

"Rope"
by
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INT. INTRODUCTION - NIGHT

A room on the first floor of the house in Mayfair shared by BRANDON and GRANILLO. Eight-forty pm.

The room is a combination of a study and a drawing-room. At the back, R, there are long french windows. There is a door L, next to a fireplace, which has a mirror above it and books and a box of cigarettes on the mantelpiece.

The room is furnished in a luxurious and faintly bizarre manner and on no discernible model. Nevertheless, there are really many good things about if you care to look for them. To the L of the french windows is a fine grandfather clock. Next L, against the wall, is a wireless set. Next, a large divan. DL are an armchair and a small table with an ashtray on it. In the UR corner is a baby grand piano, with stool. Against the R wall is a sideboard with glasses and drinks on it, and a pair of silver nutcrackers. There is a table DR with a lamp and a book on it; to the L of this table is an armchair. DC is a large chest. There is a telephone.

The heavy curtains at the french windows, and all the room's upholstery, are red.

The Curtain rises. The clock stands at eight-forty at night. (NB: The action of the play is continuous, and the fall of the curtain at the end of each act denotes the lapse of no time whatever). The red curtains are open and there is a fire burning in the grate, but this is not discernible at first. The room is completely darkened save for the pallid gleam from lamplight in the street below, which comes through the window. Against this are silhouetted the figures of GRANILLO and BRANDON.

BRANDON and GRANILLO are bending over the chest, intent, working at something - exactly what, we cannot discern. The silence is complete. Suddenly the lid of the chest falls with a bang.

BRANDON goes over to the window and closes the heavy curtain; the room is now in complete black-out. They continue whatever they are doing.

BRANDON
(murmuring)
All right, all right.

Pause. BRANDON moves DR and switches on the lamp at the little end table.

GRANILLO
 (by the chest)
 Put out that light! Put out that
 Light!

BRANDON switches the light out.

BRANDON
 Steady Granno.

He sits in the DR armchair and lights a cigarette with a
 match. The cigarette glows in the darkness. Pause.

Feeling yourself, Granno?

No answer.

Feeling yourself again, Granno?

No answer.

Granno.

GRANILLO
 Give me some matches.

BRANDON
 Matches? Here you are. Coming.

He throws the matches over. The matches can be heard
 rattling in the air and falling on the floor. GRANILLO
 picks them up and lights his own cigarette. The two pin-
 points of light are all that come from the darkness. Pause.

It's about time you pulled
 yourself together, isn't it,
 Granno? Sabot will be here in a
 quarter of an hour.

Pause.

GRANILLO
 You fully understand, Brandon,
 what we've done?

BRANDON
 Do I know what I've done?...Yes,
 I know quite well what I've done.

His voice becomes rich, easy, powerful, elated and yet withal slightly defiant.

I have done murder.

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

(continuing in the
same voice)

I have committed murder. I have committed passionless - motiveless - faultless - and clueless murder. Bloodless and noiseless murder.

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

And immaculate murder. I have killed. I have killed for the sake of danger and for the sake of killing. And I am alive. Truly and wonderfully alive. That is what I have done, Granno.

Long pause.

What's the matter? Are you getting superstitious?

GRANILLO

No. I'm not superstitious.

BRANDON

(suavely)

Then may I put on the light?

GRANILLO

No. You mayn't...

The fire glows faintly; the figures of BRANDON and GRANILLO may now be dimly discerned.

INT. EXPOSITION - NIGHT

During the following GRANILLO moves DS and sits in the armchair L.

(CONT'D)

Brandon?

BRANDON

Yes?

GRANILLO

You remember when Ronald came in?

BRANDON

What do you mean - "when Ronald came in"?

GRANILLO

When Ronald came in here - when he came in from the car. You were standing at the door.

BRANDON

Yes.

GRANILLO

Did you see anyone standing there? Up the street - about seventy yards?

BRANDON

Well, what of it?

GRANILLO

Oh, nothing...Brandon...

BRANDON

Yes?

GRANILLO

When I met Ronald. When I met him - coming out of the Coliseum...When I met him, and got him into the car - why shouldn't someone have seen us?

BRANDON

What do you mean by someone?

GRANILLO

Oh, someone. Anyone. Did we think of that, Brandon?

BRANDON

I *did*.

Pause.

GRANILLO

It's in the room, you know. Do you think we'll get away with it?

BRANDON

When? Tonight?

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

Are you suggesting that some psychic force, emanating from that chest there, is going to advise Sir Johnstone Kentley of the fact that the remains - or shall I say the lifeless entirety - of his twenty-year-old son and heir is contained therein?

(Pause)

My dear Granillo, if you are feeling in any way insecure, perhaps I had better fortify you with a brief summary of facts - with mathematics, as it were. Let me please give you - -

GRANILLO

Listen!

There is a tense silence.

BRANDON

What are...?

GRANILLO

Listen, I tell you!

There is another pause. GRANILLO springs up, goes over to the window, and peeps through the curtains.

It's all right. I thought it was Sabot.

(He sits in the L chair again)

BRANDON

Sabot, in the first place, will not be here until five minutes to nine, if then, for Sabot is seldom punctual. Sabot, in the second place, has been deprived by a wily master of his key. He will therefore ring. Let me, I say, give you a cool narration of our transactions. This afternoon, at about two o'clock, young Ronald Kentley, our fellow-undergraduate, left his father's house with the object of visiting the Coliseum Music Hall. He did so. After the performance he was met in the street by your good self, and invited to this house. He was then given tea, and at six forty-five precisely, done to death by strangulation and rope. He was subsequently deposited in that chest. Tonight, at nine o'clock, his father, Sir Johnstone Kentley, his aunt, Mrs. Debenham, and three well-chosen friends of our own will come round here for regalement. They will talk small talk and depart. After the party, at eleven o'clock - -

GRANILLO

(interrupting)

This party isn't a slip, is it, Brandon?

BRANDON

My dear Granno, have we not already agreed that the entire beauty and piquancy of the evening will reside in the party itself?

(pause)

At eleven o'clock tonight, I was saying, you and I will leave by car for Oxford. We will carry our fellow-undergraduate. Our fellow-undergraduate will never be heard of again. Our fellow-undergraduate will not be murdered. He will be missing.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

That is the complete story, and the perfection of criminality - the complete story of the perfect crime.

(pause)

I am quite lucid - am I not?

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

The party itself, you see, Granno, so far from being our vulnerable point, is the very apex, as it were, and consummation of our feat. Consider its ingredients. I still don't think we could have chosen better. There will be, first, and by all means foremost, Sir Johnstone Kentley - the father of the - occupant of the chest. It is he, as the father, who gives the entire *macabre* quality of the evening. Well chosen, so far. We then, of course, require his wife; but she, being an invalid, is unobtainable, and we have procured, instead his sister. The same thing applies to her.

INT. INTERRUPTION & CONTINUE EXPOSITION - NIGHT

The telephone rings. GRANILLO springs up and goes over to it in the darkness.

GRANILLO

(into the telephone)

Hallo...Hallo...Hallo. What?

This is Mayfair X143...What?

What? Hallo.

BRANDON turns on the lamp.

Put out that light! Put out that light, I tell you!

BRANDON promptly switches the lamp off.

BRANDON

Steady, Granno.

GRANILLO
 (into the telephone)
 Hallo...Hallo...

BRANDON
 Will you put down that receiver,
 Granno? You're telling London
 you're afraid
 (pause)
 Come and sit down.

GRANILLO puts down the receiver, goes over to the window and peers out again. He then moves to the door and opens it.

GRANILLO creeps out into passage and closes the door behind him.

Suddenly a click is heard. A light comes on in the passage beyond the door; light filters in round the door. BRANDON remains motionless. The light goes out again.

GRANILLO enters the room, shutting the door. He takes his seat again.

There is a slight pause.

GRANILLO
 Well, go on.

BRANDON
 There are then Kenneth Raglan and Leila Arden. They have been asked for their youth, innocence, and good spirits alone. Also, in Raglan, who went to the same school and is at the same university as ourselves, you have about the most perfect specimen of ordinary humanity obtainable, and therefore a suitable witness to this so extraordinary scene. Unintellectual humanity is represented. The same applies to Leila, his female counterpart...We then come to Rupert...Now in Rupert, Granno, we have a very intriguing proposition. Rupert, in fact, is about the one man alive who might have seen this thing from our angle, that is, the artistic one.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

You will recall that we even contemplated, at one time, inviting him to share our dangers, and we eventually turned the notion down, not necessarily because it would have been too much for him to swallow intellectually, but simply because he would not have had the nerve. Rupert is a damnably brilliant poet, but perhaps a little too fastidious...He could have invented and admired, but he could not have acted. So he is in the same blissless ignorance as the rest. Nevertheless he is intellect's representative, and valued at that.

(pause)

Granno...

No answer

Granno.

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

What's the time?

GRANILLO lights a match and holds it up to the clock.

GRANILLO

Ten to.

BRANDON

Sabot will be here in five minutes.

GRANILLO

I know.

BRANDON

May I put on the light?

GRANILLO

Must you? Can't you go on talking?

BRANDON

No, I can't, I'm afraid.

GRANILLO
 (after a pause)
 Go on. I'm all right. Put it on.
 I'm better now.

INT. THE TICKET - NIGHT

BRANDON switches on the lamp. He looks into the light of the lamp, employing himself by fiddling with the shade.

GRANILLO walks over to the mirror over the mantelpiece, looks at himself and adjusts his collar. He takes a cigarette from the box on the mantelpiece, strikes a match and lights it. Simultaneously, BRANDON rises and moves to the mantelpiece. He takes a cigarette just in time to have it lit from GRANILLO's match. He puts his arm round GRANILLO and does this

BRANDON
 (puffing on the cigarette)
 Thank you. I thought you were going to lose your nerve for a moment, Granno.

GRANILLO
 So did I. But I wasn't.

BRANDON
 May I put on the light proper?

GRANILLO
 Yes.

BRANDON, humming with a rather strained nonchalance, moves to the switch by the door and turns on the overhead light.

BRANDON exits without a word, closing the door.

The passage light comes on with a click.

GRANILLO remains looking into the fire for about thirty seconds, then goes over to the sideboard and takes a drink.

BRANDON enters suddenly. His eyes are blazing, and he is pale with rage. He is holding a slip of blue paper.

BRANDON
 God, you fool! Didn't I tell you to check up in there?

GRANILLO
 What?

BRANDON
 (holding the slip of
 blue paper in front of Granillo)
 Look at this! The boy's Coliseum
 ticket. It was on the floor. We
 could hang on that! What in
 heaven's name...?

GRANILLO
 (with a shrug of the
 shoulders
 characteristic of his race)
 But, my dear Brandon, you are as
 much to blame as myself.

BRANDON
 That's nothing to do with it!
 It's your business to see what I
 don't see. How in heaven's name
 it got there I don't know.

The doorbell rings.

Damnation! That's Sabot. Now
 for God's sake quiet yourself and
 sit down. All right. I'll go.

BRANDON gives GRANILLO the ticket and exits.

GRANILLO slips the blue ticket into his top waistcoat pocket,
 rushes over and finishes his drink, seizes the book from the
 table, and settles down in the R armchair, pretending to read.

Pause.

INT. SABOT'S ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The voices of BRANDON and SABOT come from outside, as if
 they are mounting stairs. They arrive outside the door.

SABOT
 (off)
 In here, sair?

BRANDON
 (off)
 Yes, in here.

SABOT
 (off)
 Very good, sair.

BRANDON enters, closing the door behind him. He settles down in the L armchair

There is a knock open the door. BRANDON rises quickly and opens it.

SABOT, in an overcoat, is at the door, with a newspaper in his hand.

SABOT
Ze evening paper, sair?

BRANDON
(taking the newspaper)
Oh - thank you very much, Sabot.

SABOT
I thought you might like to look at it, sair.
(he smiles shyly)

BRANDON
Very welcome, Sabot. Many thanks.

SABOT
Not at all, sair.

BRANDON closes the door in SABOT's face.

BRANDON comes down to the armchair L. GRANILLO watches him. BRANDON catches GRANILLO's eye but looks away again. He opens the paper.

BRANDON
(his eyes fixed on the paper)
Sorry for my little outburst, Granno. But it rather upset me.

GRANILLO
(his eyes fixed on the book)
Not at all. You're quite correct. I should have seen it. How it got there I don't know.

BRANDON
Neither do I. What's the time?

GRANILLO
(comparing his wrist-watch with the clock)
About five to.

BRANDON

We can expect our first guest.

GRANILLO

Yes.

SABOT enters, carrying a large tray with table linen, cutlery, plates, sandwiches et cetera on it. He deposits it on the sideboard, then moves C and looks first at GRANILLO and then at BRANDON. He addresses BRANDON.

SABOT

Ze table, sair?

BRANDON

(his eyes on the paper)

Yes. That's all right.

(Indicating the chest)

Lay it there, will you? We're using the table for books.

SABOT

But I can bring ze table from upstairs, sair?

BRANDON

Oh, no. That's all right, Sabot. Lay it there.

SABOT

No, sair, it will be no trouble to bring from upstairs.

BRANDON

(suavely)
Nevertheless, Sabot, lay it there, will you?

SABOT

(a little shamefaced at this snub; under his breath)
Very good, sair.
(He moves to the sideboard. During the following he lays the tablecloth and other items on the chest.)

There is a long pause

BRANDON
 (referring to the paper)
 Hallo - Hammond at it again.
 (He turns the paper
 over and finds the
 "Stop Press")
 106 not...How many's that, Sabot?

SABOT
 The tenth, sair.
 (Pause)
 He was missed at twenty-one, sair.

BRANDON
 (again referring to
 the paper)
 I'm getting rather tired of
 "Inquests on London Girls"...Also
 of "Plucky London Typists' Brave
 Attempts"...Also of Jim and Amy...

The doorbell rings.

Ah - here we are. He's early,
 whoever he is.

SABOT
 To bring in here, sair?

BRANDON
 Yes - in here.

SABOT exits.

INT. RAGLAN'S ENTRANCE & SMALL TALK - NIGHT

GRANILLO rises, goes over to the piano, and commences to
 play "Dance Little Lady" with a rather unpleasant brilliance.
 He looks significantly at BRANDON while playing. He
 finishes the tune leaves off, and takes a drink at the
 sideboard. He now looks quite at ease and pleased with himself.

SABOT enters and holds the door open, Kenneth RAGLAN enters.

SABOT exits.

RAGLAN
 (coming forward nervously)
 Hallo.

BRANDON
 (taking Raglan's hand carefully)
 Hallo, Raglan, old man. Come
 right in. You know Granillo,
 don't you?

GRANILLO comes foreword cordially.

RAGLAN
 Rather.

RAGLAN and GRANILLO shake hands.

GRANILLO
 Quite a long time since we met,
 though.
 (He smiles)

RAGLAN
 Yes - isn't it?
 (He looks round nervously)
 I say, I'm terribly sorry, I've
 come dressed.

BRANDON
 My dear fellow, my fault entirely.
 Come and seat yourself.

BRANDON affectionately leads RAGLAN to a chair.

I should have explained. You
 know we're going up to Oxford
 tonight?

RAGLAN
 Oh, no - are you? I'm not going
 up till Friday.

BRANDON
 Now what are you going to drink?
 You can have a gin and
 Italian...Or a gin and Angostura.
 And I can do you a very nice gin
 and French.

RAGLAN
 I should like gin and It, I think.

BRANDON

Gin and It? Right.

(He goes over to the
sideboard, opens the
bottles and pours the
drink carefully during
the following)

Yes, we leave tonight about
twelve, and travel by

(he pours)

automobile - in the

(he pours more)

let up hope - moonlight. And of
course all this place is simply
covered

(he pours more)

with books.

RAGLAN

Covered with books?

BRANDON

(giving Raglan his drink)

Yes. I'm come into a library.

RAGLAN

Come into a library?

BRANDON

(going to the
sideboard to pour a
drink for himself)

Of course, books aren't really in
your line, are they, Kenneth?

(He opens a fresh bottle)

RAGLAN

No - not really. Only P. G.
Wodehouse.

GRANILLO

Oh - are you good at P. G.
Wodehouse?

RAGLAN

Yes. Why? Are you?

GRANILLO

Yes - rather.

RAGLAN

Good lord - I shouldn't have
thought you would have been.

GRANILLO

Oh, rather...

INT. THE KENTLEY FAMILY DESCRIPTION - NIGHT

BRANDON

(pouring his drink)
Did you ever hear of old Gerry
Wickham, Kenneth? An uncle of mine.

RAGLAN

Oh, yes - rather.

BRANDON

Well, you know he's died just lately.

RAGLAN

Oh - has he? Yes?

BRANDON

Well, it's *his* library
(he pours)
which he has very kindly
(he pours)
and unexpectedly
(he pours)
bestowed upon me.

RAGLAN

Good Lord!

BRANDON

To the unspeakable mortification
of Sir Johnstone Kentley.

RAGLAN

Oh, Sir Johnstone Kentley. He's
quite a famous collector, isn't he?

BRANDON

Yes. He's coming here to-night.

RAGLAN

Good heavens - is he? It *is* the
same man, isn't it? He lives in
Grosvenor Square and has a son.

BRANDON

(after a pause)
Quite right, Kenneth. He lives
in Grosvenor Square
(he pauses)
and has a son.

(He moves DS with his
own drink, lights a
cigarette, and sits down)
He also runs to a sister, and
she's coming too.

RAGLAN

Oh - really?

BRANDON

Yes. A reward of ten pounds is
offered to any person or persons
forcing, by dynamite or other
means, more than two words out of
her at the same time.

RAGLAN

Why - is she uncommunicative?

BRANDON

"Is she uncommunicative?..."
Uncommunicative, Kenneth, is not
the word.

RAGLAN

Really? Tell me, Sir Johnstone's
son. Isn't that Ronald Kentley,
the lad who's so frightfully good
at sports?

BRANDON

That's right. You don't know him
do you?

RAGLAN

No. I've never met him, but he
wins hurdles, and hundreds of
yards, and things like that,
doesn't he?

BRANDON

Yes. That's right. As a matter
of fact, he's the living image of
yourself. Isn't he, Granno?

GRANILLO

Yes. He is like.

RAGLAN

Me? In what way?

BRANDON

Oh, in every way. Same age.
Same height. Same color. Same
sweet and refreshing innocence.

RAGLAN

Oh, shut up. I'm not an athlete,
anyway.

BRANDON

No. But you're just as much
alive. In fact more so.

RAGLAN

(awkwardly)

Am I? Then you are having Sir
Johnstone here just sort of to
make him grind his teeth with
envy about the books, then?

BRANDON

On the contrary, I'm going to let
him have exactly what he wants --
provided I don't want it. But
I'm telling you all this, Kenneth,
just to excuse the terrible mess
we're in. You'll observe that
we're having a meal off a chest.

INT. SMALL TALK WITH KENNETH RAGLAN - NIGHT

RAGLAN

Oh, yes.

(He looks at the chest)

I thought it looked rather weird.

BRANDON

Good Lord, Kenneth. You're
getting positively fat.

RAGLAN

Am I?

BRANDON

Nothing like the little boy who
used to fag for me at school.

RAGLAN

Lord! That's a long while ago.

BRANDON

Oh, it doesn't seem so very long.

RAGLAN

Of course, I used to think you an absolute hero in those days, Brandon.

BRANDON

Did you? Well, as a matter of fact, I was always more or less popular amongst my juniors.

GRANILLO

It was I who was the unpopular one.

BRANDON

Were you unpopular, Granno?

RAGLAN

Oh, yes, I remember I used to loathe you in those days.

GRANILLO

There you are.

BRANDON

Why did you loathe him?

RAGLAN

Oh, I don't know. I suppose games were the only things that ever counted in those days. I'm sure it was most unreasonable.

GRANILLO

It was. I assure you. I'm very harmless.

INT. LEILA ENTERS AND INTRODUCTIONS - NIGHT

The doorbell rings.

BRANDON

Here we are. I wonder if that's Rupert. Did you ever meet Rupert, Kenneth? Rupert Cadell?

RAGLAN

No -- I can't say I have.

BRANDON

No -- he was before your time,
wasn't he?

(He rises, goes to the
door, and opens it)

Ah-ha, the ravishing Leila! Come
along, my dear, this way.

BRANDON

How are you, Leila? You know
Granno, don't you?

LEILA

Hallo.

LEILA and GRANILLO shake hands.

BRANDON

And this is Kenneth. Mr
Raglan -- Miss Arden.

LEILA

Hallo.

RAGLAN

Hallo.

LEILA and RAGLAN shake hands. BRANDON indicates a chair
between RAGLAN and GRANILLO and LEILA sits down.

BRANDON

Now what are you going to have,
Leila? Kenneth's having a gin
and It.

LEILA

I'd adore one.

BRANDON goes to the sideboard and mixes LEILA's drink.
There is a rather awkward silence.

LEILA

(To Granillo)
And how are you getting on?

GRANILLO

Very well, thanks. And how are you?

LEILA

Oh, I'm all right.

She turns and grins at RAGLAN. RAGLAN is only too willing
to grin at LEILA.

LEILA
Of course, I simply *know* -- that
I've see you somewhere before.

RAGLAN
(looking foolish)
Really?

LEILA
You're not a Frinton-on-Sea
expert, are you?

RAGLAN
No, I just go there occasionally,
that's all.

LEILA
How weird! Because I could
simply *swear* that I've seen you
somewhere before.

RAGLAN
(grinning)
Oh -- how weird!

BRANDON
(giving Leila her drink)
Previous incarnation, I expect.
Here you are, Leila. Excuse mess.
We're in a horrible mess here
altogether. Kenneth'll tell you
about it. I've come into a library.

LEILA
Come into a library, my dear? My
dear, how weird!

BRANDON
Yes. And I hope you don't think
you're going to get anything to
eat, because all the servants are
away and we're very humble.

LEILA
No -- you told me that, and I had
a simply *gluttonous* high tea.
Gorged, my dear!

BRANDON
Oh, well, that's all right. I
really wouldn't have asked you --
only this is the last chance of
seeing you before we go.

LEILA
Are you going up to-night, then?

BRANDON
Yes.

RAGLAN
Of course, I'm feeling absolutely
ghastly -- coming dressed like this.

LEILA
Why? I'm sure I ought to be
dressed too.
(She turns to Brandon)
Of course you must admit, my dear,
this is a most mysterious and
weird meal.

GRANILLO
(a little too heavily)
Why mysterious and weird?

LEILA senses GRANILLO's heaviness; this causes a faintly
embarrassed little pause.

LEILA
Oh -- I don't know. Just
mysterious. And weird.
(Beat -- to Brandon)
Don't you think it's mysterious
and weird? Such a queer time, to
begin with.

The doorbell rings.

INT. SIR JOHNSTONE AND MRS. DEBENHAM ENTER - NIGHT

BRANDON
(cutting in rather loudly)
Here we are. I'll bet you that's
old Kentley. Forgive me a moment.
I must go and usher him in.

BRANDON exits, leaving the door open. Voices can be heard
from below.

LEILA
(softly, rolling her eyes)
Who's the newcomer?

GRANILLO
 (rising and putting
 his cigarette out in
 the ashtray on the table)
 The newcomer, Leila, is the
 revered Sir Johnstone Kentley,
 who has come here to look at books.

LEILA
 My dear!

GRANILLO
 Unless it's Rupert -- which it
 may be, of course.

He moves to the door.

BRANDON, SIR JOHNSTONE Kentley, and MRS DEBENHAM enter.

RAGLAN stands.

During the following, SABOT comes in after SIR JOHNSTONE, et al., and quietly goes on with the laying of plates, knives, sandwiches *et cetera* on the chest.

SIR JOHNSTONE
 (talking as he enters)
 ... which of course, can never be
 done. Ah, how do you do,
 Granillo. How are you getting on?

SIR JOHNSTONE and GRANILLO shake hands.

SIR JOHNSTONE
 You know my sister, don't you?

MRS. DEBENHAM
 Yes!
 (She smirks)

MRS DEBENHAM and GRANILLO shake hands.

RAGLAN looks sheepish and LEILA does not quite know what to do with herself.

BRANDON
 (taking the stage)
 Now let me introduce you all...
 This, Mrs. Debenham, is Miss
 Leila Arden... Miss Arden -- Sir
 Johnstone Kentley.

LEILA and SIR JOHNSTONE shake hands.

LEILA

Howdyou do.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Howdyou do.

BRANDON

And this is Mr. Kenneth Raglan.

RAGLAN and SIR JOHNSTONE shake hands.

RAGLAN

Howdyou do, Sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Howdyou do.

MRS DEBENHAM smirks.

There is an embarrassed pause.

BRANDON

And there we are. And here, Sir Johnstone, is an armchair which I think is more or less in your line.

BRANDON leads SIR JOHNSTONE down to a chair; SIR JOHNSTONE sits.

BRANDON

And here is a chest, from which we're going to feed, the table having been commandeered for books.

During the following, GRANILLO makes sure that everyone is seated again and moves to stand at the mantelpiece.

SIR JOHNSTONE

(peering at the chest)
That's not a Cassone, is it?

BRANDON

No, sir. It's not genuine, it's a reproduction. But it's a rather nice piece. I got it in Italy.

(To Sir Johnstone)
Now will you have a cocktail, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Good heavens, no, my boy.

He looks vaguely about the room.

BRANDON

And you, Mrs. Debenham?

MRS DEBENHAM merely smirks.

BRANDON

Won't you?

MRS. DEBENHAM

Oh, yes, please.

BRANDON

Ah. Good. Now what will you have? Will you have a gin and Angostura, or a gin and French, or a gin and Italian?

MRS. DEBENHAM

Yes, please.

During the following, her mind drifts off elsewhere so she is not paying attention.

SIR JOHNSTONE

These books I'm going to see -- where are they, Brandon?

BRANDON

(going to the sideboard again and mixing Mrs. Denbenham's drink)

Oh, the books. They're in the other room. The dining-room. I laid them out as well as I could, and there's more space in there.

SIR JOHNSTONE

I shall be interested to see them -- most interested... I seem to remember that Wickham had a really remarkable little lot of Shakespeariana...

BRANDON

Yes. But I am afraid the Folios were sold before he died. But there's a run of the Quartos, and a really amazing lot of Baconian stuff. At least I'm told it's very fine.

The doorbell rings.

SABOT exits quickly.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Ah-ha. Bacon, my boy. That's a special favorite of mine.

LEILA

Of course, all this is *too* technical and peculiar!

RAGLAN

Yes -- isn't it?

BRANDON

I expect Mrs. Debenham has learnt to put up with this sort of thing, hasn't she?

There is pause. MRS DEBENHAM snaps to attention and suddenly realizes she is being addressed.

MRS. DEBENHAM

Oh, yes!

LEILA

Of course, I'm *too* philistine for words. Do go on. What about Bacon?

SIR JOHNSTONE

I think we'd better try and restrain ourselves, my boy.

LEILA

Oh no. Do go on. You must tell us about Bacon. Isn't he the person who dashes round *being* Shakespeare, or something like that?

INT. RUPERT ENTERS - NIGHT

RUPERT Cadell enters and stands in the doorway.

BRANDON

Ah, here he is, here he is! The last, as usual. Come along in, Rupert.

RUPERT moves a little into the room.

BRANDON introduces RUPERT to the others. RUPERT smiles at each of them.

BRANDON

Mr. Cadell -- Mrs. Debenham.

MRS DEBENHAM smirks.

RUPERT
Howdyou do.

BRANDON
Miss Leila Arden.

RUPERT
Howdyou do.

LEILA
Howdyou do.

BRANDON
Mr. Cadell -- Sir Johnstone Kentley.

RUPERT
(a little more
solemnly, no smile on
his face)
Howdyou do, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE
Howdyou do.

BRANDON
Mr. Raglan -- Mr. Cadell.

RAGLAN
Howdyou do.

RUPERT bows.

RUPERT
But tell me. I don't quite
follow. Have I come dressed, or
have others come undressed? I
telephoned an inquiry, but could
not obtain -- er -- any answer.

BRANDON
Now contain yourself, Rupert, and
sit down.

BRANDON indicated a chair.

RUPERT looks at the chair, then espies the chest. He stops
affectedly, bends down to look at the chest and prods it
with his stick. He pauses.

RUPERT
What in heaven...?

BRANDON

There you are, Rupert, we're going to have our meal off a chest.

RUPERT

Oh -- are we?

BRANDON

Yes.

RUPERT

(prodding the chest)
Why are we going to have our meal off a chest?

BRANDON

Because it's a very nice chest, and because all the tables are covered with books.

LEILA

Yes, haven't you heard? The entire place is covered with library.

RUPERT

Oh!

He looks round, limps to a chair and sits down.

INT. DINNER OFF A CHEST - NIGHT

BRANDON

Now, Rupert, are you going to have a cocktail?

RUPERT

No. Thank you, I have had four already.

RAGLAN

(together)
 Four!

LEILA

(together)
 Four!

RUPERT

Yes, Why? Aren't I carrying my drink?

LEILA

Oh, yes -- you're carrying it all right. It's just rather a mean advantage that's all.

BRANDON

(to Sabot)
That's all right, Sabot. I'll ring when we're through. Then you can clear and get away.

SABOT

Thank you, sair.

SABOT exits.

RUPERT

When do we begin to have our meal off a chest? Because I'm personally rather peckish.

BRANDON

We're starting right away, Rupert.
(He moves to the chest)
Now look here, you people, there are a lot of plates and knives and things here -- and lots of sandwiches and things -- pâtø, caviar, and salmon and cucumber, and what-not... All you've got to do is to rally round and gather what you want...

They all rise and gather garrulously around the chest, offering each other different dishes, et cetera. Eventually, and still talking, they resume their places. SIR JOHNSTONE and RUPERT now have glasses of wine; LEILA has champagne.

MRS DEBENHAM drifts off into inattention during the following.

SIR JOHNSTONE

(to Rupert)
Are you the great Cadell, then?

LEILA, having her first gulp at her champagne, gives a long, satisfied sigh, "Ahhhhh!" RUPERT stops to look at her, in his own fashion, and then looks at SIR JOHNSTONE again.

RUPERT

Why, do you know anything about me?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh -- I've read your poems --
that's all. Or at least a lot of
them.

RUPERT

Dear me. I hope you're not
confusing me with the other
Caddell, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE

No, I don't think so. You write
poems, don't you?

RUPERT

I am told so, sir. But then so
does the other Caddell. A
devastating creature who spells
it with two d's.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh, no. There's no confusion.

GRANILLO

I never knew you could spell
Cadell with two d's.

LEILA

Same here.

RAGLAN

Yes, same here. I knew a Cadell
once, and she used to spell it
with only one d. Louisa Cadell.
Horrible old hag she was, too.
She lived in Bayswater.

RUPERT

Dear heaven. The young man is
alluding to my aunt.

RAGLAN

Oh, I say. I'm terribly sorry.
Have I dropped a brick?

RUPERT

No. You have said a mouthful.
(He gets up)

Can I have another sandwich?

(He takes another sandwich, sits down, all at once spills some wine, and commences violently wiping his trousers with his handkerchief)

I say, *must* we have our meal off a chest?

BRANDON

Here you are.

BRANDON comes forward, gets RUPERT another glass of wine and generally puts him right.

RUPERT

Thank you.

BRANDON goes over and fills SIR JOHNSTONE'S glass with wine.

INT. ABOUT RONALD - NIGHT

BRANDON

Is Lady Kentley any better, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

No. I'm afraid not. I'm afraid she's still in bed.

BRANDON

Oh. I'm sorry. And how's Ronald getting along?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh, Ronald? He's getting on all right. He's merely idling, of course, now, like you two.

GRANILLO

Does he like it, or does he want to get back?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh, no. He doesn't want to get back. He has a great time.

LEILA

Who's Ronald?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Ronald? He's my son and heir.
Twenty years of age.

RUPERT

Oh, I know Ronald. He was in the papers the other day for winning the high jump at the Varsity sports.

SIR JOHNSTONE

That's right.

RUPERT

Yes. I remember it well. There was a picture of me next door to it.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh -- was there?

RUPERT

Yes. Not -- though -- for winning the high jump. Oh, yes, quite an old friend.

BRANDON

Yes, he's a sprightly lad, is Ronald.

There is a slight pause.

RAGLAN

Brandon says he's like me. Is that true, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Why, yes, he is rather like you, when you come to think of it. Quite like, really.

RAGLAN

(to Leila)
I've a double, apparently.

LEILA

My dear! How *excruciating!*

RAGLAN

(to Sir Johnstone)
In what way is he like me, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh, I don't know. Just in general youthfulness --

BRANDON

-- and innocence, and freshness,
and --

RAGLAN

Oh, shut up, Brandon.

BRANDON

He's so afraid they won't think
him a man, isn't he?

SIR JOHNSTONE

That's like Ronald, too. I'm
afraid they won't feel like that
for long, though.

BRANDON

No. They won't poor dears.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Of course, my boy is the most
infantile thing in the world. I
honestly believe his only passion
in holiday time is the movies.
When I saw him at lunch he was
just *rushing* off to the Coliseum.

GRANILLO, at the mantelpiece, makes a movement.

INT. THE COLISEUM & A TICKET - NIGHT

BRANDON

But that's not the movies, is it?
I thought it was a music hall.
Not that I know. I've never been
there in my life.

LEILA

Never been to the Coliseum?

RUPERT

Why -- *should* he have been to the
Coliseum?

LEILA

Oh -- I thought everybody had been.

BRANDON

Well -- I haven't

GRANILLO

Neither have I. Is that the
place in the Haymarket?

LEILA

My dear! You're mixing it up
with the Capitol! What abysmal
ignorance!

GRANILLO stands with his back to the mantelpiece, his coat
open and the blue ticket protuberant in his pocket.

SIR JOHNSTONE

You'd have been a sad dog as an
ancient Roman, Granillo.

RUPERT

Yes. He would. Indeed, in the
days of the Caesars, the results
of confusing the Coliseum with
the Capitol would have been, I
should imagine, almost fatal.
Certainly you'd have been taken up.

LEILA

What was the Capitol, then?
Wasn't it where they all got up
and held forth?

RUPERT

The Capitol, I am told, was the
Roman temple to Jupiter on the
Tarpeian hill.

LEILA

Oh, my dear! Weren't they sweet!

RUPERT

Wherein -- exactly -- were the
Ancient Romans "sweet"?

LEILA

My dear -- such awful *fools!*
Going in for Jupiter, and temples,
and all that. Such a terrible
lot of bother about *nothing!*

SIR JOHNSTONE

Well, that's one way of looking
at it.

LEILA

Well, anyway, you must --

RUPERT

But to return to the twentieth century for just one moment... Do you mean to tell me, Granillo, that you have never been to the Coliseum?

GRANILLO

No. Of course I haven't. Never. Why?

RUPERT

(looking at Granillo)
It that so? Dear, dear...

GRANILLO

Yes. Why?

Everybody is quite still.

RUPERT

(slowly)
You mean to say you can stand there -- and puff out your chest -- and tell me you have never been to the Coliseum?

GRANILLO

Yes. Why? Why should you think that I had?

RUPERT

Merely the hawk-like sharpness of my vision.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Why? It is a crime never to have been to the Coliseum?

RUPERT

No, sir, I don't expect it's a crime.

SIR JOHNSTONE

For in that case I am afraid I myself am guilty.

RUPERT

Oh, no, sir. I merely thought that Granillo -- by the mere look of him, standing there in his beautiful dark blue suit -- was not the sort of person who had never been to the Coliseum.

GRANILLO

Well -- I haven't.

BRANDON

(moving DS from the sideboard)
But young Ronald has been to the
Coliseum, anyway, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

That's right.

INT. JOKING ABOUT THE CHEST CONTENTS - NIGHT

There is a slight pause. LEILA gets up for another sandwich,
and RAGLAN comes forward to help her.

RUPERT also moves to the chest and getting in further
muddles with plates, et cetera.

RUPERT

You know, I'm coming to the
conclusion that there's some
ulterior motive about this chest
picnic.

GRANILLO

(again a trifle too heavily)
What do you mean? Ulterior motive?

RUPERT looks at GRANILLO without replying. He is obviously
a little surprised at the other's tone.

BRANDON

You mean it's done purely to make
poor Rupert spill things over his
trousers?

RUPERT

I think it's more than likely.

LEILA

Oh, I suspect much worse than
that. I think they've committed
murder, and it's simply chock-
full of rotting bones. It's just
the sort of thing for rotting
bones, isn't it?

RAGLAN

Yes -- it is, isn't it?

LEILA

Yes, it is.

BRANDON

My dear -- you're right. I wouldn't let you see the inside of that chest for worlds.

LEILA

I'm sure you wouldn't.

GRANILLO, again noticeably, walks back to his seat R.

LEILA

And it's all very well to try and bluff me out and pretend you're willing to let me see --

BRANDON

But, my dear -- that's just what I said I *wouldn't* do.

LEILA

I have my suspicions.

SIR JOHNSTONE

But surely your murderer, having chopped up and concealed his victim in a chest -- wouldn't ask all his friends round to come and eat off it.

RUPERT

(slowly)

Not unless he was a very stupid, and very conceited murderer.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Very stupid, and very conceited.

RUPERT

Which, of course, he might be.

LEILA

In fact, it's exactly what all criminals are!

BRANDON

Oh no, I don't think so...

There is another pause.

INT. THE SOMETHING-SOMETHING - NIGHT

LEILA

Talking of murderers -- have you seen that new thing at the New Gallery?

RAGLAN

Yes, I saw that. Isn't it good?

LEILA

Yes, *Isn't* it good? I didn't like *her*, though, much -- that new woman -- I didn't think she was much good.

RAGLAN

No, *she* wasn't much good. That other film was good, though, wasn't it?

LEILA

Yes, *Wasn't* it good?

RAGLAN

Yes, it was good, wasn't it?

RUPERT

The Lord look down upon us. We have fallen amongst fans.

LEILA

Of course, the man I've got a passion for is William Powell.

RUPERT

Is *he* good?

RUPERT looks sardonically at LEILA and RAGLAN in turn during the following.

LEILA

My dear, *absolutely marvelous!* You know, my dear -- *strong, silent.* In fact, I think I like him better than John Gilbert now.

RAGLAN

Oh, do you like John Gilbert?

LEILA

Oh -- rather. I think he's terribly good.

RAGLAN

Yes -- he is good. Not as good as Ronald Colman, though.

LEILA

Oh -- don't you think so? Did you see him in the old version of *The Merry Widow*?

RAGLAN

Yes, he was good in that. Of course, he had a moustache in that didn't he?

RUPERT

I expect *that* improved him, didn't it?

LEILA

But then John Gilbert *always* had a moustache, didn't he?

RAGLAN

Oh no. Rather not. I've seen him in thousands of ones without. All the early ones.

RUPERT

(despairingly)
The early ones! When he was a child?

LEILA

By the way, did you see Robert Montgomery in that thing with Joan Crawford? I've forgotten what it was called... "The Wonderful Something" -- or something -- you know -- it was all sort of -- you know...

RUPERT

I, for one, at the moment of speaking, do not.

RAGLAN

Yes, I know what you mean, "The Wonderful" -- I've forgotten what... It was jolly good, wasn't it? What do you think of her -- Joan Crawford?

LEILA

(disparagingly)
Oh -- I think she's rather good.

RUPERT
I once went to the pictures and
saw Mary Pickford.

RAGLAN
Oh, how did you like her?

RUPERT
Oh, I don't know. Like all *these*,
you know...

LEILA
What was she in, anyway?

RUPERT
I can't quite recall. "The
Something Something", I think.
Or something like that.
(beat)
Something very like it, anyway.

LEILA
I don't believe you ever went.

BRANDON
I never knew you were a fan like
this, Leila. I simply abhor the
things myself.

LEILA
What -- on moral grounds?

BRANDON
Oh, no. They simply make me go
to sleep. And all those places
are so infernally stuffy. Tell
me, what do you think about films,
Mrs. Debenham?

Pause.

MRS. DEBENHAM
(snapping to attention
and smirking)
No -- I don't...

Silence. Everybody looks at each other, inclined to giggle.

LEILA
Well, if you'd seen --

RUPERT

(cutting in)
 Pardon me. I cannot quite ascertain Mrs. Debenham's opinion. She says she doesn't. Does she mean that she does not think about films, or merely that she does not think at all?

Pause.

MRS. DEBENHAM

Oh, yes. Decidedly.

RUPERT

Ah. I see.

INT. BOOKS & DANCING - NIGHT

BRANDON rises and places his plate upon the chest with an air of finality.

BRANDON

Well, anyway, who says books?

SIR JOHNSTONE

(rising)
 Ay.

LEILA

Yes, that's a very good idea.

BRANDON

(looking at Leila)
 I have a gramophone for the very young, if they care to make use of it.

LEILA

But I thought you said the room was covered with books.

BRANDON

Oh, no -- there's room to dance.

RAGLAN

(looking at the wireless cabinet)
 Hallo, you've got a wireless, I see.

BRANDON

Yes. So we have.
 (He goes over to the wireless)
 Let's see what they're doing.
 They won't be dancing yet.

BRANDON switches on the apparatus.

LEILA

Oh, no. Not till eleven.

Pause.

BRANDON

Hallo -- it's not doing anything.

RUPERT

Then take it off.

RUPERT rises, moves to the fire, takes a cigarette and lights it. He leans on the mantelpiece.

BRANDON switches off the radio, takes SIR JOHNSTONE by the arm and leads him towards the door.

BRANDON

This way, Sir Johnstone.
 (He frees his arm at
 the doorway and turns
 to Mrs. Debenham)
 Will you come along, too, Mrs.
 Debenham? You dance, don't you?

MRS. DEBENHAM

Oh, I really couldn't say!

RUPERT

We never until we try, do we?

MRS. DEBENHAM

I beg your pardon.

RUPERT

Granted -- utterly.

BRANDON

Well, come along, the rest of
 you -- if you want to, that is.
 I've dozens of records in here.

BRANDON, SIR JOHNSTONE and MRS DEBENHAM exit.

RAGLAN and LEILA stand. RAGLAN rather ostentatiously holds back the door for LEILA.

LEILA
 (smiling up at Raglan)
 Thank you.

RAGLAN and LEILA exit.

INT. RUPERT, GRANILLO & A TICKET - NIGHT

GRANILLO and RUPERT are left alone. GRANILLO moves over to RUPERT at the mantelpiece and takes another cigarette. He stands US of RUPERT and slaps RUPERT affectionately upon the shoulder.

GRANILLO
 Well, Rupert?

RUPERT
 Well? You look rather fagged out.

GRANILLO
 Do I? I don't feel it.

RUPERT
 What have you been doing with yourself?

GRANILLO
 (yet again too heavily)
 Doing with myself? Nothing. Why do you ask?

RUPERT
 For no reason whatsoever, my dear Granno. You seem rather touchy.

GRANILLO
 Yes, I'm a bit liverish. I've been sleeping most of the afternoon, and that always puts me out for the rest of the day.

RUPERT
 Ah, that's what I do...

In the room across the passage the gramophone begins.

GRANILLO
 Writing anything lately?

RUPERT
 (reflectively)
 Yes... A little thing about
 doves -- and a little thing about
 rain -- both good. Very good, in
 fact... And then, of course, I'm
 getting ahead with the big work...

GRANILLO
 That going well?

RUPERT
 Yes. Very. Indeed, it promises
 to be not only the best thing I
 have ever written, but the best
 thing I have ever read.
 (He nods his head to
 the gramophone)
 This is rather nice, isn't it?

GRANILLO suddenly yawns, sticking out his chest and lifting his hands. The blue Coliseum slip is prominent in his waistcoat. He resumes a normal position, leaning against the mantelpiece. RUPERT leans against the mantelpiece, close to GRANILLO and looking at him.

RUPERT
 So you and Brandon leave tonight
 for Oxford?

GRANILLO
 (looking into the fire)
 That's right.

RUPERT
 What time are you going?

GRANILLO
 We're aiming to start about ten-
 thirty.

RUPERT
 Arriving there about when?

GRANILLO
 Oh. About three. Why?

RUPERT
 Peculiar form of enjoyment,
 Granno. But, then, that's like you.

GRANILLO
 Why? Lovely moonlight night.

RUPERT
It's not. It's raining already.

GRANILLO
It's not.

RUPERT
Yes, it is.
(He raises his hand)
Listen.

The rain can be heard pouring gently down. The gramophone stops in the next room, and there is a sudden great quiet over everything. GRANILLO listens, first by putting his head slightly sideways, and then by suddenly turning his head to look at the window. In this instant, RUPERT makes a deft snatch at the little ticket in GRANILLO's waistcoat pocket, then holds his hand behind his back rather awkwardly. GRANILLO turns his head back and sees RUPERT with his hand behind his back, but RUPERT puts his hand in his pocket in quite an easy fashion, and GRANILLO passes it over. But there has been a queer little pause.

GRANILLO looks into the fireplace again.

GRANILLO
Yes, it *is* coming down, isn't it?

RUPERT spots a book on the mantelpiece and reaches for it.

RUPERT
What have we here?... Ah-ha!...
Conrad. Dear me... Dear me...

RUPERT turns the pages interestedly.

The gramophone starts up again. Suddenly the door across the passage opens, and the sound of the gramophone comes loudly through, also laughter and voices.

BRANDON (O.S.)
Granno!

GRANILLO
Hallo?

BRANDON (O.S.)
Granno! You're wanted!

GRANILLO
Coming!
(to Rupert)
Coming along?

RUPERT
No, I'm all right.

GRANILLO exits.

INT. SABOT GETS QUESTIONED - NIGHT

RUPERT, left alone, goes on reading the book for a little while. Then, still standing and holding the book, he fishes in his left-hand pocket for his spectacles case, taking the spectacles out and looking at the book at the same time. Then he strolls toward the armchair. He sits down and adjusts the spectacles on his face, still reading. He puts the spectacle case absently on the table, and fishes in another pocket for the blue ticket. He holds the ticket out, straightening it on his knee as he goes on reading. Then he closes the book with one hand and places it on the table, leans back and gives his whole attention to the ticket. He turns it over, looking at each side, then screws it up in his hand. He drops his hand over the side of the armchair, and looks thoughtfully -- not suspiciously -- ahead of him. RUPERT stays like this for nearly half a minute. Then he takes up the book again and makes to start reading.

SABOT enters.

RUPERT
(looking up)
Ah -- good-evening, sabot.

SABOT
Good-evening, sair.

SABOT clears the meal away on to the tray during the following.

RUPERT
(reading)
How are you getting on?

SABOT
Very well, thank you, sair.

There is a pause. The sound of the rain becoming louder.

RUPERT
(after a beat; quietly)
It's going to be a dirty night.

SABOT
Yes, sair. It's set in now, sair.

RUPERT
I suppose Mr. Brandon'll still be going, though.

SABOT
 Pardon, sair?

RUPERT
 I suppose Mr. Brandon'll still be
 going, though -- to Oxford?

SABOT
 Oh -- yes, sair. I suppose so, sair.

SABOT busies himself with clearing. He picks up a large
 pile of plates. RUPERT all at once puts the book down and
 looks at the little ticket again.

RUPERT
 Have you any idea of the date, Sabot?

SABOT
 Ze date, sair? Yes, sair. It
 ees zee -- er --
 (screwing up his eyes)
 er -- sixteenth, sair.

RUPERT
 The -- ?

RUPERT is about to repeat "the sixteenth" in surprise.

SABOT
 (quickly)
 No, sair! No, sair! It ees not,
 sair! It ees zee *seventeenth*, sair!

RUPERT looks quite openly at the ticket.

RUPERT
 Yes. I thought so. The seventeenth.

Pause.

RUPERT
 Have you been getting into
 trouble lately, Sabot?

SABOT
 Trouble, sair?

RUPERT
 Yes. Trouble.

SABOT
 Er... Trouble, sair?

RUPERT
Uncanny as it may seem, the word
I employed, Sabot, was trouble.

SABOT
Er... What kind of trouble, sair?

RUPERT
Why -- have you a selection?

SABOT
Ah, sair. Life. She is full of
trouble.

RUPERT
She certainly is. Indeed she is
almost unintermittently
troublesome. I was wondering,
though, whether you had been
getting into any trouble with
your employers.

SABOT
Me, sair? No, sair. What should
make you think so, sair?

RUPERT
Well, I telephoned this house at
a quarter to eight and heard the
most hysterical noises.

SABOT
Hysterical noises, sair?

RUPERT
Hysterical -- Sabot -- noises.
Somebody had evidently lost their
nerve. I was wondering whether
you were the cause of it.

SABOT
Me, sair? No, sair. I was not
here till five to nine.

There is a long pause. SABOT continues clearing the meal away.

RUPERT
Then are you the one that
frequents the Coliseum, Sabot?

SABOT responds not having heard and merely being polite.

SABOT
Yes, sair?

RUPERT sees that this is the wrong reply and looking up.

RUPERT
I said, are you the one that
frequents the Coliseum?

SABOT
(pulling himself together)
Oh, sair! I did not hear, sair!
Pardon, sair. The Coliseum, sair?
No, sair.

RUPERT
You don't?

SABOT
Zee -- er -- zee music-hall, sair?

RUPERT
Yes.

SABOT speaks in a puzzled fashion, as though accused, and quite innocent.

SABOT
No, sair... No, sair, I have been
there once, sair... Many years
ago, sair.

RUPERT
But not lately?

SABOT
No, sair.

There is another pause. SABOT goes on clearing.

RUPERT
Then is it Mr. Granillo who
frequents the Coliseum?

SABOT
Mr. Granillo, sair?

RUPERT
Or is it Mr. Brandon who
frequents the place?

SABOT
Mr. Brandon, sair?

INT. BRANDON INTERRUPTS - NIGHT

BRANDON enters. He is quite bright and cheerful, and moves straight over to the sideboard, plainly to fetch drinks.

BRANDON
 (as he moves; rallyingly)
 Hallo! Hallo! "Mr. Brandon"?
 What's all this about, Mr. Brandon?

RUPERT
 (quickly)
 I was asking the good Sabot,
 Brandon, whether Mr. Brandon
 would still travel to Oxford in
 all this rain. Wasn't I, Sabot?

SABOT looks up quickly from BRANDON to RUPERT and speaks in a puzzled way.

SABOT
 Er... Yes, sair. Yes, sair.

BRANDON bends down to fish in the cupboard in the sideboard for bottles.

BRANDON
 Well -- I hope he told you that
 we are. What's a little rain,
 anyway?

BRANDON produces a bottle of whisky, looks at it, and walks to the doorway.

BRANDON
 (in motion)
 Besides, we've got nobody to look
 after us here. One moment, I'll
 be back in a minute.

BRANDON suddenly turns DS to look over RUPERT's shoulder to see what he is reading.

BRANDON
 What's he reading? *The Rover*.
 I'll be back in a minute. Why
 don't you come in?
 (He turns to Sabot)
 That's all right, Sabot. You can
 go straight away now -- now
 that's cleared.

SABOT
 Thank you, sair.

BRANDON
 (to Rupert)
 Back in a minute.

BRANDON exits.

There is another pause as SABOT puts the final touch to his clearing.

RUPERT
 That, Sabot, was what we call a
 White One.

SABOT
 (uncomprehending)
 A White One, sair?
 (understanding)
 Oh, sair! Yes, sair... A white
 one, sair.

SABOT draws air in through his teeth rather nervously.

RUPERT goes on reading.

SABOT moves to the door and opens it, then comes back and fetches the tray containing everything cleared, and exits with it into the passage, leaving the door open. He can be heard putting the tray outside. He comes back to close the door, but pauses in the doorway and bows.

SABOT
 Bonsoir, monsieur.

RUPERT
 (looking up from the book)
 Good-night, Sabot.

SABOT exits.

There is a pause. The rain comes down.

RUPERT abruptly closes the book, gets up and moves towards the window. He pauses at the chest and gives it a kick -- not very suspiciously, but curiously, in passing -- goes on to the window and looks out. Rain. He moves DS and helps himself to a drink, then goes back to the same chair and resumes his book. He suddenly closes it and looks in front of him for about ten seconds. He makes to resume the book.

A chorus of voices is heard from the next room.

BRANDON enters. He looks at the chest and at RUPERT.

BRANDON
Hallo. Sabot gone?

RUPERT
Yes. Sabot gone.
(puts book on table)
Brandon.

BRANDON closes the door and moves to the mantelpiece for a cigarette. He lights one.

Pause.

RUPERT settles himself in the armchair.

BRANDON
Um?

BRANDON pokes the fire during the following.

RUPERT
I have just thought of something
rather queer.

BRANDON
Something queer. What's that?

RUPERT
All this talk about rotting bones
in chests...

RUPERT gazes lethargically into the distance.

BRANDON stands up, poker in hand, and looks at RUPERT.

The gramophone is suddenly heard again, together with a great guffaw of general laughter.

CURTAIN

INT. BRANDON'S PAST - NIGHT

The scene is the same as before, and no time has elapsed. The offstage gramophone takes up where it left off.

BRANDON
(in the same attitude)
Talk about rotting bones in
chests, Rupert?

RUPERT
Yes.

BRANDON
What about them?

BRANDON turns round and pokes the fire again during RUPERT's line.

RUPERT
Do you remember when you were an infant, Brandon?

BRANDON
M'm...

BRANDON finishes poking the fire, puts the poker back and wipes his hands on his handkerchief during the following.

RUPERT
And how you used to tell me stories round the fire?

BRANDON
Yes. Rather. I remember.

RUPERT
Do you remember your chest complex, Brandon?

BRANDON
My chest complex?

RUPERT
Yes. Whatever the story was -- piratical, detective, murder, adventure or ghost -- it always contained a marvelous denouement with a bloody chest containing corpses. You had a perfect mania for it, don't you remember?

BRANDON is suddenly a trifle serious, forgetting himself.

BRANDON
Yes, I'd forgotten that.

RUPERT looks at BRANDON. There is a pause.

RUPERT
Why *should* you have remembered it?

BRANDON puts his handkerchief away and walks over to the sideboard for whisky.

BRANDON
Yes, it's quite true. I remember
now. What about it, though?

RUPERT
(lightly)
Oh, nothing. Just queer, that's
all. You were a morbid child.

BRANDON pours out his whisky.

BRANDON
(quietly)
How queer -- exactly?

RUPERT
Oh, just queer. Us all talking
to-night about rotting bones in
chests. It just came back to me,
that's all.

BRANDON is intent upon pouring, and as though suddenly
seeing the light...

BRANDON
Oh! I see what you mean! Yes!
Are you going to have some of
this, Rupert?

RUPERT
What's that? Whisky? Yes.
Thank you.

RUPERT makes to stand.

BRANDON
All right! Don't get up. I'll
bring it over...

BRANDON pours whisky into a second glass.

BRANDON
... Say when...

RUPERT gives instructions as BRANDON pours.

RUPERT
When. No. A little more. When.
When!

BRANDON brings RUPERT's drink over to him.

RUPERT
Thank you.

BRANDON holds up his glass.

BRANDON
Happy days.

RUPERT
How's the old man getting on with
his books?

BRANDON
Going to take the entire library
away with him, as far as I can
see. I'm simply saying good-bye
to it.

RUPERT
I didn't know you were a book
collector.

BRANDON
I've only been one for about a year.

RUPERT
What exactly is your line?

BRANDON
Well -- I've theories about some
of the Victorians. Everything
comes round, you know, in time.

RUPERT
For example...?

BRANDON
For example? Well -- Matthew
Arnold, Carlyle, and perhaps
people of that sort.

RUPERT
Matthew Arnold, perhaps.

BRANDON
What's wrong with Carlyle, anyway?

RUPERT
My dear Brandon. An unspeakable
person. Pull yourself together.

BRANDON
Oh, I don't agree with you. He's
got guts, anyway.

RUPERT
 (screwing up his face)
 Guts!

BRANDON
 And a kind of angry righteousness,
 which you don't get nowadays.

RUPERT
 Thank God!

BRANDON swills down the remains of his whisky.

BRANDON
 Well, I must go in and function.
 Aren't you coming?

RUPERT
 (getting up)
 Yes.

The gramophone is heard again.

RUPERT
 Ah -- I like that one.
 (beating time)
 Dee-de-dee-de-dee-dedeede.
 (He moves to the door)
 I say. What's the time?
 (He compares his watch
 with the grandfather clock)
 I want to be home fairly early
 to-night.

BRANDON
 Plenty of time. Come along.

BRANDON switches off the lamp and the overhead lights.

BRANDON and RUPERT exit together.

The room is in darkness except for a gleam of light around the door from the passage.

BRANDON (O.S.)
 Now I've left the cigarettes. Go
 along in, Rupert. I'll be in in
 a moment.

BRANDON enters, his figure being silhouetted against the doorway as he comes in.

There are voices from the next room as RUPERT enters it.

BRANDON moves down to the mantelpiece for cigarettes. There is a pause. He suddenly moves over to the window and draws the curtains back. He is silhouetted against the window's light.

The rain is heard, and seen, beating against the windows.

BRANDON moves down to the chest and stands by it. He sits on it, and bends down to the lock.

The gramophone in the next room ceases. There is a pause. Suddenly the light in the passage goes off, and then on again.

The figure on the chest becomes upright and tense.

Pause.

INT. THEY WANT BEETHOVEN RECORDS - NIGHT

All at once GRANILLO's figure is seen against the light of the doorway. He closes the door. He is inside the darkened room.

The figure on the chest remains motionless. GRANILLO moves towards the chest.

Pause.

GRANILLO touches BRANDON and lets out a horrible, shuddering, muffled scream

BRANDON
(crying out)
Damnation!

GRANILLO's scream dies down into a sobbing noise.

BRANDON, cursing furiously, gets down from the chest with a heavy thud and rushes over to the lamp on the table and switches it on.

BRANDON
(blazing)
What in God's name do you mean?

GRANILLO sinks down by the chest with his arms on it.

GRANILLO
Oh - Oh! Oh, God!

BRANDON
(fiercely)
What's the matter, man? Tell me
what's the matter!

GRANILLO speaks, his voice coming from within his folded arms.

GRANILLO

I thought it was him. I thought
it was him! I thought it was Ronald!

BRANDON switches on the main light and the lamp off, then goes over to the sideboard and pours out a large whisky and soda, spilling some of it over. He brings the whisky over to GRANILLO.

BRANDON

For God's sake, drink that.

GRANILLO takes the whisky and sips it freely

BRANDON

Be quick -- be quick, man!

GRANILLO

Why were you sitting there? Why
were you trying to frighten me?

BRANDON

I wasn't trying to frighten you.
I was wondering what you were up
to. I wasn't even sure it was
you. Why did you want to sneak
in like that? You got what you
deserved. Hang you -- you've
upset me.

GRANILLO

I wanted to see that everything
was all right. I'm sorry. My
nerve's going. I'm all right.
I'll be all right.

GRANILLO finishes the rest of the whisky with a gulp and makes a wry face as it goes down.

GRANILLO

I'll be all right. Give me some
more of that.

BRANDON

(taking Granillo's glass)
Get up, get up!

BRANDON pours GRANILLO some more whisky.

GRANILLO gets up and sits on the chest. BRANDON gives him another glass full of whisky and soda.

BRANDON
I'm going into the other room.
Come in when you can.

BRANDON moves to the door and pauses there.

BRANDON
Don't get drunk on that.

GRANILLO
No.

BRANDON exits with the cigarettes, closing the door.

Pause.

GRANILLO looks in front of him. He swills off the remainder of his whisky at one gulp again. There is a pause; he looks in front of him. He goes to the sideboard and helps himself to another large glass of whisky and soda. He takes a sip and moves slowly down to the fireplace, giving a little stagger of drunkenness just before reaching it. He leans against the mantelpiece, looking into the fire. He slowly turns round and looks at the chest. He quickly takes another long gulp at his whisky, pulls a long face and coughs. The cough continues horribly; he cannot leave off. He stops to gasp, and then starts again.

BRANDON enters hurriedly.

BRANDON
(looking at Granillo)
What's the matter, man?

GRANILLO
(straining)
Cough.

GRANILLO coughs again, continuing through the following.

BRANDON
Pull yourself together. Come on.
Come on. You can stop if you
want to
(He thuds Granillo on
the back)
Come on.

GRANILLO's coughing slowly dies out.

GRANILLO
All right. It went down the
wrong way.

GRANILLO seems quite calm again in every way.

GRANILLO
What are you back here for?

GRANILLO sits down.

BRANDON
They want those Beethoven records. You know, those old ones. I couldn't find them in there. You had them last, didn't you? Are they in here, or upstairs?

GRANILLO
Oh, yes. They're upstairs in my room.

BRANDON
I'll go and get them. Where are they?

GRANILLO
They'll be a hell of a nuisance to get at. They're at the bottom of my trunk.

BRANDON
What? The green one?

GRANILLO
Yes. But they're right at the bottom, and it's locked. Must they have their Beethoven records?

BRANDON
All right, then. You come and tell them.

BRANDON moves down to the fire, puts coal on it and pokes it.

BRANDON
You're all right, aren't you?

GRANILLO rises to go to the door.

GRANILLO
Yes. Quite.

GRANILLO opens the door and makes to leave.

BRANDON
(still poking the fire)
One moment, Granno.

GRANILLO stops.

INT. LET'S GET RID OF THE TICKET NOW - NIGHT

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

Shut the door.

GRANILLO

(shutting it)

Yes.

BRANDON

You've got that little ticket, haven't you? You'd better give it to me and we'll destroy it right away now.

GRANILLO

What ticket?

BRANDON

Ronald's ticket.

GRANILLO is vague, only half-realizing the significance of what he has been asked.

GRANILLO

What Ronald's ticket?

BRANDON still is quite cool.

BRANDON

(tersely)

Oh, don't dither, Granillo. Ronald's ticket. Ronald's Coliseum ticket.

GRANILLO

Ronald's Coliseum ticket?

BRANDON

Sh! Not so loud, you fool. Yes.

GRANILLO

I haven't got the Coliseum ticket.

BRANDON

Don't be a fool, Granno. I gave it to you.

GRANILLO
You didn't give it to me.

BRANDON clinches his hands and looks at GRANILLO.

BRANDON
Granno!

Almost simultaneously...

GRANILLO
Wait!

GRANILLO plunges his thumb into the waistcoat pocket where the ticket was.

Pause.

He does the same with the other thumb in the opposite pocket.

Pause.

He checks the right waistcoat pocket beneath then, quickly, the left. He looks at BRANDON.

BRANDON
Granno!

GRANILLO goes through all four waistcoat pockets again rapidly and in a panic. He looks at BRANDON. He goes through his two coat pockets, then his inside pockets and trousers pockets. He turns his trouser pockets out, then checks his coat pockets again. He comes back to his waistcoat pockets.

GRANILLO
You didn't --

BRANDON
Hip! Hip!... Hip pocket!

GRANILLO feels in his hip pocket, with the same result.

GRANILLO
You didn't --

BRANDON
Look again! Look again!

GRANILLO repeats the entire performance, which lasts nearly a minute. This time, also, he brings out his wallet and looks in that.

GRANILLO
 (hoarsely)
 You didn't give it to me. I
 never had it.

BRANDON looks at GRANILLO in a kind of calm rage.

BRANDON
 I gave it into your hand.

GRANILLO
 You didn't. I never had it.

BRANDON
 I gave it into your hand!

GRANILLO
 See if you've got it.

BRANDON
 I haven't got it, I tell you.
 Where is it?

BRANDON moves toward the sideboard and rapidly and desperately searches himself with his back to the audience. He bangs on the chest with sudden terrible rage.

BRANDON
 Where is it? Where is it?

BRANDON stands still, both hands still on the chest.

GRANILLO
 Shshsh! I put it in my waistcoat
 pocket.

INT. BRANDON & GRANILLO ALMOST GIVE THEMSELVES AWAY - NIGHT

RUPERT enters during the next line and stands in the doorway.

BRANDON
 (shouting)
 You put it in your waistcoat
 pocket! You put it in your
 waistcoat pocket! Where is it
 now? Where is it now?

RUPERT
 My dear Brandon. What *have* you lost?

There is a long pause. BRANDON and GRANILLO glare into RUPERT's eyes, and he looks coolly at them.

BRANDON
 (his hands still on
 the chest)
 My temper, Rupert. Sorry, Granno.

GRANILLO moves over to pour himself another drink.

GRANILLO
 (very nervously)
 That's all right.

RUPERT
 Oh --
 (hobbling DC)
 I hope I'm not interfering.

BRANDON moves to the fireplace and lighting a cigarette...

BRANDON
 No. It's my fault. You didn't
 know that Granno and I behaved
 like that, did you, Rupert? But
 we often have outbursts, like
 this -- and always about trifles,
 eh, Granno?

GRANILLO
 Yes.

GRANILLO takes a drink.

BRANDON
 On this occasion it was a
 question of a case of Beethoven
 gramophone records, which poor
 old Granno couldn't produce. I
 was chiding him for his remissness.
 The party'll have to do without
 its Beethoven to-night.

RUPERT
 Well, it's an ill wind that blows
 nobody any good. What a queer
 thing to quarrel about.

BRANDON
 Yes. But we do quarrel about
 queer things nowadays, don't we,
 Granno?

GRANILLO
 We do.

RUPERT
 (sitting down)
 Can I have another drink, please?

GRANILLO, preoccupied, does not respond.

BRANDON
 Granno.

GRANILLO
 Yes. Whisky?

RUPERT
 Yes, please.

GRANILLO pours a whisky for RUPERT and brings it over to him. His hand is trembling violently as he gives the drink to RUPERT, and this does not go by unobserved.

RUPERT
 Can I have some soda?

GRANILLO
 Oh. Sorry.

GRANILLO moves back and pours soda into the glass, then returns with it to RUPERT.

RUPERT
 Thank you. Ever so much,

RUPERT drinks.

GRANILLO returns to the sideboard during the following.

RUPERT
 (beat)
 Well, as a matter of fact, I'm in here on an errand.

BRANDON
 An errand?

RUPERT
 Yes, I want some rope.

BRANDON
 (together)
 Rope!

GRANILLO
 (together)
 Rope!

RUPERT

Yes. Why so excited? Rope. The young people in the other room, having exhausted the lyric possibilities of the gramophone, are now projecting their entire youthful *Ølan* and ingenuity into the composition of a parcel. And they want something to do it up with.

BRANDON

A parcel?

RUPERT

Yes. The old man's books. You'd better see what goes into it. I'm sure he's lifting all your best.

There is a sudden, tremendous clap of thunder.

RUPERT

Hallo -- here we are...

There is another clap, which dies down into the distance.

RUPERT

I thought it was coming.

There is an enormous downpour of rain. BRANDON moves to the window and looks out.

BRANDON

Damnation... Yes, it's coming down all right.

RUPERT

Surely --

There is another, even more tremendous clap of thunder, which causes RUPERT to rise to his feet.

GRANILLO drops a full glass on he floor.

GRANILLO

Blast!

GRANILLO tries to mop the spillage up with his handkerchief but gets into difficulties.

GRANILLO

Oh, where are the servants?
Where are the servants?

RUPERT looks at GRANILLO in a surprised way then moves over to look out of the window with BRANDON.

RUPERT
My dear Brandon, surely you're not going in this?

BRANDON
Oh yes, we'll go all right. It'll clear up soon.

There is another clap of thunder.

Pause.

BRANDON
Besides, we've got nowhere to sleep here. The beds are all dismantled.

RUPERT
(moving DS again)
Oh, that needn't worry you. You can come round and put up with me if you care. I've plenty of room.

BRANDON moves DS and puts his arm around RUPERT.

BRANDON
No -- thank you old boy. I think we'll try and make it.

RUPERT
Very well, have it your own way.

BRANDON moves to the fireplace during the following.

INT. MAKING THE PACKAGE - NIGHT

LEILA and RAGLAN burst in. RAGLAN is carrying books and is behind LEILA.

LEILA
Hallo! Did you hear that?

RUPERT
M'm. We heard it all right. We're scared out of our wits.

LEILA

I *know*!

(She goes to the window)
And it's simply coming down in
sheets! Surely you're not going
to Oxford to-night?

GRANILLO

Certainly we are.

LEILA

But, my dear, you *can't*! You'll
be simply *swamped out*, my dear!
Flooded, my dear!

BRANDON

I hear you want some string, Leila.

LEILA

Oh, yes -- so we do!
(She turns to Raglan)
Where are the books? Oh, here
they are. We're going to make a
parcel, my dear. Come on.

LEILA takes half the books from RAGLAN and plunks them down
on the chest.

LEILA

We've got some paper.
(to Raglan again)
Have you got the paper?

RAGLAN

Oh, no. I've forgotten the paper.

LEILA

Well, go and get it! Be quick!

RAGLAN

Right you are.

RAGLAN exits.

BRANDON moves to the door and shouts...

BRANDON

And you might bring the cigarettes
while you're there, Kenneth!

RAGLAN (O.S.)

Right you are!

BRANDON returns to the fire. RUPERT goes up to the chest and looks at the books during the following.

LEILA
(moving to the wireless)
Can I see what's on?

BRANDON
Certainly.

LEILA touches the indicators. Nothing happens. There is a pause for about ten seconds.

RUPERT
This, of course, is the time when
I enjoy the wireless.

LEILA
That's the storm, I expect.

INT. FORGOT ONE MORE THING, ROPE - NIGHT

RAGLAN enters with paper and cigarettes. He hands the cigarettes to BRANDON.

RAGLAN
Here you are.

BRANDON
Ta.

RAGLAN
(giving the paper to Leila)
Here you are.

LEILA
Thanks. Well, now we want the
string. Where's the string?

BRANDON
Oh -- the string's in the other
room. I'll get it.

RAGLAN is obviously enjoying himself and frantically eager to serve.

RAGLAN
No, no. I'll get it. Where is it?

BRANDON
It's in the sort of big vase
thing -- you know.

LEILA
Do you know the sort of big vase
thing?

RAGLAN
Oh, yes -- I know. I'll get it.

RAGLAN rushes out again.

RUPERT looks up from his book and straight at LEILA for a moment, mockingly...

RUPERT
Isn't it sweet?

LEILA
Yes, he is rather a lamb.

LEILA spreads the paper out on the chest during the following.

RUPERT
(putting his book down)
Yes.
(He hobbles over to
the chair L)
A decided duck.

RUPERT sits down.

RAGLAN returns with a ball of string.

RAGLAN
Here we are.

RAGLAN gives LEILA the string. She arranges books on the paper and he stands over her, helpfully.

RAGLAN
(turning to Brandon)
Oh! And Sir Johnstone wants to
know whether he can browse on
that sort of top shelf thing -- I
don't quite follow what he --

BRANDON
Oh, yes. I know what he means.

GRANILLO moves to get another drink, but BRANDON notices it.

BRANDON
(to Granillo)
I say, Granno, do go in and
explain to him. The poor old
man's getting into hopeless muddles.

GRANILLO at the sideboard, swiftly pours and swallows a drink, then moves towards the door. Walking unsteadily, he happens to stumble against the chest.

GRANILLO exits a little insecurely.

There is a slight pause and silence.

LEILA
(rolling her eyes)
Just a *little*... I think?

RUPERT
I should say completely.

BRANDON
What? Granno blotto? Yes. He is a bit. It's this whisky.

There is another growl of thunder.

INT. BACK TO THE BONES IN THE CHEST - NIGHT

RAGLAN
Hallo, listen. Here we are again.

LEILA
(looking behind her)
Oh, my hat!

BRANDON
I believe you're afraid of storms, Leila.

LEILA
My dear! I am. I simply rush around in circles. It's hereditary, you know. You should see my mother.

RUPERT
What does she rush around in?

LEILA
My dear! She doesn't! She simply hides herself in cupboards.

BRANDON
Really?

LEILA
 (taking the string
 from Raglan)
 All entangled in the linen, my
 dear! If it comes on again,
 you'll probably all see me
 suddenly take a *violent plunge*
 into this chest.

LEILA busies herself with the string during the following.

RAGLAN
 I should love to see that.

LEILA
 Head-foremost, my dear! By the
 way, can you get into this chest,
 or is it locked?

The remark goes unanswered. BRANDON lights a cigarette and
 pretends not to hear. There is a pause.

RUPERT repeats LEILA's words carefully, looking at BRANDON.

RUPERT
 Can you get into this chest,
 Brandon, or is it locked?

BRANDON pretends that he has not heard

BRANDON
 What? Oh! Yes, you can get into
 this chest if you want to.

LEILA
 Oh, well, then *I'm* safe.

RUPERT looks at the chest from his chair.

RUPERT
 Isn't there a lock on that, though?

Pause.

BRANDON
 Yes. There is.

LEILA
 (suddenly and brightly)
 Oh, my dear! You've forgotten!

LEILA hands the ball of string back to RAGLAN.

LEILA
He's got his murdered man in there!

RAGLAN
Oh, so he has! We'd forgotten
that, hadn't we?

LEILA
Well, you may have. I hadn't. I
say, can I have another spot?

BRANDON
I'm sorry, Leila.

BRANDON moves over to the sideboard.

BRANDON
And you too, Kenneth?

RAGLAN
Well -- I think I would -- really...

LEILA
(tugging at the string)
Yes, that's what he's been
committing --
(tug)
murder --
(tug; then to Raglan)
Finger, please.

RAGLAN puts his finger on the string.

LEILA
No -- here. That's right. And
we've caught him --
(tug)
red --
(tug)
handed.

BRANDON
(jokingly and easily)
Ah, Leila. You don't know how
near the mark you are.

LEILA
Oh -- don't I? I know exactly
what's inside that chest.

BRANDON
What?

LEILA

There's an old, old man. You picked him up selling papers in the street and you did him to death for the gold fillings in his teeth. You've a lust for gold, my dear.

BRANDON

Oh -- I see you've been following me.

LEILA looks at the lock and fumbles with it.

LEILA

No. It *is* locked, *isn't* it? And why a padlock? What *have* you got in it?

BRANDON

But you know, Leila. You have already explained to us what is in it.

LEILA

No.

(working on the parcel again)
I honestly think you ought to let us have a look. Have you got the key?

BRANDON

Yes. I've got the key. It's in my waistcoat pocket.

LEILA

Well -- hand it over and let's have a look inside.

BRANDON

I'm hanged if I do.

LEILA

But why *not*, my dear? If you're --
(tug)
really --
(tug)
innocent -- you can prove it, dear.

BRANDON

But how often have I to tell you, Leila, that I am *not* innocent? My hands are red with a crime committed less than three hours ago.

INT. I'LL BE YOUR STRONG MAN - NIGHT

LEILA

Oh, well -- if you won't --
(she tugs the string
and hurts her finger)
damn -- you won't. All the same,
if I had strong men about me,
they'd force it from you.

RAGLAN

I'll be your strong man.

LEILA

Will you? All right. Go and be
strong.

RAGLAN

How do I do that?

LEILA

Oh -- that's up to you.

RAGLAN

(moving DS)
All right, then.
(He strikes an attitude)
Now then, Mr. Brandon, hand it
over, or it will be the worse for
you.

LEILA

Said he, eyeing the other fearlessly.

BRANDON

Come and get it, Kenneth.

RAGLAN's a little nervous, and rather wishes he hadn't begun it.

RAGLAN

Which pocket is it in?

BRANDON

Top. Right.

RAGLAN

Mine or yours?

BRANDON

Mine.

LEILA

Go on. Seize it.

RAGLAN
I'll give him ten seconds, shall I?

LEILA
That's right.

BRANDON
Right you are. Ten seconds.

LEILA
One -- two -- three...

RAGLAN
(creeping a little nearer)
Won't you surrender?

BRANDON
No.

LEILA
Four -- five --

RAGLAN creeps nearer still.

LEILA
Six -- seven --

RAGLAN suddenly makes a spring at BRANDON, who is not ready for him.

LEILA
Hooray!

RAGLAN and BRANDON begin to wrestle, both with a smile on their faces, but looking a little breathless and anxious.

RUPERT watches carefully.

The struggle becomes a little too protracted.

LEILA
My dears! What *will* men not do for me!

The struggle becomes a little more breathless, and even unfriendly. RAGLAN looks for a moment as though he is going to get the best of it.

LEILA
Slaughtering each other, of course!

They continue. All at once, BRANDON seizes RAGLAN's wrist and has him at his mercy. BRANDON gives the wrist a violent twist, looking, suddenly, entirely malicious.

RAGLAN unexpectedly and actually shouting...

RAGLAN

Ow!

BRANDON still grips RAGLAN's wrist.

RUPERT

Mr. Raglan, we cannot on every occasion be Strong, but it is always possible to be Silent. What *is* he doing to you?

BRANDON releases RAGLAN.

INT. APPROVE OF MURDER? - NIGHT

RAGLAN

I thought he'd bust my arm. I say, Brandon, you don't know your own strength, you know.
(rubbing his arm)
You gave me an awful foul tug.

BRANDON

Kenneth, I'm profoundly sorry. Really.

RAGLAN

No. That's all right.
(moving to Leila again)
That's what you used to do to me at school...
(to Leila)
So I'm not your Strong Man after all.

LEILA

Never mind. You come back to the Mother Heart. I think he's a beast.

BRANDON

No, Leila. Only a desperate criminal, that's all. You must forgive me.

LEILA

All right. I'll forgive you. There was room in her heart even for the lowest of God's creatures -- a criminal and an outcast...

RUPERT

How fearfully interested in crime we all seem to-night. Why poor Brandon can't be allowed to commit his own murders in quiet I don't know.

LEILA

Ah, but I'm a sleuth. I'm professionally interested, you see.

RAGLAN

Pearl White?

LEILA

Yes. That's right. Pearl White. Besides, it's a simple question of bringing assassins to justice.

RUPERT

Oh -- how would you do that?

LEILA

Why -- by having them arrested, of course.

RUPERT

Oh -- would that do it? I have heard of assassins being brought to the Old Bailey, but I have seldom heard of them being brought to justice. I hope you're not confusing the two.

LEILA

Well, what's wrong with the Old Bailey, anyway?

RUPERT

My dear Leila, its blemish is single but ineradicable. It is human. Justice is not.

BRANDON

Hear, hear!

RAGLAN

Oh, I say -- are you one of those people who don't approve of capital punishment?

RUPERT
I think, possibly, I approve of
murder too much to approve of
capital punishment.

LEILA
(together)
Approve of murder!

RAGLAN
(together)
Approve of murder!

BRANDON looks at RUPERT sharply.

RUPERT
My dear Leila, there are *so* many
people that I would *so* willingly
murder -- *particularly* the
members of my own family -- and
including the aunt so felicitously
described by Mr. Raglan as living
in Bayswater -- that it would be
positively disingenuous to say
that I don't approve of murder.
Furthermore, I have already
committed murder myself.

BRANDON
How do you get that?

RUPERT
It is all simply a question of
scale. You, my friends, have,
paradoxically, a horror of murder
on a small scale, a veneration
for it on a large scale. That is
the difference between what we
call murder and war. One
gentleman murders another in a
back alleyway in London for, let
us say, since you have suggested
it, the gold fillings in his
teeth, and all society shrieks
out for revenge upon the
miscreant. They call that murder.
But when the entire youth and
manhood of a whole nation rises
up to slaughter the entire youth
and manhood of another, not even
for the gold fillings in each
other's teeth, then society
condones and applauds the outrage,
and calls it war.

(MORE)

RUPERT (CONT'D)

How, then, can I say that I disapprove of murder, seeing that I have, in the last Great War, acted on these assumptions myself? A lamentable thing, certainly, and responsible for the fact that to-night, instead of being able to fool around the gramophone with you two -- a thing I should very much like to have done -- I have to hobble about like an old man, on one leg. But the point is that I have proved that I don't disapprove of murder. Haven't I?

LEILA

No. You've done nothing of the sort. You'd be the first to be horrified by murder if it happened under your own nose.

RUPERT

I wonder.

Pause.

LEILA

Besides, you must have *some* moral standards.

RUPERT

Must I? I don't recall any.

LEILA

Don't be absurd. You wouldn't hurt a fly.

RUPERT

Wouldn't I? I've hurt thousands in my time.

There is a pause.

INT. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS - NIGHT

RUPERT and LEILA begin talking at the same time.

LEILA

(together)
Well, I call --

RUPERT
 (together)
 Anyway, perhaps --

LEILA
 No, do go on.

RUPERT
 No, do go on, please.

LEILA
 No, do go on.

RUPERT
 (together)
 All I was going to say --

LEILA
 (together)
 I was merely about to --

RUPERT
 I'm very sorry.

LEILA
 No, do go on.

RUPERT
 Shall we toss up?

LEILA
 Well, all I was going to say --

RUPERT
 Yes?

LEILA
 All I was going to say is, that I
 call that a jolly good parcel.

LEILA holds up her parcel.

BRANDON
 Excellent.

LEILA
 Well, now what were you going to say?

RUPERT
 I've really no idea... What are
 your own moral standards, then,
 Leila?

LEILA

Mine?

BRANDON

Oh, Leila believes in the Ten Commandments, doesn't she?

RUPERT

Oh, no. Surely not.

RAGLAN

Why, what's wrong with the Ten Commandments?

RUPERT

Nothing whatever. Indeed, I have no doubt that they were of the profoundest significance to the nomadic needs of the tribe to whom they were delivered. Their inadequacy and irrelevance for to-day, though, must be sufficient to condemn them. I have often attempted to discover whether it is within the range of any of us to observe each one of them. Honor my father and mother, of course I do. How could I do otherwise? Indeed, on the occasion of my birthday, I have never failed to send them a telegram of congratulation. Though whether this will make my days any longer in the land which has been given us must remain in doubt. But look at the others. Keep the Sabbath day. I don't. Take not the name of the Lord in vain. I do. Thou shalt not murder. But I have done murder, as I have explained.

BRANDON

And the seventh, Rupert?

RUPERT

Committed. Since infancy.

(beat)

Thou shalt not steal. But property itself, as Proudhon has explained to us, is theft. And I am a man of property. Moreover, these are your matches.

(MORE)

RUPERT (CONT'D)

(He produces a box of matches)
Indeed the only clause I am sincerely capable of adhering to is the little stricture concerning my neighbor's ox and my neighbor's ass. Few and far between as are my neighbors who own oxen, and few and farther between as are my neighbors who own asses, I honestly think I could face either type, in an emergency, with a pure heart. But then it might be different if I lived in a rural district.

INT. THE PERILS OF MOTIVELESS MURDER - NIGHT

LEILA

Well, anyway, I still say that you'd never commit a murder. Your conscience wouldn't let you.

RUPERT

Ah, but have I a conscience?

BRANDON

He's quite right. And for one who hasn't a conscience, I can understand murder being an entirely engrossing adventure.

RUPERT

You mean a motiveless murder?

BRANDON

Yes.

RAGLAN

Yes. That really does happen sometimes, doesn't it? You do get people who murder purely sort of for the fun of the thing, don't you?

LEILA

What a peculiar idea of fun.

RAGLAN

No, but I've heard of cases like that.

RUPERT

Certainly you have. And I for one can certainly enter into the excitement of it. The only trouble about that sort of thing is that you're bound to be found out.

BRANDON

(rather too quickly)
Why should you be found out?

Pause.

RUPERT

Because, dear Brandon, that sort of murder would not be a motiveless murder at all. It would have a quite clear motive. Vanity. It would be a murder of vanity. And because of that, the criminal would be quite unable to keep from talking about it, or showing it off -- in *some* fantastic way or another. The trouble with that sort of murderer is that he can't keep quiet about it. He won't hide it up. He wants to boast about it -- and say something -- do something -- it may be something only just slightly *outrø* -- which gives him away. They have always done it and they always will.

BRANDON

But then suppose your murderer -- your really ideal, brilliantly clever and competent murderer -- a genius at it, I mean -- suppose he was alive to the fact that vanity was the Achilles heel to the thing, and went specially out of his way to see that he wasn't caught like that. I'm talking of a genius at it.

RUPERT

(looking at him)
Oh yes. But then he'd never be able to keep from talking about the very fact that he was so brilliantly clever, as you put it. So he'd give himself away just the same.

BRANDON

Yes. But he *might* be so clever.

RUPERT

Might. But wouldn't.

(beat; looking to Brandon)

Don't you think so?

There is a roll of thunder in the distance.

INT. I MUST BE GOING - NIGHT

RAGLAN

Ah -- here we are. It's coming back again.

BRANDON

(going over to the window)

Lord, yes. I'm getting sick of this storm.

LEILA

Yes. So am I. I say, you know, it's really about time I ought to be going.

RAGLAN

Yes. Same here, really.

RUPERT

(dryly)

What an uncanny coincidence. Now you'll both be able to go together.

There is another, louder, clap of thunder.

LEILA

I say -- isn't it *absolutely* awful?

RAGLAN

Isn't it terrible?

(to Brandon)

Are you really still going, you two?

BRANDON

Certainly. It's probably only just around London. Besides -- it's not so bad now. It's not raining, as a matter of fact, now, if you're thinking of getting off.

LEILA

No -- that's what I thought.

RAGLAN

Same here.

RUPERT

Which is another curious coincidence.

LEILA

Oh, do shut up ---

The telephone rings.

BRANDON

Ah-ha...

BRANDON goes over to the telephone and sits down at it. The others listen to the following in complete silence.

BRANDON

(into the telephone)

Hallo... Hallohallohallo... Yes...

Mayfair X142... Hallo... Yes...

There is another clap of thunder.

BRANDON

Hallo... Sorry -- I can't hear.

It's thundering this end...

What?... Who??... Who?... Oh!...

Yes. Yes, rather. Will you hold the line a minute and I'll get him. Right you are. Just hold on.

(he rises)

Sir Johnstone...

BRANDON exits.

INT. SIR JOHNSTONE MUST LEAVE - NIGHT

There is a silence. RAGLAN grins at LEILA. She grins back, then, moves down to the fireplace and looks into the fire. RUPERT rises very abruptly. He hobbles over to the sideboard and pours himself out a stiff drink. He gulps at it, takes some more, and gulps again. He seems, for the first time, rather nervous. He sits on the chest.

The voices of SIR JOHNSTONE and BRANDON are heard coming from the other room, then along the passage,

SIR JOHNSTONE and BRANDON enter. SIR JOHNSTONE has obviously had a very satisfactory time with the books. He leaves off talking and goes cheerfully over to the telephone and takes up the receiver.

The others are perfectly still during the following.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Hallo -- hallo -- hallo... Hallo,
hallo...

(to the others)

No-one here... Oh, hallo --
yes?... Oh, yes. That you, dear?
Oh yes?... Ye-e-e-es... Ye-e-e-
es... No, no... He's not here...
Yes, yes that's right.

GRANILLO and MRS DEBENHAM enter. GRANILLO is talking, but immediately senses the silence of the others, and becomes as quiet as them.

SIR JOHNSTONE turns around and looks at them for a moment as he listens on the telephone, and then turns back again.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Yes, yes. That's quite correct...
Quite right, dear... What? Oh,
no, no. He'll be back soon, I
expect. Probably held up in
the -- What?... Oh yes, dear...
Well -- I'll be back there soon
now. I'll be coming pretty well
straight away... What?... Yes...
Right you are. Right you are...
Good-bye.

SIR JOHNSTONE puts the receiver down. He looks thoughtful and suddenly a trifle older and more lonely.

SIR JOHNSTONE

(beat)

Ronald hasn't come back...

RUPERT

Hasn't come back?

SIR JOHNSTONE looks first at RUPERT and then in front of him.

SIR JOHNSTONE

No...

GRANILLO

Oh, that's the storm.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Yes. That's what it must be.

RUPERT

(acidly)
 Didn't you say that he'd been to
 the Coliseum?

SIR JOHNSTONE

That's right.

RUPERT

I am disliking the telephone to-
 night.

BRANDON

Was he expected back, then, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE

Yes. Apparently he arranged to
 get back to tea. My wife gets so
 alarmed if there's any hitch.

BRANDON

He'll probably be back by the
 time you get home.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Yes... yes, I expect he will.

(brightening)

Well, we must be off. Where did
 we leave our hats and coats?
 Oh -- downstairs.

BRANDON

Yes. I'll go and get them.

BRANDON exits.

GRANILLO pours himself another drink.

LEILA

(to Sir Johnstone)

Well -- we've got your parcel all
 ready.

LEILA show the parcel to SIR JOHNSTONE.

SIR JOHNSTONE

Oh -- that *is* sweet of you.
 Thank you very much. That's a
 wonderful parcel, isn't it?

LEILA

Well, it's not bad, is it?

SIR JOHNSTONE
 I should say not. Yes...
 (he becomes rather listless)
 That's very convenient...

BRANDON enters with SIR JOHNSTONE's hat and coat.

BRANDON
 Here you are, Sir Johnstone. And
 it's not raining now.

BRANDON helps SIR JOHNSTONE on with his coat.

BRANDON
 But I do expect you'd like a taxi,
 wouldn't you?

SIR JOHNSTONE
 Yes. I think I'd like a taxi.
 I'd rather like to get back. I
 can't think where that boy's got
 to... Thank you. I've never
 known him fail when he's said
 he'd be back.

BRANDON
 Then he must be very filial, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE
 Yes. He is. Well, then, it only
 remains to thank you for the most
 charming evening, to say nothing
 of the most charming company, the
 company being even more delightful
 than the books, and that's saying
 an enormous amount.

(he smiles)
 Well.
 (to Leila)
 Good-night --

LEILA
 Good-night.

SIR JOHNSTONE
 (to Raglan)
 Good-night.

RAGLAN
 Good-night, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE
 Good-night, Mr. Cadell.

RUPERT
Good-night, sir.

During the following RUPERT moves to the window and looks out.

GRANILLO pours another drink.

SIR JOHNSTONE looks at GRANILLO.

SIR JOHNSTONE
(moving toward the door)
And I'll have to give you
something in exchange for those
books, you know.

BRANDON
Never, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE
Oh, yes. You must have something
back. You must have some swaps,
as we used to say. You must have
your swaps. Oh yes...

BRANDON
No, you're forgetting them, sir.

LEILA brings the books to SIR JOHNSTONE and puts them shyly
and kindly into his hand.

SIR JOHNSTONE
Ah -- thank you. That won't do,
will it? Just like me. Just
like me. I'm getting on, you
know. I'm getting old, that's my
trouble.

SIR JOHNSTONE exits in a rather bewildered way, followed by
BRANDON.

MRS DEBENHAM smiles a farewell all round. The others all
murmur "Goo-night" and smile.

MRS DEBENHAM exits. GRANILLO follows her out.

INT. RAGLAN, LEILA & RUPERT LEAVE - NIGHT

LEILA
(yawning)
Oh dear. Well -- I'm going, too.

RAGLAN
What part do you have to go to?

LEILA

Oh -- I'm South Kensingtonish.

RAGLAN

Oh, then we'll get a taxi, shall we? And I'll drop you.

RUPERT

(moving DS)

Where, then, do you live, Mr. Raglan.

RAGLAN

Me? Oh -- I live up at Hampstead.

RUPERT

Oh, I see. Then it'll be quite easy to drop her.

LEILA

I wish you'd drop your sarcastic remarks.

RUPERT

Pardon, pardon. I crave your pardon. I'm always suspecting "Love's Young"...

RUPERT gives a ferocious bow with his stick on his chest as he brings out the next word...

RUPERT

... Dream" when it's non-existent.

BRANDON and GRANILLO enter. GRANILLO is still staggering slightly.

BRANDON

Well, well.

LEILA

Well -- I suppose we must go now.

BRANDON

Oh -- won't you stay and have another spot?

LEILA

Oh, no. I don't think so. Thanks awfully. I think I ought to be going.

RAGLAN

Yes. Same here, really.

RUPERT
Yes, I thought so.

LEILA looks at GRANILLO reproachfully.

LEILA
(to Brandon)
Well, if you're still going to-
night, I certainly wouldn't let
him drive.

GRANILLO
Whadyoumean?

BRANDON
I will not, Leila. You may be
sure. You ought to be ashamed of
yourself, Granno.

LEILA
He certainty ought.

GRANILLO
Whadyoumean?

GRANILLO tries to grin. He moves to the sideboard and pours
a drink during the following.

RAGLAN looks nervous and shy.

LEILA
(departingly)
Well... ?

BRANDON
Well... ?

RAGLAN
Well... ?

LEILA, BRANDON and RAGLAN exit.

RUPERT follows them to the door but stops there.

RUPERT
Good-night, Granillo.

GRANILLO turns round as though startled.

GRANILLO
Good-night, Rupert.

RUPERT exits.

INT. IN THE CLEAR? - NIGHT

GRANILLO sips at his drink and looks in front of him blankly and miserably. He staggers DS to a chair and bangs his glass down on the table. He puts his head in his hands.

BRANDON enters the doorway with a little smile of satisfaction on his lips. He goes over to the window and draws the curtains to, then moves to the sideboard and pours himself out a drink.

BRANDON

Well?

GRANILLO speaks from behind his hands.

GRANILLO

Well?

BRANDON picks up his drink with relish.

BRANDON

All's well.

He moves down to the chest and plants his foot on it.

GRANILLO

God! I thought he got on to it.

BRANDON

Who? Rupert?

GRANILLO

Yes.

BRANDON

Yes. So did I. For a few moments. But that's what gave piquancy to the evening. He hadn't.

GRANILLO

You're sure he hadn't?

BRANDON

Quite sure.

(he drinks; beat)

I sometimes rather wish he had. God. Rupert. Queer lad. I wonder.

(reflectively)

If he had been with us he wouldn't have got drunk, Granno.

GRANILLO
 I not drunk -- I'm a little
 blurred, that's all.
 (he sits up)
 Hallo! What's that?

BRANDON
 What?

GRANILLO
 I thought I heard something.

BRANDON
 Be yourself, Granno.

GRANILLO
 I thought it was the bell.

There is a pause. Both listen.

The bell is heard ringing.

INT. LEFT YOUR CIGARETTE CASE? - NIGHT

GRANILLO
 It was! It was!

BRANDON
 (sipping his drink; evenly)
 Well.
 (he gulps)
 What of it?
 (he carefully finishes
 his drink)
 I'll go down.

BRANDON puts down his glass and exits.

There is a long pause. GRANILLO looks in front of him steadily.

The voices of BRANDON and RUPERT are heard from downstairs.

BRANDON enters suddenly, obviously having run up the stairs.

BRANDON moves to the mantelpiece, rather flustered.

BRANDON
 It's Rupert. He's left his
 cigarette case behind, apparently.
 Have you seen it?

GRANILLO
 No.

BRANDON looks at one table, then at the chest, then at the second table.

BRANDON
Well, it must be here somewhere.

RUPERT appears in the doorway. He has his overcoat on, and his hat in his hand.

For a moment neither BRANDON nor GRANILLO sees RUPERT. Then BRANDON sees him.

BRANDON
Hallo. You came up?

RUPERT
Yes...

RUPERT slowly takes off his coat, and places it, with his hat, on the divan. He moves DS.

BRANDON and GRANILLO watch RUPERT intently.

RUPERT
I thought you might give me another spot.

RUPERT sits down.

CURTAIN

INT. WHY DID YOU COME BACK, RUPERT - NIGHT

The scene is the same as before, and no time has elapsed.

BRANDON
You're welcome, Rupert.

BRANDON moves to the sideboard and pours RUPERT a whisky.

RUPERT calmly produces his cigarette case from his hip pocket and holds it up.

RUPERT
I beg your pardon. Humbly.

BRANDON
(from the sideboard)
Why?
(he sees the cigarette case)
Oh! You ass!
(he indicates the soda siphon)
Just a splash, Rupert?

RUPERT

Yes. A generous one.

BRANDON squirts soda water into the glass then takes it over to RUPERT.

RUPERT takes a cigarette from the case and lights it. He takes the whisky from BRANDON..

BRANDON sits on the chest.

RUPERT

Oh, dear heavens! What unmentionable fatigue.

BRANDON

What?

RUPERT

Living, living, living. I wonder if this is a way out.

(he looks at his glass)

I shall try Omarism one day.

"The mighty Mahmud, the victorious lord,

Whom all the mis-believing and black horde

Of fears and *horrors*

(rather stressed)

that infest the soul,

Scatters and slays with this enchanted sword."

Granno seems to agree with that.

BRANDON

Yes. But he's not going to get any more.

RUPERT

You're in a horrible state tonight, Granillo. You're positively silent drunk.

GRANILLO rises and goes over to the mantelpiece for a cigarette.

GRANILLO

Oh -- I'm all right.

He lights the cigarette and returns to his seat, walking quite fairly steadily.

RUPERT

I say. Must we have all this light?

GRANILLO

What's wrong with the light?

RUPERT

Nothing is *wrong* with the light, Granillo. Only I am a creature of half-lights, and seeing that you have a very pleasantly shaded little table lamp, can't we make use of it?

BRANDON rises and moves to the lamp.

BRANDON

Yes, I quite agree.

BRANDON switches the lamp on and moves to the light switch by the door.

INT. FIVE AND TWENTY TO ELEVEN - NIGHT

BRANDON

But I hope you're not going to settle down *too* heavily, and make yourself *too* much at home, because we've got to be off before long.

BRANDON switches the overhead lights off.

The room is lit by the table lamp only.

RUPERT

Ah -- that's better.
(crosses his legs and leans back)
Much better. I am sad to-night, you know. What's the time?

BRANDON

(looks at the clock)
About five-and-twenty to eleven.

RUPERT

Five-and-twenty to eleven. I expect you're wanting to get rid of me, aren't you?

BRANDON

Not at all, Rupert.

RUPERT

I hope not. I'm full of melancholy, and don't want to go home... You must bear with me... It's been such a strange evening...

BRANDON

Strange evening -- why?

GRANILLO

(quickly)

Why strange?

RUPERT

I can't tell you. That's my trouble. I suppose it's the thunder, and one thing and another.

(he drinks)

Thunder always upsets me. Besides, I'm always melancholy at this hour. Five-and-twenty to eleven. It's a curious hour... Did you ever read Goldsmith's *Nightpiece*?

BRANDON

No. I can't actually recall it.

RUPERT

No? You should. It's about the city at night. I shall do his *Nightpiece* up to date one of these days. And I shall make it five-and-twenty to eleven. Now. It's a wonderful hour. I am particularly susceptible to it.

BRANDON

Why so wonderful?

RUPERT

Because it is, I think, the hour when London asks why -- when it wants to know what it's all about -- when the tedium of activity and the folly of pleasure are equally transparent. It is the hour in which unemployed servant girls, and the spoiled beauties of slums, walk the streets for hire... It is the hour of winking advertisement signs, and taxis, and buses, and traffic blocks. It is the hour when jaded London theater audiences are settling down in the darkness to the last acts of plays, of which they know the denouement only too well. They know that when the curtain's down, it'll be just a question of "God Save The King", and they'll be bundled out into a chilly and possibly rainy night, where they'll have to fight for taxis, or rush for trains, or somehow transport themselves home to a cold supper and the prospect of another day to-morrow exactly similar to that which has passed. For others, further horrors are awaiting. The nightclubs and cabarets have not yet begun, but they will do so very soon... I could enlarge upon the idea indefinitely. Five-and-twenty to eleven. A horrible hour -- a *macabre* hour, for it is not only the hour of pleasure ended, it is the hour when pleasure itself has been found wanting. There, that is what this hour means to me, and it has, moreover, been thundery. Five-and-twenty to eleven...

BRANDON

Yes, Rupert, but by the time you have finished making your speech it will be eleven o'clock. In brief, my dear Rupert, you see no earthly object in living?

RUPERT

I fear not. Do you?

BRANDON

I? Yes. Of course I do. But then I'm interested in things. Why don't you get interested in things? Why don't you take up exploring, or cricket, or making love, or golf, or finance, or lecturing, or something?

RUPERT

Or, as you suggested this evening, murder.

Pause

INT. WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE US OFF - NIGHT

BRANDON

Or, as you say, murder.
(he finishes his drink
and switches the
overhead light on)
Now, Rupert. We don't want to
turn you out...

RUPERT

Oh, surely you're not going to do that? Surely you're not going to spoil my mood?

BRANDON

No. We're not going to spoil any of your moods, but we've got to get going some time. And we've got a bit of packing to do and one thing and another.

RUPERT

Oh, you really mustn't spoil my mood. I shall write something to-night if I go on like this. You can't be so cruel. Can't I have another drink?

BRANDON comes down to RUPERT for his glass and takes it back to the sideboard again.

BRANDON

Certainly, Rupert. There's no hurry whatever. Only a poetic frame of mind will hardly be induced by the spectacle of Granno and me filling suitcases.

RUPERT

Oh, I certainly think it would. Can't I stay and watch you?

BRANDON

(giving Rupert his drink)
Well -- we'll see. You know, I believe you're a bit blotto to-night too, Rupert.

RUPERT

I wouldn't be surprised.
(he drinks)
I'll tell you what -- I'll stay and see you off.

GRANILLO rises suddenly and pours himself out another enormous drink. BRANDON goes over to him.

BRANDON

That's enough of that, Granno.

GRANILLO

Mind your own business.

BRANDON

Come along, Granno. That's enough.

GRANILLO bangs his glass on the sideboard.

GRANILLO

(louder)
Mind your own business!

GRANILLO moves DS.

BRANDON

(coming DS)
Well, it's not my business.
(brightly)
Stay and see us off, Rupert? All right. You finish that and see what you feel about it. Doesn't look as though we'll get off with Granno in this state.

GRANILLO

I'm perf'ly sober. Why does he want to stay'n see us off? That's what I want to know. Why does he want to stay'n see us off?

BRANDON

By dear Granno. Rupert has no earthly reason in wanting to stay and see us off, and I don't know what you're talking about. There's no doing anything with you. I'm getting sick of this. Come along, Rupert, finish that up and leave him with me.

There is a pause during which RUPERT looks at BRANDON.

RUPERT

Oh, I've got to go, then?

There is a long pause in which BRANDON and GRANILLO both look at RUPERT.

BRANDON

(very quietly and securely)
What do you mean, Rupert? You've "got to go"?

RUPERT

Oh. Nothing. I thought for a moment that perhaps you wanted me to go as well.

BRANDON

Nothing of the sort. I was getting fed up with all this silly chatter, and wanted to be alone with Granno, that's all. I don't want you to go.

RUPERT

You don't?

BRANDON

No.

RUPERT

All right, then. I'll stay. Can I have another drink?

RUPERT holds out his glass.

GRANILLO
I said so! I said so...

BRANDON
(putting on a grin)
You're in a queer mood to-night,
Rupert, too.

BRANDON takes RUPERT's glass to the sideboard.

RUPERT
No -- not a queer mood. An
inspired mood, rather. One has
inspirations, you know.
Extraordinary inspirations. And
I have one to-night.

BRANDON
Oh -- what's that?

RUPERT
Ah -- I'll tell you that, perhaps.

GRANILLO rises and goes towards the window. RUPERT rises
and stops him on the way.

INT. THE TICKET PRESENTS ITSELF - NIGHT

RUPERT
You haven't such a thing as a pin,
Granillo, have you?

GRANILLO
A what?

RUPERT
A pin.

GRANILLO
(feeling in his lapel)
Yes.

GRANILLO gives RUPERT the pin.

RUPERT
Thank you.

RUPERT puts the pin straight into his own lapel.

GRANILLO moves to the window.

BRANDON brings RUPERT's drink to him.

RUPERT

Ah -- thank you.
 (he takes a sip)
 I shan't be long now.

BRANDON

No hurry.

BRANDON looks at the clock, and then goes to the cupboard on the sideboard, and puts bottles and things away during the following.

BRANDON

It's past a quarter to, though.
 (he yawns)
 Oh Lord, I don't feel like
 driving to-night after all.

RUPERT

No -- there's something in the
 air to-night.

RUPERT takes the Coliseum ticket from his waistcoat pocket, and very calmly pins it on the outside of his lapel.

RUPERT

Did you notice Sir Johnstone's exit?

RUPERT touches the ticket as though it were a flower.

BRANDON continues to put bottles away.

BRANDON

(casually)
 No -- what about it?

RUPERT

Rather subdued, I thought.
 (he finishes off his drink)
 And pathetic. Well, well, I must
 be going.

RUPERT rises. GRANILLO is at the window, BRANDON at the cupboard; neither sees RUPERT. He hesitates, and then slowly hobbles to GRANILLO at the window. He opens the window and leans out.

RUPERT

What's it doing?

GRANILLO

S'better now.

RUPERT remains at the window, looking out. GRANILLO moves down to the chest. He looks at BRANDON, who looks at him. They exchange a satisfied glance. GRANILLO sits on the chest, hands in pockets, reeling a little.

RUPERT suddenly shuts the window, turns around, leans against the sill, and looks at BRANDON and GRANILLO. They still do not observe him. Then he hobbles DS, and, putting his stick on his chest, he leans his face on his hands thoughtfully.

RUPERT
Ah, well. And so to bed.

BRANDON puts the last bottle away, and moves a little toward RUPERT.

BRANDON
Well, Rupert -- thank you very
much for coming round and all that...

RUPERT remains in the same position, nodding his head.

RUPERT
The pleasure is mine. Mine
altogether. Believe me.

RUPERT brings his stick down and stands properly.

GRANILLO rises, sobered completely, and stares at RUPERT in horror.

RUPERT
It's been a very interesting evening.

BRANDON
Hallo -- what's your button-hole?

RUPERT looks first at BRANDON, and then at GRANILLO. He stays perfectly still, watching GRANILLO.

GRANILLO
(slowly and tensely)
He's got it.
(nodding)
He's got it.

BRANDON
Hold your tongue, Granno.

GRANILLO hysterically, not listening to BRANDON.

GRANILLO

Oh yes. He's got it all right.
Ah-ah-ah-ah!

GRANILLO gives a terrible, piercing, falsetto scream, and bangs on his chest as he says the following.

BRANDON shakes GRANILLO and shouts even louder.

GRANILLO

(together)
He's got it! He's got it! He's
got it!

BRANDON

(together, he's
shaking Granillo
shouting even louder)
Hold your tongue! Hold your
tongue! Hold your tongue!

RUPERT hobbles DR.

GRANILLO groans and staggers against the chest.

GRANILLO

Oh -- oh -- oh.

GRANILLO gives a low, long drawn-out, shuddering sob; during the following he sinks down beside the chest, still sobbing and breathing hard.

BRANDON

(with restrained violence)
Hold your row! Hold your row!

BRANDON moves in the direction of RUPERT.

INT. THE WHISTLE - NIGHT

BRANDON

Rupert.

RUPERT

Yes.

BRANDON

Rupert. This has nothing to do with you. Granno and I have a certain trouble between us which concerns no-one else. Will you kindly oblige us by going at once and leaving us to it?

RUPERT

(looks down to his stick)
 Won't you tell me your trouble,
 Brandon? I might be able to help.

BRANDON

No. I will not tell you our
 trouble.
 (he moves toward the door)
 Please go. It's nothing to do
 with you.

RUPERT

(still looking at his stick)
 No, Brandon, it may not be
 anything to do with me. But it
 may possibly be something to do
 with -- with the public in
 general -- and I'm its only
 representative in this room.
 Won't you tell me?

BRANDON comes forward menacingly, and, to his surprise,
 RUPERT comes forward to meet him.

BRANDON

Are you going, or are you not?

They glare into each other's eyes. There is a slow moan
 from GRANILLO.

Pause.

RUPERT

No, Brandon. I'm not going. You
 see, I'm rather awkwardly situated...

BRANDON is more menacing still.

BRANDON

(a change in his tone)
 You are something more than that,
 my friend.

RUPERT holds his ground.

RUPERT

(a trifle breathlessly)
 Oh -- how's that?

BRANDON

You are very dangerously situated.

BRANDON suddenly moves forward.

RUPERT retreats, putting up his stick to protect himself. BRANDON seizes it without the slightest difficulty, and brings it down to a horizontal level. They each hold firmly to the stick and gaze at the other.

BRANDON
Very dangerously situated, indeed.

RUPERT
(beat)
Brandon. I am lame, and I have no protection.

BRANDON
You have not.

RUPERT
Save that of my foresight.

BRANDON
Your foresight?

RUPERT pulls on the handle of the stick and withdraws a blade from it -- revealing it as a sword-stick. There is a flash of steel. BRANDON is left with the empty wooden sheath in his hand.

RUPERT
But this is a compensation as well as an encumbrance.

RUPERT hobbles sideways US quickly, with the sword between him and the others.

RUPERT
Besides, I have another little weapon, which is of even greater value to me.

RUPERT produces a little silver whistle.

BRANDON
What's that?

RUPERT
This?
(holds it up)
A whistle. A policeman gave it to me.

BRANDON walks rapidly over to RUPERT. RUPERT puts himself in a defensive position. BRANDON pauses, and then goes over to pour himself a drink.

INT. LET ME LOOK INSIDE THE CHEST - NIGHT

BRANDON

(quite calmly)

Oh! And when did he give you that?

RUPERT

He gave it to me twenty minutes ago. Before I came back -- for my cigarette case. He is now waiting for me to use it. He is waiting at the corner. It depends upon you whether I shall use it or not.

BRANDON

What do you want from me, Rupert?

RUPERT

I want two things -- two truths. I want the truth about this ticket here

(he tears it off his jacket)
and the truth about that chest there -- or rather its contents.

BRANDON

I can satisfy you on both. As for the ticket, I know nothing whatever about it. As for the chest, I simply do not know what you mean.

RUPERT

You have succeeded in satisfying me on neither.

BRANDON

(moving a little toward Rupert)

Rupert, I have come to the conclusion that you are hopelessly drunk and that you had better go home.

RUPERT

It is possible that I am drunk -- but not hopelessly. And I am not going home.

BRANDON

What is all this about? What is all this maudlin suspiciousness?

RUPERT

This is not maudlin suspiciousness, Brandon. It is well-founded. From the first moment, when I telephoned this house at a quarter to nine, and heard, over the wire, your friend there
 (points to Granillo)
 crying for the dark, suspicion was there. And that suspicion has been growing ever since.

BRANDON

Growing ever since? Growing ever since! What do you mean? What do you suspect?

RUPERT

I suspect murder, Brandon. The murder of Ronald Kentley.

BRANDON

Rupert. Have you gone mad?

RUPERT

I dare say so. Perhaps you will prove that I have.

BRANDON

You suspect *what*, did you say?

RUPERT

Murder, Brandon.

BRANDON

(feigning relief)
 On, my God! My poor, poor Rupert! You don't know how you've relieved me. I imagined you'd got on to the real truth, which'd have been devilish awkward. Murder! Oh dear, that's good
 (to Granillo on the ground)
 Hear that, Granno. He suspects us of murder! Murder! Isn't that too rich?

RUPERT

Is it possible that you are trying to bluff me?

BRANDON

Bluff you -- you drunken sot and maniac! Bluff you! Get on out of here! Blow your whistle, and bring your policeman in! Get on out! Do what you like!

RUPERT

Ah -- perhaps I am insane, then. But since you say I can do what I like, may I see the inside of that chest?

BRANDON

See the inside of that chest!
See the inside of that chest!
You can see the inside of fifty thousands chests! Get on out!

RUPERT

(very calmly)

I did not ask to see the inside of fifty thousands chests, Brandon, but to see the inside of that specific chest. And I cannot do that if I have to "get on out".

BRANDON

You're mad and drunk!

RUPERT

Possibly. Nevertheless, may I look inside that chest?

BRANDON

(shouting)

Yes!

There is a tremendous and baffling silence. RUPERT hobbles DL, and pauses to look at BRANDON in a puzzled way, then hobbles towards the window and looks at him again in the same way. He moves DC.

INT. YOU SWINE! - NIGHT

RUPERT

(beat)

Very well. I will.

There is another pause as they look at each other. BRANDON moves fairly near to the chest.

BRANDON

Go on. What are you waiting for?

RUPERT
You're very clever, Brandon, in
any case.

BRANDON
I wish I could say the same of
you, you fantastic ass.

BRANDON advances a little on RUPERT.

RUPERT
Will you get farthest away,
please? Will you go down to that
chair?

RUPERT points with the sword to the chair R.

BRANDON obeys. RUPERT pauses, then goes to the chest.
GRANILLO is still prostrate. RUPERT examines the lock and
tries to lift the lid.

RUPERT
It's locked -- padlocked.

RUPERT sits easily on the edge of the chest.

BRANDON
What of it?

RUPERT
Where's the key?

BRANDON
I don't know. Why should I know?
It's upstairs, I think.

RUPERT
Upstairs?

BRANDON
Yes. Shall I go and get it?

RUPERT
(rising)
No. Don't do that.

RUPERT moves over to the sideboard and picks up the silver
nutcrackers.

RUPERT
I can force it.

RUPERT moves DS again, looking at the others.

RUPERT
Must I do this?

There is no answer from BRANDON.

RUPERT
Must I do this?

BRANDON
(suddenly blazing)
Here's your key! Here's your key!

BRANDON fishes the key out of his waistcoat pocket and flings it down.

BRANDON
Now look -- and get what's coming to you!

RUPERT
Thank you.

RUPERT picks up the key and begins to fumble with the lock. BRANDON leaps forward, but RUPERT is too quick for him. He swings round into a sitting posture on the chest, and has his sword pointed at the other's breast.

BRANDON
You'll be sorry if you look in there, Cadell! You'll be sorry.

RUPERT
I'll take the risk. Will you go back to that chair?

BRANDON obeys. RUPERT goes on fumbling. He unlocks the chest. He pauses before opening the chest, and looks at BRANDON. Then he slowly lifts up the lid and looks in. There is a long pause. Suddenly the lid comes down with a smash. RUPERT literally runs, in so far as his lameness will allow him, toward the door. The thing has obviously appalled him more than he could have imagined. He turns and runs in the same way UC. There he stops completely overcome.

RUPERT
Oh -- you swine...

RUPERT wipes his hand across his mouth, his lips at once contemptuous and horror-struck.

RUPERT
You dirty swine...

RUPERT gives a shuddering sob.

INT. BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, RUPERT - NIGHT

BRANDON

(quietly)
Now then, Rupert. Sit down. I
want to talk to you.

RUPERT

Poor Ronald Kentley... What had
he done to you?

RUPERT moves DS a little.

BRANDON

Sit down, Rupert. For God's sake
sit down. I want to talk to you.

RUPERT

(pulling himself together)
Sit down, Brandon? What do you mean?

BRANDON stands.

BRANDON

(louder)
Sit down! For God's sake sit
down and listen. I want to explain!

RUPERT

Explain?

BRANDON

(giving way slightly)
Oh, sit down. For God's sake sit
down! I'm at your mercy, I tell
you. I'm at your mercy. Have
mercy on me! I can explain!
Have mercy on me! Sit down and
judge me! Sit down and judge me!

RUPERT slowly comes and sits DL.

RUPERT

Well?

BRANDON paces up towards the window before sitting DC. He
thinks, putting his face in his hands.

BRANDON

Rupert. You're an enlightened
man, aren't you?

RUPERT

I profess to be. Yes.

BRANDON

And it is in your power to have me -- hanged.

RUPERT

So it seems.

BRANDON

And Granillo, too.

RUPERT

And Granillo, too.

BRANDON

Rupert.

RUPERT

Yes.

BRANDON

You remember our talk to-night -- about the Old Bailey and justice?

RUPERT

Yes. Well.

BRANDON

And the difference between the two. You made the point.

RUPERT

Yes.

BRANDON

Yes. Well. Remember that. You wouldn't be giving us up to justice. And now I want to ask you something else. You are not a man of morals, are you?

RUPERT

No, I'm not.

BRANDON

And you do not rate life as a very precious thing, do you?

RUPERT

No.

BRANDON

Now listen, Rupert. Listen. I have done this thing. I and Granno. We have done it together. We have done it for -- for adventure. For adventure and danger. For danger. You read Nietzsche, don't you, Rupert?

RUPERT

Yes.

BRANDON

And you know that he tells us to live dangerously.

RUPERT

Yes.

BRANDON

And you know that he's no more respect for individual life than you, and tell us -- to -- live dangerously. We thought we would do so -- that's all. We have done so. We only have *done* the thing. Others have talked. We have done. Do you understand?

RUPERT

Go on.

BRANDON

Listen, Rupert, listen. You're understanding, I think. You're the one man to understand. Now apart from all that -- quite apart -- even if you can't see how we -- look at it, you'll see that you can't give us up. Two lives can't recall one. It'd just be triple murder. You would never allow that. But apart from that too -- our lives are in your hands. You can't kill us. You can't kill. If you have us up now, it'd be killing us as much as if you were to run us through with that sword in your hand. You're not a murderer, Rupert.

RUPERT

What are you?

BRANDON

We aren't, we aren't, I tell you!
Don't tell me you're a slave of
your period. In the days of
Borgias you'd have thought
nothing of this. For God's sake
tell me you're an emancipated man.
Rupert, you can't give us up.
You know you can't. You can't.
You can't! You can't...

(long beat)

Can you?

Pause.

RUPERT

Yes, I know. There's every truth
in what you've said. This is a
very queer, dark and
incomprehensible universe, and I
understand it little. I myself
have always tried to apply pure
logic to it, and the application
of logic can lead us into strange
passes. It has done so in this
case. You have brought up my own
words in my face, and a man
should stand by his own words. I
shall never trust in logic again.
You have said that I hold life
cheap. You're right. I do.
Your own included.

RUPERT rises.

BRANDON

What do you mean?

RUPERT suddenly lets himself go -- a thing he has not done
all the evening, and which he now does with a tremendous
force, and clear, angry articulation.

INT. RUPERT CASTS OFF HIS PHILOSOPHIES - NIGHT

RUPERT

What do I mean? What do I mean?
I mean that you have taken and
killed -- by strangulation -- a
very harmless and helpless
fellow-creature of twenty years.
I mean that in that chest
there -- now lie the staring and
futile remains of something that
four hours ago lived, and laughed,
and ran, and found it good.
Laughed as you could never laugh,
and ran as you could never run.
I mean that, for your cruel and
scheming pleasure, you have
committed a sin and blasphemy
against the very life which you
now find yourselves so precious.
And you have done more than this.
You have not only killed him; you
have rotted the lives of all
those to whom he was dear. And
you have brought worse than death
to his father -- an equally
harmless old man who has fought
his way quietly through to a
peaceful end, and to whom the
whole universe, after this, will
now be blackened and distorted
beyond the limits of thought.
That is what you have done. And
in dragging him around here to-
night, you have played a lewd and
infamous jest upon him -- and a
bad jest at that. And if you
think, as your type of philosopher
generally does, that all life is
nothing but a bad jest, then you
will now have the pleasure of
seeing it played upon yourselves.

BRANDON

(pale and frozen)

What are you saying? What are
you doing?

RUPERT

It is not what *I* am doing,
Brandon. It is what society is
going to do. And what will
happen to you at the hands of
society I am not in a position to
tell you. That's its own
business. But I can give you a
pretty shrewd guess, I think.

RUPERT moves forward to the chest and swings back the lid.

RUPERT

You are going to hang, you swine!
Hang! Both of you! Hang!

Whistle in hand, RUPERT runs hobbling to the window, throws
it open, leans out, and sends three piercing whistles into
the night.

CURTAIN