

(*They stare at him; not understanding.*)

Well that's the next verse, isn't it?

"Six little soldier boys playing with a hive; A bumble bee stung one, and then there were five."

A bumble bee stung one – we all look pretty spry, nothing wrong with any of us.

(*His glance rests on EMILY.*)

My God, you don't think –

(*He goes slowly over to her. He touches her motionless body then bends down and picks up a hypodermic syringe.*)

A hypodermic syringe.

WARGRAVE. The modern bee sting.

VERA. (*Stammering.*) While she was sitting there – one of us –

WARGRAVE. One of us.

(*They look at each other.*)

ARMSTRONG. Which of us?

ACT III

Scene One

(Some hours later. The curtains are drawn and the room is lit by three candles. WARGRAVE, VERA, BLORE, LOMBARD and ARMSTRONG, are sitting in silence. From time to time they shoot quick, covert glances at each other. WARGRAVE watches each in turn, but most often VERA with a long, speculative glance. There is silence for some time. Then suddenly LOMBARD speaks in a loud, jeering voice that makes them all jump.)

LOMBARD. "Five little soldier boys sitting in a row, watching each other and waiting for the blow."

New version up to date!

ARMSTRONG. I hardly think this is a moment for facetiousness.

LOMBARD. Have to relieve the gloom. Damn that electric plant running down. Let's play a nice round game. What about inventing one called "Suspicious?" A. suspects B., B. suspects C. – and so on. Let's start with Blore. It's not hard to guess whom Blore suspects. It sticks out a mile. I'm your fancy, aren't I, Blore?

BLORE. I wouldn't say no to that.

LOMBARD. You're quite wrong, you know. Abstract justice isn't my line. If I committed murder, there would have to be something in it for me.

BLORE. All I say is that you've acted suspiciously from the start. You've told two different stories. You came here with a revolver. Now you say you've lost it.

LOMBARD. I have lost it.

BLORE. That's a likely story!

LOMBARD. What do you think I've done with it? I suggested myself that you should search me.

BLORE. Oh! You haven't got it on you. You're too clever for that. But you know where it is.

LOMBARD. You mean I've cached it ready for the next time?

BLORE. I shouldn't be surprised.

LOMBARD. Why don't you use your brains, Blore? If I'd wanted to, I could have shot the lot of you by this time, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.

(BLORE points to the rhyme.)

BLORE. Yes, but that's not the big idea.

LOMBARD. The crazy touch? My God, man, I'm sane enough!

(BLORE looks around at everyone.)

BLORE. The doctor says there are some lunatics you'd never know were lunatics. That's true enough, I'd say.

ARMSTRONG. We – we shouldn't just sit here, doing nothing! There must be something – surely, surely, there is something that we can do? If we lit a bonfire –

BLORE. In this weather?

WARGRAVE. It is, I am afraid, a question of time and patience. The weather will clear. Then we can do something. Light a bonfire, heliograph, signal.

(ARMSTRONG laughs in an unbalanced way.)

ARMSTRONG. A question of time – time? We can't afford time. We shall all be dead.

WARGRAVE. I think the precautions we have now adopted will be adequate.

ARMSTRONG. I tell you – we shall all be dead. All but one – he'll think up something else – he's thinking now –

LOMBARD. Poor Louise – what was her name – Clees? Was it nerves that made you do her in, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. (*Mechanically.*) No, drink. I used to be a heavy drinker. God help me, I was drunk when I operated – quite a simple operation. My hand shaking all over the place – I can remember her now – a big, heavy, countrified woman. And I killed her!

(**ARMSTRONG** *buries his face in his hands.*)

LOMBARD. So I was right – that's how it was?

ARMSTRONG. Sister knew, of course, but she was loyal to me – or to the hospital. I gave up drink – gave it up altogether. I went in for a study of nervous diseases.

WARGRAVE. Very successfully.

ARMSTRONG. One or two lucky shots. Good results with one or two important women. They talked to their friends. For the last year or two I've been so busy I've hardly known which way to turn. I'd got to the top of the tree.

LOMBARD. Until Mr. Unknown Owen – and down will come cradle and doctor and all.

ARMSTRONG. Will you stop your damnable sneering and joking?

WARGRAVE. Gentlemen, gentlemen, please. We can't afford to quarrel.

LOMBARD. That's okay by me. I apologise.

ARMSTRONG. It's this terrible inactivity that gets on my nerves.

WARGRAVE. We are adopting, I feel convinced, the only measures possible. So long as we remain together, all within sight of each other, a repetition of the tragedies that have occurred is – must be – impossible. We have all submitted to a search. Therefore, we know that no man is armed either with firearms or a knife. Nor has any man got cyanide or any drug about his person. If we remain, as I say, within sight of each other, nothing can happen.

ARMSTRONG. But we can't go on like this – we shall need food – sleep –

BLORE. That's what I say.

WARGRAVE. Obviously, the murderer's only chance is to get one of us detached from the rest. So long as we prevent that we are safe.

ARMSTRONG. Safe –?

LOMBARD. You're very silent, Vera?

VERA. There isn't anything to say. *(Pause.)* I wonder what the time is. It's this awful waiting – waiting for the hours to go by and yet feeling that they may be the last. What is the time?

LOMBARD. Half past eight.

VERA. Is that all?

LOMBARD. Pretty awful light, this. How are the candles holding out?

BLORE. There's a whole packet. Storm's dying down a bit, what do you think, sir?

WARGRAVE. Perhaps. We mustn't be too optimistic.

ARMSTRONG. The murderer's got everything on his side. Even the weather seems to be falling in with his plans.

(There is a long pause.)

BLORE. What about something to eat?

VERA. If you like, I'll go out and open some tongue and make some coffee. But you four stay here.

(She looks to WARGRAVE.)

That's right, isn't it?

WARGRAVE. Not quite. You see, Miss Claythorne, it might be inadvisable to eat or drink something that you had prepared out of our sight.

VERA. Oh! *(Slowly.)* You don't like me, do you?

WARGRAVE. It's not a question of likes or dislikes.

LOMBARD. There are very few tricks that will get past you, Sir Lawrence. You know, if you won't be offended at my saying so, you're my fancy.

(WARGRAVE looks at him coldly in his best court manner.)

WARGRAVE. This is hardly the moment, Captain Lombard, for any of us to indulge in the luxury of taking offense.

LOMBARD. I don't think its Blore. I may be wrong, but I can't feel you've got enough imagination for this job. All I can say is if you are the criminal. I take my hat off to you for a damned fine actor.

BLORE. Thank you, for nothing.

LOMBARD. (*Pause.*) I don't think it's the Doctor. I don't believe he's got the nerve. You've got plenty of nerve Vera. On the other hand, you strike me as eminently sane. Therefore, you'd only do murder if you had a thoroughly good motive.

VERA. (*Sarcastically.*) Thank you.

ARMSTRONG. I've thought of something.

LOMBARD. Splendid. Animal, vegetable or mineral?

(**ARMSTRONG** points to **BLORE**.)

ARMSTRONG. That man says he's a police officer. But we've no proof of that. He only said so after the gramophone record, when his name had been given. Before that he was pretending to be a South African millionaire. Perhaps the police officer is another impersonation. What do we know about him? Nothing at all.

LOMBARD. He's a policeman all right. Look at his feet.

BLORE. That's enough from you, Mr. Lombard.

LOMBARD. Well, now we know where we are. By the way, Miss Claythorne suspects you, Doctor. Oh, yes, she does. Haven't you seen her shoot a dirty look from time to time? It all works out quite prettily. I suspect Sir Lawrence. Blore suspects me. Armstrong suspects Blore.

(*He looks to* **WARGRAVE**.)

What about you, sir?

WARGRAVE. Quite early in the day, I formed a certain conclusion. It seemed to me that everything that had

occurred pointed quite unmistakably to one person.
(*Pause.*) I am still of the same opinion.

VERA. Which one?

WARGRAVE. Well – no, I think it would be inadvisable to mention that person's name at the present time.

LOMBARD. Inadvisable in the public interest?

WARGRAVE. Exactly.

(Everyone looks at each other.)

BLORE. What about the food idea?

ARMSTRONG. No, no, let's stay here. We're safe here.

VERA. I can't say I'm hungry.

LOMBARD. I'm not ravenous myself. You can go out and have a guzzle by yourself, Blore.

BLORE. Tell you what. Suppose I go and bring in a tin of biscuits?

(BLORE starts to head towards the dining room door.)

LOMBARD. Good idea. Oh, Blore.

BLORE. Eh?

LOMBARD. An unopened tin, Blore.

(BLORE exits, taking a candle from the bookcase. A pause. Everybody watches the door. A gust of wind. The windows rattle. WARGRAVE sits.)

It's only the wind – making the curtains rattle.

VERA. I wonder what happened to the bathroom curtain? The one that Rogers missed.

LOMBARD. By the wildest stretch of imagination, I cannot see what any homicidal maniac wants with a scarlet oilsilk curtain.

VERA. Things seem to have been disappearing. Miss Brent lost a skein of knitting wool.

LOMBARD. So the murderer, whoever he or she is, is a kleptomaniac too.

VERA. How does it go?

“Five little soldier boys”

LOMBARD. “Going in for law, One got in Chancery”

VERA. In chancery, but how could that apply? Unless, of course –

(VERA looks at WARGRAVE.)

WARGRAVE. Precisely, my dear young lady. That’s why I’m sitting right here.

LOMBARD. Ah! But I’m casting you for the role of murderer – not victim.

WARGRAVE. The term can apply to a boxer.

(LOMBARD turns to VERA.)

LOMBARD. Maybe we’ll start a free fight. That seems to let you out, my dear.

VERA. That awful rhyme. It keeps going round and round in my head. I think I’ll remember it till I die.

(VERA realises what she has said and looks around at the others. There is a pause.)

Mr. Blore’s a long time.

LOMBARD. I expect the big bad wolf has got him.

WARGRAVE. I have asked you once before to try and restrain your rather peculiar sense of humour, Captain Lombard.

LOMBARD. Sorry, sir. It must be a form of nervousness.

(BLORE enters from the dining room with a tin of biscuits. WARGRAVE takes the tin and opens it.)

WARGRAVE. Put your hands up. Search him.

(ARMSTRONG and LOMBARD search BLORE. WARGRAVE offers the biscuits to VERA.)

VERA. No, thank you.

LOMBARD. Come now – you’ve had no dinner.

VERA. I couldn’t eat anything.

LOMBARD. I warn you – Blore will wolf the lot.

BLORE. I don't see why you need be so funny about it. Starving ourselves won't do us any good. (*Sadly.*) How are we off for cigarettes?

(**LOMBARD** takes out his case and opens it.)

LOMBARD. (*Ruefully.*) I haven't got any.

ARMSTRONG. I've run out too.

WARGRAVE. Fortunately, I'm a pipe smoker.

(**VERA** rouses herself and makes to the hall door.)

VERA. I've got a whole box upstairs in my suitcase. I'll get them. I could do with a cigarette myself.

(*She pauses at door.*)

See that you all stay where you are.

(*She exits carrying a candle from the bookcase. WARGRAVE goes to the door and looks after her. BLORE picks up the tin of biscuits and starts eating solidly.*)

BLORE. Not bad, these biscuits.

LOMBARD. What are they, cheese?

BLORE. Cheese and celery.

LOMBARD. That girl ought to have had some.

ARMSTRONG. Her nerves are in a bad state.

WARGRAVE. I don't know that I'd agree with you there, Doctor. Miss Claythorne strikes me as a very cool and resourceful young lady – quite remarkably so.

(**LOMBARD** looks curiously at **WARGRAVE**.)

LOMBARD. So that's your idea, is it? That she's the guilty party?

ARMSTRONG. Hardly likely – a woman!

WARGRAVE. You and I, Doctor, see women from slightly different angles.

BLORE. What does anyone say to a spot of whiskey?

LOMBARD. Good idea, providing we tackle an unopened bottle.

(An appalling and blood-curdling shriek of utter terror comes from overhead followed by a heavy thud. LOMBARD and BLORE snatch up the candles and all four men rush to the hall door. They exit in this order: LOMBARD, BLORE, ARMSTRONG. Owing to his age, WARGRAVE is slow getting under way. He is plunged into darkness as LOMBARD and BLORE exit with the candles. Confused noises are heard off. WARGRAVE's voice calls out, "Who's that?" There is the sound of a shot. Approaching voices are heard off. VERA enters breathlessly from the dining room, LOMBARD from the hall. BLORE can be heard swearing off.)

VERA. Philip, Philip, where are you? I've lost you.

LOMBARD. Here I am.

VERA. Why can't we have some light? It's awful in the dark. You don't know where you are. You don't know where anyone is.

LOMBARD. It's that damned draught on the stairs – blowing all the candles out. Here, I've got a lighter.

(LOMBARD lights his candle.)

VERA. Where's Doctor Armstrong?

(ARMSTRONG's voice heard off from the hall.)

ARMSTRONG. I'm hunting for the matches.

LOMBARD. Never mind matches – get some more candles.

VERA. I was horrified to death – It went right around my throat –

LOMBARD. What did?

VERA. The window was open in my room. It blew out the candle as I opened the door. And then a long strand of seaweed touched my throat. I thought, in the dark, that I was being strangled by a wet hand –

LOMBARD. I don't wonder you yelled.

VERA. Who hung the seaweed there?

LOMBARD. I don't know. But when I find out, he'll be sorry he was ever born.

(ARMSTRONG comes in quietly from the hall.)

VERA. *(Sharply.)* Who's that?

ARMSTRONG. It's all right, Miss Claythorne. It's only me.

(A faint glow is seen through the hall door. BLORE lights a candle before entering.)

BLORE. Here we are. Who fired that shot?

(VERA turns and screams, light reveals WARGRAVE sat upright. The red oil-silk curtain draped around shoulders and a grey skein of wool plaited into a wig on his head. In the centre of his forehead is a round dark mark with blood trickling from it. They stand paralysed. ARMSTRONG pulls himself together and examines WARGRAVE.)

ARMSTRONG. He's dead – Shot through the head –

VERA. One got in Chancery – and then there were four.

ARMSTRONG. Miss Claythorne.

LOMBARD. Vera.

(VERA's voice is low and full of horror.)

VERA. You got me out of the way. You got me to go upstairs for cigarettes. You put that seaweed there. You did it all so that you could kill that helpless old man in the dark – you're mad – all of you – crazy. That's why you wanted the red curtain and the knitting wool. It was all planned – long ago – for that – Oh, my God, let me get out of here –

(She edges to the hall door and rushes out.)

Scene Two

(The following morning. Brilliant sunshine is streaming through the window. The room is as it was the night before. BLORE, LOMBARD and VERA are sat eating tinned tongue on a tray.)

LOMBARD. "Three little soldier boys, Sitting in a row,
Thinking as they guzzle Who's the next to go?"

VERA. Oh, Philip!

BLORE. That's all right, Miss Claythorne. I don't mind
joking on a full stomach.

VERA. I must say I was hungry. But all the same, I don't
think I shall ever fancy tinned tongue again.

BLORE. I was wanting that meal! I feel a new man.

LOMBARD. We'd been nearly twenty-four hours without
food. That does lower the morale.

VERA. Somehow, in the daylight everything seems different.

LOMBARD. You mustn't forget there's a dangerous homicidal
lunatic somewhere loose on this island.

VERA. Why is it one doesn't feel jittery about it any more?

LOMBARD. Because we know now, beyond any possible
doubt, who it is, eh, Blore?

BLORE. That's right.

LOMBARD. It was the uncertainty before – looking at each
other, wondering which.

VERA. I said all along it was Doctor Armstrong.

LOMBARD. You did, my sweet, you did. Until, of course, you
went completely bats and suspected us all.

(VERA takes three cigarettes out of a box.)

VERA. It seems rather silly in the light of day.

LOMBARD. Very silly.

BLORE. Allowing it is Armstrong, what's happened to him?

LOMBARD. We know what he wants us to think has
happened to him.

(*VERA gives BLORE and LOMBARD a cigarette.*)

VERA. What exactly did you find?

LOMBARD. One shoe – just one shoe – sitting prettily on the cliff edge. Inference – Doctor Armstrong has gone completely off his onion and committed suicide.

BLORE. All very circumstantial – even to one little china soldier broken over there in the doorway.

VERA. I think that was rather overdoing it. A man wouldn't think of doing that if he was going to drown himself.

LOMBARD. Quite so. But we're fairly sure he didn't drown himself. But he had to make it appear as though he were the seventh victim all according to plan.

VERA. Suppose he really is dead?

LOMBARD. I'm a bit suspicious of death without bodies.

VERA. How extraordinary to think that there are five dead bodies in there, and we've been eating tinned tongue.

LOMBARD. The delightful feminine disregard for the facts – there are six dead bodies and they are not all in there.

BLORE. Oh, no, no. She's right. There are only five.

LOMBARD. What about Mrs. Rogers?

BLORE. I've counted her. She makes the fifth.

LOMBARD. (*Exasperated.*) Now look here: Marston, one. Mrs. Rogers, two. General MacKenzie, three. Rogers, four. Emily Brent, five, and Wargrave, six.

BLORE. (*Counting themselves.*) Seven, eight, nine – Armstrong, ten. That's right, old man. Sorry.

LOMBARD. Don't you think it would be an idea if we brought Mrs. Rogers downstairs and shoved her in the morgue, too?

BLORE. I'm a detective, not an undertaker.

VERA. For Heaven's sake, stop talking about bodies. The point is Armstrong murdered them.

LOMBARD. We ought to have realised it was Armstrong straight away.

BLORE. How do you think Armstrong got hold of your revolver?

LOMBARD. Haven't the slightest idea.

VERA. Tell me exactly, what happened in the night?

BLORE. Well, after you threw a fit of hysterics and locked yourself in your room, we all thought we'd better go to bed. So we all went to bed – and locked ourselves in our rooms.

LOMBARD. About an hour later, I heard someone pass my door. I came out and tapped on Blore's door. He was there all right. Then I went to Armstrong's room. It was empty. That's when I tapped on your door and told you to sit tight – whatever happened. Then I came down here. The window on the balcony was open – and my revolver was lying just beside it.

BLORE. But why the devil should Armstrong chuck that revolver away?

LOMBARD. Don't ask me – either an accident or he's crazy.

VERA. Where do you think he is?

LOMBARD. Lurking somewhere, waiting to have a crack at one of us.

VERA. We ought to search the house.

BLORE. What – and walk into an ambush?

VERA. Oh – I never thought of that.

LOMBARD. Are you quite sure you heard no one moving about after we went out?

VERA. Oh I imagined all sorts of things – but nothing short of setting the house on fire would have got me to unlock my door.

LOMBARD. I see – just thoroughly suspicious.

BLORE. What's the use of talking? What are we going to do?

LOMBARD. If you ask me – do nothing. Sit tight and take no risks.

BLORE. Look here, I want to go after that fellow.

LOMBARD. What a dog of the bulldog breed you are, Blore. By the way, between friends and without prejudice, you did go in for that little spot of perjury, didn't you?

BLORE. (*Hesitating.*) Well, I don't suppose it makes any odds now. Landor was innocent, all right. The gang squared me and between us we put him away for a stretch. Mind you, I wouldn't admit it now if it wasn't that –

LOMBARD. You think we're all in the same boat?

BLORE. Well, I couldn't admit it in front of Mr. Justice Wargrave, could I?

LOMBARD. No, hardly.

BLORE. I say, that fellow Seton, do you think he was innocent?

LOMBARD. I'm quite sure of it. Wargrave had a reason for wanting him out of the way. Well, Blore, I'm delighted you've come off your virtuous perch. I hope you made a tidy bit out of it?

BLORE. (*Injured.*) Nothing like what I ought to have done. They're a mean lot, that Benny gang. I got my promotion, though.

LOMBARD. And Landor got penal servitude and died in gaol.

BLORE. I couldn't tell he was going to die, could I?

LOMBARD. No, that was your bad luck.

BLORE. His, you mean.

LOMBARD. Yours, too. Because as a result of that fact you may get your life cut short unpleasantly soon.

BLORE. What? Me? By Armstrong? I'll watch it.

LOMBARD. You'll have to. Remember there are only three soldier boys there.

BLORE. Well, what about you?

LOMBARD. I shall be quite all right, thank you. I've been in tight places before and I've got out of them. And I mean to get out of this one. (*Pause.*) Besides, I've got a revolver.

BLORE. Yes – that revolver. Now listen. You said you found it lying down there. What's to prove you haven't had it all the time?

LOMBARD. Same old gramophone record! No room in your head for more than one idea at a time, is there?

BLORE. No, but it's a good idea.

LOMBARD. And you're sticking to it.

BLORE. And I would have thought up a better story than that, if I were you.

LOMBARD. I only wanted something simple that a policeman could understand.

BLORE. What's wrong with the police?

LOMBARD. Nothing – now that you've left the force.

BLORE. Now look here, Captain Lombard, if you're an honest man, as you pretend –

LOMBARD. Oh, come, Blore, we're neither of us honest.

BLORE. If you're telling the truth for once, you ought to do the square thing and chuck that revolver down there.

LOMBARD. Don't be an ass.

BLORE. I've said I'll go through the house looking for Armstrong, haven't I? If I'm willing to do that, will you lend me that revolver?

LOMBARD. No, I won't. That revolver's mine. It's my revolver and I'm sticking to it.

BLORE. (*Angrily.*) Then do you know what I'm beginning to think?

LOMBARD. You're not beginning to think it, you square-headed flattie. You thought it last night, and now you've gone back to your original idea. I'm the one and only U.N. Unknown Owen. Is that it?

BLORE. I won't contradict you.

LOMBARD. Well, think what you damned well please. But I warn you –

VERA. (*Incisively.*) I think you are both behaving like a pair of children.

(They look at her rather sheepishly.)

LOMBARD. Sorry, teacher.

(VERA speaks scornfully to BLORE.)

VERA. Of course, Captain Lombard isn't the unknown. The Unknown Owen is Armstrong – and I'll tell you one very good proof of it.

BLORE. Oh, what?

VERA. Think of the rhyme.

“Four little soldier boys – going out to sea. A red herring swallowed one, and then there were three.”

Don't you see the subtlety of it? A red herring? That's Armstrong's pretended suicide, but it's only a red herring – so really he isn't dead!

BLORE. That's very ingenious.

VERA. To my mind, it's absolute proof. You see, it's all mad because he's mad. He takes a queer, childish, crazy pleasure in sticking to the rhyme and making everything happen in that way. Dressing up the Judge, killing Rogers when he was chopping sticks; using a hypodermic needle on Miss Brent, when he might just as well have drugged her. He's got to make it all fit in.

BLORE. And that might give us a pointer. Where do we go from here?

(BLORE goes to mantelpiece and reads:)

“Three little soldier boys walking in the zoo. A big bear hugged one and then there were two.”

He'll have a job with that one. There's no zoo on this island!

(He laughs but it is cut short as he sees the big bear rug on which he is standing. He edges off the rug and turns to LOMBARD.)

I say, Captain Lombard, what about a nice bottle of beer?

LOMBARD. Do stop thinking about your stomach, Blore. This craving for food and drink will be your undoing.

BLORE. But there's plenty of beer in the kitchen.

LOMBARD. Yes, and if anyone wanted to get rid of you, the first place they'd think of putting a lethal dose would be in a nice bottle of beer.

(From outside comes the sound of a motorboat hooter.)

BLORE. What's that? A boat! A boat!

(They rush towards the balcony. BLORE runs out first. A scream is heard followed by a thud.)

VERA. Oh, God!

(VERA puts hands over eyes. LOMBARD, revolver in hand, rushes to the window and looks out.)

LOMBARD. Blore's got his.

VERA. How?

LOMBARD. A booby trap – all set – a wire across the door attached to something above.

VERA. Is he?

LOMBARD. Yes. Crushed. Head stove in. That great bronze bear holding a clock, from the landing.

VERA. A bear? Oh, how ghastly! It's this awful childishness!

LOMBARD. I know. God, what a fool Blore was!

VERA. And now there are two.

LOMBARD. Yes, and we'll have to be very careful of ourselves.

VERA. We shan't do it. He'll get us. We'll never get away from this island!

LOMBARD. Oh, yes, we will, I've never been beaten yet.

VERA. Don't you feel – that there's someone – now – in this room – watching us, watching and waiting?

LOMBARD. That's just nerves.

VERA. Then you do feel it?

LOMBARD. (*Fiercely.*) No, I don't.

VERA. Please, Philip, let's get out of this house – anywhere.
Perhaps if that was a boat, they'll see us.

LOMBARD. All right. We'll go to the top of the island and
wait for relief to come. It's sheer cliff on the far side and
we can see if anyone approaches from the house.

VERA. Anything's better than staying here.

LOMBARD. Won't you be rather cold in that dress?

VERA. I'd be colder if I were dead.

LOMBARD. Perhaps you're right.

(*He goes to the window.*)

A quick reconnaissance.

VERA. Be careful, Philip – please!

LOMBARD. I'm not Blore. There's no window directly above.

(*He goes to the edge of the balcony and looks
down. He is arrested by what he sees.*)

Hullo, there's something washed up on the rocks.

(*VERA joins him.*)

VERA. What? It looks like a body.

(*LOMBARD speaks in a strange new voice.*)

LOMBARD. You'd better wait in there. I'm going to have a
look.

(*He exits off the balcony. VERA comes back into
room, her face full of conflicting emotions.*)

VERA. Armstrong – Armstrong's body –

(*LOMBARD enters from the balcony very
slowly.*)

LOMBARD. It's Armstrong drowned – washed up at high
water mark.

VERA. So there's no one on the island – no one at all except
us two.

LOMBARD. Yes, Vera. Now we know where we are.

VERA. Now we know where we are?

LOMBARD. A very pretty trick of yours, with that wire. Quite neat. Old Wargrave always knew you were dangerous.

VERA. You –

LOMBARD. So you did drown that kid after all.

VERA. I didn't! That's where you're wrong. Please believe me. Please listen to me!

LOMBARD. I'm listening. You'd better make it a good story.

VERA. It isn't a story. It's the truth. I didn't kill that child. It was someone else.

LOMBARD. Who?

VERA. A man. Peter's uncle. I was in love with him.

LOMBARD. This is getting quite interesting.

VERA. Don't sneer. It was hell. Absolute hell. Peter was born after his father's death. If he'd been a girl, Hugh would have got everything.

LOMBARD. Well-known tale of the wicked uncle.

VERA. Yes – he was wicked – and I didn't know. He said he loved me, but that he was too poor to marry. There was a rock far out that Peter was always wanting to swim to. Of course, I wouldn't let him. It was dangerous. One day we were on the beach and I had to go back to the house for something I'd forgotten. When I got back, I saw Peter swimming out to the rock. I knew he hadn't a chance, the current had got him already. I flew towards the beach and Hugh tried to stop me. "Don't be a fool," he said. "I told the little ass he could do it."

LOMBARD. Go on. This is interesting.

VERA. I pushed past him – he tried to stop me, but I got away and rushed down. I plunged into the sea and swam after Peter. He'd gone before I could get to him.

LOMBARD. And everything went off well at the inquest. They called you a plucky girl, and you kept discreetly quiet about Hugh's part in the business.

VERA. Do you think anyone would have believed me?
Besides, I couldn't! I really was in love with him.

LOMBARD. Well, it's a pretty story. And then I suppose
Hugh let you down?

VERA. Do you think I ever wanted to see him again?

LOMBARD. You certainly are an accomplished liar, Vera.

VERA. Can't you believe the truth when you hear it?

LOMBARD. Who set the trap that killed Blore? I didn't –
and Armstrong's dead. I've broken most of the
Commandments in my time – and I'm no saint. But
there's one thing I won't stand for and that's murder.

VERA. You won't stand for murder. What about those
natives you left to die in Africa?

LOMBARD. That's what's so damn funny – I didn't.

VERA. What do you mean?

LOMBARD. For once – just once, mark you, I played the
hero. Risked my life to save the lives of my men, left
them my rifle and ammunition and all the food there
was – and took a chance through the bush. By the most
incredible luck it came off – but it wasn't in time to save
them. And the rumour got around that I'd deliberately
abandoned my men. There's life for you!

VERA. Do you expect me to believe that? Why, you actually
admitted the whole thing.

LOMBARD. I know. I got such a kick out of watching their
faces.

VERA. You can't fool me with a stupid lie like that.

(LOMBARD completely loses his temper.)

LOMBARD. Blast you!

VERA. Why didn't I see it before? It's there in your face –
the face of a killer –

LOMBARD. You can't fool me any longer.

VERA. Oh –

(VERA sways forward as if fainting. LOMBARD runs to catch her. She wrests the revolver from him.)

Now!

(LOMBARD backs away.)

LOMBARD. You cunning little devil!

VERA. If you come one step nearer, I'll shoot.

LOMBARD. You – young, lovely, and quite, quite mad.

1943 Ending Commences Here

(LOMBARD makes a movement to VERA, she shoots, he falls. She rushes to him, her eyes full of horror. The revolver falls from her hand. Suddenly a low laugh is heard coming from the study. VERA turns her head slowly. The laughter grows louder as the study door opens. WARGRAVE enters. He carries a rope in his hand.)

WARGRAVE. It's all come true. My Ten Little Soldiers plan – My rhyme – my rhyme –

(VERA stifles a scream.)

(Angrily.) Silence in Court! If there is any more noise, I shall have the Court cleared. It's all right, my dear. It's all right. Don't be frightened. This is a Court of Justice. You'll get justice here.

(WARGRAVE locks the doors to the dining room and the hall.)

You thought I was a ghost. You thought I was dead. Armstrong said I was dead. That was the clever part of my plan. Said we'd trap the murderer. We'd fix up my supposed death so I should be free to spy upon the guilty one. He thought it an excellent plan – came out that night to meet me by the cliff without any suspicion.

I sent him over with a push – so easily. He swallowed my red herring all right.

(VERA is frozen with horror.)

You know, Vera Claythorne, all my life I've wanted to take life – yes, to take life. I've had to get what enjoyment I could out of sentencing the guilty to death.

(VERA slowly moves to the revolver but WARGRAVE intercepts her.)

I always enjoyed that – but it wasn't enough. I wanted more – I wanted to do it myself with my own hands –

(VERA backs away to the hall door. He suddenly curbs his excitement and speaks with severe dignity.)

But I'm a Judge of the High Court. I've got a sense of justice. As between our Sovereign Lord the King and the prisoner at the Bar – will true deliverance make – Guilty, my Lord. Yes.

(He nods his head.)

Guilty. You were all guilty, you know, but the Law couldn't touch you, so I had to take the Law into my own hands.

(WARGRAVE holds up his hands in a frenzy of delight.)

Into my own hands! Silence in the Court!

(VERA hammers on the hall door. WARGRAVE takes her arm and drags her back into the room.)

Anthony Marston first. Then Mrs. Rogers. Barbitone in the brandy. MacKenzie – stabbed. Got Rogers with an axe when he was chopping sticks. Doped Emily Brent's coffee so she couldn't feel the hypodermic. Booby trap for Blore. *(Confidentially.)* Blore was a fool. I always knew it would be easy to get Blore. Returning that revolver was a clever touch. Made the end interesting. I knew you two would suspect each other in the end.

The question was, who'd win out? I banked on you, my dear. The female of the species. Besides, it's always more exciting to have a girl at the end.

(He steps onto the sofa, and VERA falls to the ground.)

Prisoner at the Bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you? Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, I sentence you to death –

VERA. Stop! Stop! I'm not guilty! I'm not guilty!

WARGRAVE. Ah, they all say that. Must plead not guilty. Unless, of course, you're going all out for a verdict of insanity. But you're not mad. *(Reasonably.)* I'm mad, but you're not.

VERA. But I am innocent!! I swear it! I never killed that child. I never wanted to kill him. You're a Judge. You know when a person is guilty and when they're innocent. I swear I'm telling the truth.

WARGRAVE. So you didn't drown that boy after all? Very interesting. But it doesn't matter much now, does it?

VERA. What –

(VERA makes an inarticulate sound as the rope swings in front of her.)

WARGRAVE. I can't spoil my lovely rhyme. My ten little soldier boys. You're the last one. One little soldier boy left all alone. He went and hanged himself. I must have my hanging – my hanging –

(LOMBARD comes slowly round. He picks up the revolver and shoots. WARGRAVE falls.)

VERA. Philip – Philip –

LOMBARD. It's all right, darling. It's all right.

VERA. I thought you were dead. I thought I'd killed you.

LOMBARD. Thank God, women can't shoot straight. At least, not straight enough.

VERA. I shall never forget this.

LOMBARD. Oh, yes, you will. You know there's another ending to that Ten Little Soldier Boys rhyme: "One little soldier boy, left all alone, We got married – and then there were none!"

*(He puts his head in the noose and kisses her.
The sound of a motorboat hooter is heard.)*

End of Play (1943 Ending)

1939 Ending
(Continues from page 97)

LOMBARD. You – young, lovely, and quite, quite mad.

(LOMBARD makes a movement to VERA, she shoots, he falls. The revolver falls from her hand. She rushes to him, her eyes full of horror. Suddenly a low laugh is heard from the study. VERA turns her head slowly. The laughter grows as the study door opens. WARGRAVE enters. A noose is seen hanging inside the door.)

WARGRAVE. It's all come true. My Ten Little Soldiers plan – My rhyme – my rhyme –

(VERA stifles a scream.)

(Angrily.) Silence in Court! If there is any more noise, I shall have the Court cleared. It's all right, my dear. It's all right. Don't be frightened. This is a Court of Justice. You'll get justice here.

(WARGRAVE moves slowly to the mantelpiece removing the remaining three soldier figurines. VERA is frozen in fear.)

You thought I was a ghost. You thought I was dead. Armstrong said I was dead. That was the clever part of my plan. Said we'd trap the murderer.

(He locks the door to the hall.)

We'd fix up my supposed death so I should be free to spy upon the guilty one. He thought it an excellent plan – came out that night to meet me by the cliff without any suspicion. I sent him over with a push – so easily. He swallowed my red herring all right.

(He locks the door to the dining room.)

You know, Vera Claythorne, all my life I've wanted to take life – yes, to take life. I've had to get what enjoyment I could out of sentencing the guilty to death.

(VERA moves slowly towards the revolver.)

I always enjoyed that – but it wasn't enough. I wanted more – I wanted to do it myself with my own hands –

(WARGRAVE advances on VERA before she can reach the revolver. Desperate she runs for the hall door, trapped. WARGRAVE curbs his excitement and speaks with severe dignity.)

But I'm a Judge of the High Court. I've got a sense of justice. As between our Sovereign Lord the King and the prisoner at the Bar – will true deliverance make – Guilty, my Lord. Yes.

(He nods his head.)

Guilty. You were all guilty, you know, but the Law couldn't touch you, so I had to take the Law into my own hands.

(WARGRAVE holds up his hands in a frenzy of delight.)

Into my own hands! Silence in the Court!

(VERA hammers on the door. WARGRAVE takes her arm, dragging her back into the room.)

Anthony Marston first. Then Mrs. Rogers. Barbitone in the brandy. MacKenzie – stabbed. Got Rogers with an axe when he was chopping sticks. Doped Emily Brent's coffee so she couldn't feel the hypodermic.

(WARGRAVE holds up the first of the remaining toy soldiers.)

Booby trap for Blore.

(He drops it, crushing it under foot.)

(Confidentially.) Blore was a fool. I always knew it would be easy to get Blore. Returning that revolver was a clever touch. Made the end interesting. I knew you two would suspect each other in the end. The question was, who'd win out?

(WARGRAVE smiles and drops the second figurine, crushing it as the first. He holds the last one up triumphantly.)

I banked on you, my dear. The female of the species. Besides, it's always more exciting to have a girl at the end.

(He advances slowly on VERA who falls to the ground in fear.)

Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, I sentence you to death –

VERA. Stop! Stop! I'm not guilty! I'm not guilty!

WARGRAVE. Ah, they all say that. Must plead not guilty. Unless, of course, you're going all out for a verdict of insanity. But you're not mad. *(Reasonably.)* I'm mad, but you're not.

VERA. You'll never get away with it!

(WARGRAVE laughs darkly.)

WARGRAVE. I shan't be around to find out. I shall be found laid neatly on my bed, shot through the forehead in accordance with the record kept by my fellow victims. I've thought it through to the last detail. Most ingenious. Using that revolver and taking great care to preserve your fingerprints on it, I shall loosely attach the cord from my spectacles to the trigger.

(He shows her the cord, smiling.)

It's elasticated you see. The cord will loop round the door handle, then with the weight of my body on the glasses I shall pull the trigger. The revolver will recoil, jar the door and detach itself. Needless to say when the sea goes down, there will come from the mainland boats and men. And they will find ten dead bodies and an unsolved problem on Soldier Island. But first things first.

VERA. But I am innocent!! I swear it! You're a Judge. You know when a person is guilty and when they're innocent. I swear I'm telling the truth.

(WARGRAVE looks at her intensely then smiles.)

WARGRAVE. You know my dear you were one of the last of my guests to be recruited. I happened to be crossing the Atlantic at the time and late one night the sole occupants of the smoking room were myself and a good-looking young man. He had taken a considerable quantity of drink and was in a maudlin, confidential state. He told me the most intriguing story. I can remember his words now.

(WARGRAVE bends down to meet VERA's eyes.)

"I've known a murderess – known her I tell you. And what's more I was crazy about her."

(VERA shakes her head in horror.)

"You wouldn't think a girl like that – a nice straight jolly girl – would take a kid out to sea and let it drown?"

VERA. No – please –

WARGRAVE. Naturally I had to be absolutely certain, so I asked if he was sure and suddenly sober he thrust his face into mine:

"Quite sure. You see, she did it for me. I knew the moment I looked at her..."

(Broken VERA sobs.)

VERA. I – never killed that child! I – I – I never wanted to kill him.

(WARGRAVE smiles victorious.)

WARGRAVE. During the gramophone recital I watched the faces of you all closely. After my long court experience, I had no doubt whatever that you were guilty my dear.

(Grabbing her face savagely he forces VERA to look at LOMBARD.)

And now you've killed Lombard haven't you. How does it feel to be a killer? To be guilty?

(VERA doubles over with tears unable to speak.)

Ah, you liked him didn't you my dear?

(WARGRAVE leaves her in a heap and makes to the study door. He quickly places a chair beneath the noose hanging from it and then approaches VERA.)

Prisoner at the Bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you?

(VERA says nothing. WARGRAVE bends down handing VERA the final china soldier boy.)

I can't spoil my lovely rhyme. My ten little soldier boys. You're the last one. One little soldier boy left all alone. He went and hanged himself.

(WARGRAVE references the noose for her to see.)

I must have my hanging – my hanging – and you must pay for your crimes my dear. For that poor innocent child you murdered. For Lombard.

(VERA nods, at his mercy. WARGRAVE helps her to her feet. She stands looking at LOMBARD for a moment then begins moving slowly and inexorably towards the noose. WARGRAVE voices his encouragement.)

Yes...

(Slowly she climbs onto the chair, eyes staring out front. She places the noose round her neck, tears rolling down her cheeks.)

"One little soldier boy, left all alone..."

Goodbye, my dear.

"He went and hanged himself, and then there were..."

(VERA kicks away the chair. There is a pause. She hangs, convulsing under her own weight. WARGRAVE looks up at her briefly then calmly removes a handkerchief from his pocket. He

picks up the revolver but stops suddenly. He turns back to VERA.)

Now I'm forgetting something. Ah, of course, how silly of me.

(He removes the chair from under her and places it neatly against the wall.)

Wouldn't want anyone thinking you killed yourself now would we my dear.

(He laughs darkly, slowly leaving the room. VERA continues to struggle. The sea crashes against the rocks. There is a pause. A gunshot is heard. VERA finally goes limp as the last china soldier falls from her hand, shattering on the floor.)

(Blackout.)

End of Play (1939 Ending)