

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.

Start

~~(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~~

End