

GOSFORD PARK

a screenplay
by
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based upon an idea
by
Robert Altman and Bob Balaban

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Pre-Title Sequence

1 EXT. THE COUNTESS OF TRENTHAM'S HOUSE. DAY. NOVEMBER. 1932.

It is a grey day. Mary Maceachran, a young Scottish lady's maid, watches a liveried chauffeur trying to start a green 1920s Daimler in front of a London house. The chauffeur, Merriman, climbs out with a crank handle which he fits and turns.

MERRIMAN

Just start, you filthy heap of scrap.

MARY

She'll hear you one of these days.

MERRIMAN

I don't care if she does.

MARY

Don't you just?

The motor catches and he stands. While the passenger seats are enclosed, the front, driving seat is open to the weather. Mary places a basket with a thermos glass and a sealed, tin sandwich container on the rear seat. As she does so, it begins to rain.

BUTLER (VO)

Mary? Merriman? Are you ready?

With a final check, she looks up to where a butler in a black morning coat waits.

MARY

Yes, Mr Burkett.

We can hardly hear his "Everything's ready, milady," nor can we see the face behind the veil of the figure who hurries down the steps. This is Constance, Countess of Trentham. Muffled in furs against the cold, she hurries into the waiting vehicle.

The titles run over the following sequence.

2 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

Merriman drives. Mary sits silently next to him, huddling into her coat. Unlike the passenger, the servants, in the roofless front seat, are exposed to the rain.

3 INT. CONSTANCE'S CAR. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

Gloved hands try lazily to open the thermos, give up immediately and reach for the polished brass speaking tube. The veiled indistinct mouth gives some instructions.

4

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

They pull over and the dripping maid gets out as a large Lagonda stops. It is bright with shining chrome. It looks like Tomorrow next to the Daimler's Yesterday. A man in the front passenger seat looks out helpfully. He speaks in a Californian accent.

WEISSMAN

Do you need any help? Are you O.K.?

The door is open now and, behind the maid, the indistinct passenger speaks.

CONSTANCE

Am I what?

MARY

We're quite all right. Thank you.

IVOR

Excuse me but... is that... Lady Trentham?

Constance does not answer.

IVOR (CONT'D)

You don't remember me... I'm William McCordle's cousin. Ivor Novello.

At this Mary gasps in recognition but Constance merely nods.

CONSTANCE

Of course.

IVOR

May I present a friend of mine from California, Morris Weissman? And -

Having indicated the American on the passenger side in front, he has turned to a very handsome young man sitting behind but, on second thoughts, he breaks off.

IVOR (CONT'D)

I was wondering if we were all headed in the same direction...

CONSTANCE

I dare say we might be.

IVOR

Well... if you're sure you don't need any help...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary has opened the folding table for the refreshments. The other car drives away.

MARY

Was that really Ivor Novello?

CONSTANCE

Could we get on before I freeze to death?

The maid shuts the car door, climbs in and the journey continues. The credits end.

EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

The great house stands confidently in its park, proclaiming its social pre-eminence. As the car continues down the drive, it catches the attention of a beautiful woman who is cantering on her horse, Topaz. She wears jodphurs and a loosely tied neck scarf over her hacking jacket. This is Lady Sylvia McCordle, daughter of an earl and doyenne of Gosford. She digs in her heels and heads for the house.

As she arrives at the front steps, the Novello car is moving away to the side and Novello himself, with his companion, is being shepherded inside by the butler, Jennings. A footman (Arthur) holds an umbrella. With them is the owner of all he surveys, Sir William McCordle, bart, a rich parvenu and proud of it. In his arms he holds a wiry unattractive terrier. The arrival of Constance makes him turn back.

WILLIAM

Constance. Welcome.

The visitor nods as Sylvia jumps down from her horse, tossing the reins back over its head. She gives her aunt a kiss.

CONSTANCE

If he has to call me by my christian name, why can't he make it "Aunt Constance"? I'm not the upstairs maid.

SYLVIA

You know what he's like.

CONSTANCE

I see he's still got that vile dog.

SYLVIA

It's so typical. The ones you hate live forever. Have you had a horrid journey?

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
Fairly horrid.

SYLVIA
You must be frozen. Come and have some
tea.

Mary eyes the standing horse warily. With a snort, it shakes its head and, rather gingerly, she stretches out her hand to take the reins under the animal's chin. At once it starts to fidget and plunge. Sylvia looks across.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
Leave him alone. He knows what to do.

The embarrassed maid drops the reins as a groom appears and leads the docile horse away. Mary, of course, does not know what to do.

Sylvia and her aunt start up the steps but we do not follow as they move off camera.

Jennings steps forward.

JENNINGS
Take the car round the back to unload
it.

The car starts up and heads towards the side of the house. Still, Mary waits. Jennings looks over to the maid as he also starts to re-climb the front steps.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)
You'd better follow him. Mrs Wilson'll
look after you.

A lone figure, she trudges off through the puddles, clutching the dressing case, as the car carrying the Stockbridge party sweeps up to the front.

6 INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. DAY.

Chaos reigns. Servants duck past the piled up trunks and cases. Valets and maids (Barnes and Sarah, joined later by Renee and Robert) struggle to check that none of their luggage has gone to the wrong rooms. Surveying it all, clipboard in hand, is Mrs Wilson, the house-keeper, an opaque woman in her middle years. Barnes, who is carrying a large flat, crested case approaches. She does not look up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS WILSON

Just leave everything in one pile,
make sure it's properly labelled and
it'll be taken up.

BARNES

These are the guns. Where's the gun
room?

His voice could scarcely be more disdainful. She nods at a side
corridor.

MRS WILSON

At the end on the left. You'll find
the keeper, Mr Strutt, in there. He'll
show you what to do.

BARNES

I know what to do.

He goes as Mary arrives timidly, sheltering behind a laden
Merriman.

MRS WILSON

Yes?

MARY

Hello.

MERRIMAN

The Countess of Trentham.

Merriman has carried in the three smart cases. He knows the
ropes. Mrs Wilson nods and checks her list, handing a label to
the man.

MRS WILSON

Leave them over there by the luggage
lift and tie this to the top one.
You'll find the chauffeur, Mr Raikes,
in the courtyard. He'll tell you where
to put the car. You'll sleep in the
stable block with the grooms.

He sets about the task, leaving Mary feeling more alone than
ever.

MRS WILSON (CONT'D)

Her ladyship is in the Blue Damask
Room. You'll be sharing with the Head
Parlourmaid.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MRS WILSON (CONT'D)

She'll show you where everything is.
Elsie, this is Miss Trentham.

A young, uniformed maid, Elsie, turns at the sound of her name and comes near.

MARY

Excuse me, m'm, but... my name's
Maceachran...

ELSIE

Not here it's not.

Mrs Wilson has moved away as Elsie takes Mary's case.

MARY

What about the jewels?

She indicates the dressing case still in her hand.

ELSIE

This way. George is in charge of the
safe. He's the First Footman. And you
want to watch where he puts his hands...

They turn another corner in the maze of service corridors that run beneath the house. At the door of the Butler's Silver Pantry, stands a supercilious figure in livery. Next to him, just inside the room, is a large wall safe. The iron door is open revealing a felt-lined closet, filled with laden shelves. George, the first footman, is receiving a case from another maid (Renee). Mary takes a key on a chain around her neck under her dress and opens the case, removing the jewel box which she is about to hand over.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Have you got the ones for tonight?

MARY

Oh...

Mary unlocks the box. Inside are gleaming trays, each one with a complete parure of gems. She takes out a set of sapphires and puts them in the pocket of her coat.

ELSIE

Always take a separate box with the
first night's jewels. Saves bother.

Mary nods, re-locking the box and handing it over to George who gives her a wink as he takes it. As they walk away, re-crossing the back hall, they almost collide with a tall stranger carrying a suitcase. Mrs Wilson arrives.

(CONTINUED)

MRS WILSON

Elsie, this is Lord Stockbridge's valet. Show him the footmen's staircase, will you? And he'll need the ironing room.

She starts to leave. The new arrival turns to the two maids.

ROBERT

The name's Robert. Robert Parks.

This seems to halt the retreating Mrs Wilson. Robert looks at her enquiringly.

MRS WILSON

I meant to say you'll be sharing with Mr Weissman's man. You could have gone up together but I don't know where he's got to.

Other business claims her. Elsie sighs. They might as well get on with it.

ELSIE

Has his lordship's luggage gone up?

ROBERT

Supposedly. He's in the Tapestry Room wherever that is... Oh well, here, we go again.

But Mary cannot return his casual pleasantries. Instead she half whispers.

MARY

That's just it. I've never done a house-party before. Not properly...

ROBERT

You'll be all right.

Elsie, above them on the back stair, has overheard.

ELSIE

How d'you manage to be taken on as a countess's lady's maid if you didn't 'ave no experience?

MARY

She wants to train me. She said she didn't care about experience.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (4)

ELSIE

She didn't want to pay for it, you mean.

7 INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

A handsome face displays the brilliant smile of Henry Denton, Morris Weissman's valet. At the long table, the cook, Mrs Croft, is working on a tray of quail. The senior kitchen maid, Bertha, slices carrots and the junior, Ellen, slowly turns an ice-cream churn. They ogle the visitor who speaks in a Scottish accent.

MRS CROFT

Get on with your work. Yes?

HENRY

I just -

But before he can say more, Mrs Wilson spies him from the corridor and enters.

MRS WILSON

Ah, Mr Weissman, there you are.

MRS CROFT

I'm dealing with this. What is it, Mr Weissman?

The dislike between the two women is almost tangible.

HENRY

Well, to start with my name is Denton. Henry Denton.

MRS WILSON

You are here as valet to Mr Weissman. That means you will be known, below stairs, as Mr Weissman for the duration of your stay. You'll find we keep to the old customs. It avoids confusion.

He would answer back but decides against it.

HENRY

It's about Mr Weissman's diet -

MRS WILSON AND MRS CROFT

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

He's a vegetarian.

MRS CROFT

A what?

HENRY

A vegetarian. He doesn't eat meat. He eats fish but not meat.

MRS CROFT

Well, I never.

HENRY

I'm sorry if it's inconvenient.

MRS CROFT

Well, it's not very convenient, I must say. Doesn't eat meat? He's come for a shooting party and he doesn't eat meat?

HENRY

Mr Weissman doesn't intend to shoot. I think he just wants to walk out with them. Get a bit of air.

MRS CROFT

Get a bit of air?

MRS WILSON

Thank you. We'll make the necessary adjustments. Now, if you'd like to get one of the servants to take you upstairs... Mr Weissman is in the Mulgrave Room and you'll be sharing with Lord Stockbridge's valet.

Henry nods his thanks and walks out of the room watched by Mrs Croft.

MRS CROFT

He's very full of himself, I must say. Doesn't eat meat!

MRS WILSON

Come along, Mrs Croft. We don't want to be thought unsophisticated, do we? Mr Weissman is an American. They do things differently there.

She goes, leaving Mrs Croft seething.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

MRS CROFT
I'll give her 'unsophisticated'!

Her assistants giggle but their response does not please the cook.

MRS CROFT (CONT'D)
What are you gawping at? Those are no good. I said 'julienne.' And Ellen that is ice-cream you are churning not concrete. Calm down.

8 INT. ELSIE'S ATTIC ROOM. DAY.

This is a simple, plainly furnished room with two beds. Mary hangs up her coat then opens the valise on the bed. She unbuttons her wet travelling dress and takes a black frock from the case then a cap and a frilly, black apron. Elsie watches her.

ELSIE
I thought ladies' maids never wore aprons.

MARY
Her ladyship used to have a French maid who wore a black one like this. She thinks it's got a bit of style.

ELSIE
I bet she does. And I'll bet she took it out of your wages, too.

MARY
She likes to have everything just so.

Elsie rolls her eyes.

ELSIE
Don't they all?

Behind Elsie's bed are various pictures of movie stars, postcards or cut from magazines. Mary goes over to the collection to admire it. She points.

MARY
That's him!

This is surprising as the picture is principally of Garbo with a man behind her.

(CONTINUED)

ELSIE

Who'd you mean?

MARY

Ivor Novello. He passed us on the road today, on his way here, and he spoke to me. Well... he spoke to her ladyship but I answered..

ELSIE

I only cut it out for Garbo. I prefer the American stars. I think they've got more oomph.

MARY

Go on. Is he really Sir William's cousin? Imagine having a film star in the family. Lady Sylvia must be thrilled.

ELSIE

I don't think.

MARY

Why wouldn't she be?

ELSIE

Because she's a snobbish cow. Because she looks down on anyone who got to the top with brains and hard work. Just like she looks down on her husband. Except when it's time to foot the bills. Then she's got her hand out all right.

MARY

What was her family, then?

ELSIE

What you'd expect. Toffee-nosed and useless. Her father was the Earl of Carton which sounds good except he didn't have a pot to piss in.

MARY

What's she like to work for?

ELSIE

Horrible but he... he's O.K.... Come on. We'd better get cracking.

9

INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. DAY.

Probert, Sir William's valet, is carrying a boiled-front dress shirt past Mrs Wilson.

PROBERT

Can't think why I'm so behind today.
The gong hasn't gone, has it?

MRS WILSON

Oh no, you've plenty of time yet.

PROBERT

'Cos you know what a fuss he's in when
he's playing Mine Host...I think I'll
go and get him a paper if there's
time...

This last is to himself as he hurries on. Mrs Wilson notices something in the corridor that displeases her.

MRS WILSON

George? What are you up to? Hasn't Mr
Jennings given you anything to do?

GEORGE

I'm just going to help him with the
tea. Then I'm to finish the table with
Arthur.

MRS WILSON

Well get on with it then.

With a movement suspiciously like the discarding of a cigarette, he nods, starting up the service stair that leads to the main house.

10

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. DAY.

Emerging from the green baize door, George crosses a magnificent staircase hall. As he goes, he hears a whispered, angry exchange although he cannot detect the source.

MAN (VO)

What do you mean "no"? You promised!

YOUNG WOMAN (VO)

I never promised! I said I'd do my
best... Anyway, I'm going to ask him
tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN (VO)

You'd bloody well better! What --

This is provoked by George stepping from the rug to the polished floor. The speaker, The Hon. Freddie Nesbitt, emerges. His anxiety dissolves at the sight of a footman.

FREDDIE

It's all right. It's nobody.

He is joined by a young woman, Isobel McCordle.

ISOBEL

You shouldn't sneak up on people like that.

GEORGE

Sorry, Miss Isobel.

The camera stays with the servant as the others walk away, their voices fading.

FREDDIE (VO)

Do you really think you'll have a chance to talk to him tonight?

ISOBEL (VO)

Oh, do stop going on about it.

FREDDIE (VO)

That's all very fine but why the hell do you think I've come here?

George turns the handle of the saloon door, without knocking, and goes silently in.

11

INT. SALOON/LIBRARY. DAY.

Sitting at a table, surrounded by the evidence of a large tea, are Constance Trentham, Morris Weissman, and Mabel Nesbitt. Ivor is holding court, enthralling Mabel with Hollywood gossip. The others sprawl around the room, balancing plates and cups with magazines and cigarettes as they drawl and chatter. Jennings presides over the teapot. George, followed by Isobel, Freddie and the Stockbridges, enters and takes his position by the door as Lt. Commander Anthony and Lady Lavinia Meredith approach the tea table. He is ex-navy, she is Sylvia's sister. Their tone is urgent and could not be overheard - except possibly by the butler.

ANTHONY

What do you mean "leave it?"

(CONTINUED)

LAVINIA

I just meant let it come up naturally.
Don't steer the conversation. It makes
you sound so desperate.

ANTHONY

Well, I am fucking desperate.

They cross the room to sit down, passing the tea-table.

MABEL

What's Greta Garbo really like? Did
you get to know her?

IVOR

I did. As a matter of fact, she's
coming to stay with me next month.

Mabel gasps. Her shop-girl awe reassures Ivor but it irritates
Constance.

CONSTANCE

Tell me, how much longer do you think
you'll go on making films?

IVOR

That depends how much longer the
public wants to see me in them.

CONSTANCE

I expect it's hard to know when it's
time to throw in the towel...What a
pity about that last one of yours.
What was it? "The Dodger"?

IVOR

"The Lodger"

CONSTANCE

It must be so disappointing...When
something just *flops* like that. After
all the hard work.

IVOR

Yes, I suppose it is rather
disappointing.

Sylvia arrives at the table.

WEISSMAN

You have some beautiful antiques, Lady
Sylvia. Real museum quality.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

I'm interested: How much would a picture like that set you back?

SYLVIA

I hope you've all got everything you need.

She shares the moment with Constance before walking back towards the open library door where McCordle is sitting at a work table covered with gun tools and a pistol feeding his terrier, Pip. Keeping him company is Louisa Stockbridge.

LOUISA

Who's the funny little American?

WILLIAM

Morris Weissman? A friend of Ivor's. He makes films in Hollywood. Ivor asked if he could bring him and I didn't see why not. I thought he might be interested in shooting but...

LOUISA

Never mind. He adds to the glamour of the gathering. I didn't expect anything half as exotic.

During this, William goes to pour two whiskies. He splashes a little soda into them. Nearby a door set into the books opens and Probert appears. He is surprised to find the room occupied.

PROBERT

I beg your pardon, Sir. I just thought I'd take the Times up with me. In case you want to read it when you dress.

WILLIAM

Good thinking, Probert.

As the valet looks for the paper, William hands the drink to Louisa but she shakes her head.

LOUISA

Not for me. Far too early. And you know I never drink whisky.

WILLIAM

Nonsense. Come on. Drink up. It's good for you.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

LOUISA

Really, Bill. You're such a bad influence. Don't blame me if I pass out at dinner.

But she takes the drink and sips it as the valet takes the paper and leaves.

WILLIAM

I don't know how impressed your husband is with our Showbiz folk. He looks as if he's being forced to share a railway sleeper with a garage mechanic.

LOUISA

I'm afraid he only feels safe with his own kind.

WILLIAM

Poor old Raymond.

LOUISA

If you think he's dull you should've met his father. He made Raymond look like Buster Keaton.

12 INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. EVE.

Mary carries three evening frocks while Elsie carries one. She holds it up.

ELSIE

Mrs Nesbitt. She's only got this one with her. Says her husband rushed her when she was packing.

MARY

Do you always look after visitors if they don't have a maid?

ELSIE

Sometimes Dorothy helps. Though why Mrs Wilson makes the Still Room Maid do it beats me...I think it's just to annoy Mrs Croft.

MARY

Which one does Dorothy answer to?

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

ELSIE

Both. And she's worked off her feet.
But then I do Miss Isobel as
well...Here we are.

She opens a door and goes in.

13 INT. IRONING AND SEWING ROOM. EVE.

In the centre are several ironing boards. Barnes, Robert, Sarah
and Renee are in there working. Robert brushes glaze on an
evening waistcoat as he irons it.

ELSIE

You found it, then?

She smiles at Robert. Then points to a cupboard.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

This one's yours.

MARY

Thanks.

ROBERT

What's your name?

MARY

I think here I'm called Trentham...

ROBERT

No. I meant your real name?

MARY

Mary. Mary Maceachran.

ROBERT

Blimey. What does her ladyship call
you?

MARY

Well, it should be Maceachran. That's
what my mother says. Now I'm a lady's
maid. But she can't pronounce it so
she calls me Mary.

ROBERT

I don't blame her.

Elsie irons with contempt.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

ELSIE
Machine-made lace.

BARNES
Hark at her.

ELSIE
I hate cheap clothes. Twice the work
and they never look any good.

RENEE
What d'you expect from a woman without
her own maid?

SARAH
Lady Lavinia always says a woman who
travels with no maid has lost her self-
respect. She calls it "giving in."

ELSIE
I don't have a maid and I haven't
"given in."

SARAH
That's different.

ELSIE
Why?

BARNES
Yes, why is it different, Sarah?

SARAH
Miss Morse to you.

14 INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. EVE.

Henry is carrying some clothes and a pair of stout shoes. As he goes, he opens every door and looks inside... He marvels at the complexities of the still room, then at the larders and so on. He jumps at the sound of a voice. It is Arthur, the Second Footman.

ARTHUR
Can I help you?

HENRY
I er... I was looking for the brushing
room... I thought I'd give Mr Weissman's
tweeds a going-over for tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

ARTHUR
I'll show you... Here y'are.

He opens a door and Henry goes in.

15 INT. BRUSHING ROOM. EVE.

There is a covered table with every type of brush on it. Lewis, Sylvia's maid, is working on the hacking jacket. Henry puts down the shoes and lays out the tweeds.

ARTHUR
The boot room's next door... Do you really live in Hollywood?

HENRY
I do.

ARTHUR
But how did you get there? I mean, where did you start from?

HENRY
Where do you think? Scotland.

This answer is not quite satisfying to Arthur. He looks at Lewis. Then he presses on.

ARTHUR
Were you always in service? Or did you ever think of trying to get into films? I wanted to be an actor once...when I was little...

HENRY
Was that a bell?

LEWIS
It's not the dressing gong, is it?

ARTHUR
Can't be time for them to change yet, surely.

He goes off to investigate as Henry tries different brushes to suit the tweed.

15A INT. RED SALOON. EVE.

Tea is nearly finished. Jennings hands an empty tray to George.

(CONTINUED)

15A CONTINUED:

JENNINGS

Its nearly time for the gong. If they don't want any more, take their cups and plates. If they do, don't give them much.

George walks towards the sofa on the left of the fire-place.

RAYMOND

Sylvia, I mean it. There mustn't be any nonsense.

SYLVIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

Sylvia, without her hacking jacket but still in jodphurs, speaks to her other brother-in-law, Raymond Stockbridge. With George on camera, we hear them before we see them. Raymond sits reading a magazine but it is clear that something has set him on edge.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Have you done a lot of shooting this year?

RAYMOND

Quite a lot.

GEORGE

Are you finished, your ladyship? Or would you like some more tea?

SYLVIA

All finished, thank you, George. So is Lord Stockbridge.

He starts to clear as she looks across at the silent peer.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Does Louisa always go out with you?

RAYMOND

Usually.

SYLVIA

How good she is...It bores me stiff, I'm afraid. And William's such a rotten shot, he doesn't really like anyone standing with him. I try and duck out of it. Particularly if it's Scotland.

(CONTINUED)

15A CONTINUED: (2)

RAYMOND

I'm very fond of Scotland...

He speaks without looking up as George takes his tray and us over to the table.

CONSTANCE

But what a waste! If you're not shooting either, then they'll only be six! William? Isn't that a shame...

She addresses William who stands in the library doorway with Louisa. Anthony makes a move to speak to him but William's words deter him.

WILLIAM

It doesn't matter...I'm going up to change.

CONSTANCE

Well, I am surprised. Normally anything to do with shooting or those wretched guns is sacrosanct. What is your secret, I wonder?

Ivor drifts over to Sylvia.

IVOR

I am sorry about that. I should have made it clear. Stupid of me.

SYLVIA

Nonsense. It's William's fault. He just has this idea that all Americans sleep with guns under their pillows.

IVOR

So they do. But they're more for each other than for killing birds.

She laughs as Raymond looks up from his reading.

RAYMOND

Remind me, how are you related to William exactly?

IVOR

Our mothers were first cousins.

(CONTINUED)

RAYMOND

Really? I don't know that I ever met William's mother. Didn't she do something rather original?

George crosses back to the now clear tea-table.

IVOR

She was a teacher. So was mine.

RAYMOND

Oh? Well, of course that's marvellous, isn't it?

Back at the table, Constance is ingratiating herself with her neighbour.

CONSTANCE

Sylvia's so clever. She always finds such wonderful servants. I don't know how she manages. I'm breaking in a new maid and I'm simply worn out with it. There's nothing more exhausting, is there?

MABEL

I don't have a lady's maid.

She gives the information flatly but Constance remains light. Sylvia has given up on Raymond and come to look for a cigarette in a box on the tea-table.

CONSTANCE

I was just telling dear Mabel here about my new maid. Honestly, for all the help I have to give her, she should be paying me...

SYLVIA

She does look rather young.

Constance drops her voice so that only Sylvia (and George) can hear.

CONSTANCE

Well of course what she is, my dear, is *wonderfully* cheap.

She laughs softly with her niece. During all this, George has removed the cloth, and folded the tea-table.

16

INT. IRONING AND SEWING ROOM. DAY.

SARAH

I s'pose Old Mother Trentham'll have
her begging bowl out while she's here.

RENEE

She won't be bothering your employer.
That's for sure.

MARY

What d'you mean? Why not?

ELSIE

'Cos Lady Lavinia Meredith hasn't a
penny to bless herself with.

BARNES

And who's fault is that?

SARAH

There's nothing wrong with the
Commander. He's just been a bit
unfortunate.

BARNES

I'll say. I think he's pathetic.

SARAH

Then why don't you hand in your
notice?

RENEE

Well, the other two sisters fell on
their feet. 'Course, it helps that
they're good-looking.

MARY

Lady Sylvia's lovely.

ELSIE

Do you think so?

SARAH

She might have done a bit better for
herself, really.

ELSIE

I beg your pardon. Lord Carton was
determined to get Sir William for
either of the two eldest. I was told
he could have had his pick.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Why was Lord Carton so keen?

BARNES

Why d'you think? Who d'you suppose pays for him to swan around Biarritz for six months a year. Come to that, who keeps Ma Trentham in stockings and gin? Old Money Bags, that's who.

ELSIE

I think it's disgusting. The way they use him. Especially when they all look down on him 'cos he's made it himself. None of them have got the brains to make the price of a packet of tea.

MRS WILSON

Have you finished, Elsie?

She is in the doorway.

ELSIE

Nearly, Mrs Wilson. I've just got these cuffs to do.

MRS WILSON

When you're ready make your way to the Servants' Hall. We dine after the guests are dressed and before we serve dinner.

She goes. Barnes follows, saying,

BARNES

Here we go. Yes sir, no sir, three bags full, sir.

MARY

What's Lord Stockbridge like?

ROBERT

He thinks he's God Almighty but they all do.

INT. DINING-ROOM. EVE.

A beautiful and complicated table-setting fills the screen with six glasses of different shapes and sizes, and silver cutlery ranged sideways out from a place mat supporting a folded napkin.

CONTINUED:

On the right, among the spoons and knives is a single fork while all the other forks are on the left. A hand enters the frame and takes it up.

HENRY (VO)

Why does this fork go on the right?

Henry is examining it. Arthur, wearing green baize gloves for moving silver, takes it back, spits on it, rubs it lightly and replaces it.

ARTHUR

Because they eat their fish with two of them. One in each hand.

HENRY

Why's that then?

ARTHUR

Search me.

George enters. He carries a tray holding some full, red wine decanters.

GEORGE

What are you doing here?

HENRY

Just looking around.

George unloads the tray onto the sideboard then takes a ruler out of a drawer and starts to measure the exact distance between the place settings.

GEORGE

Mr Jennings'll be up in a minute. If I were you, I'd go and 'look around' somewhere else.

HENRY

Whatever you say.

With a smile, he leaves. Arthur waits until the door shuts.

ARTHUR

There's something funny about that bloke...

GEORGE

His accent for a start. Where do you -

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

JENNINGS

Are you finished? What about Lord
Rupert Standish and Mr Blond?

He stands in the other door. Frowning, he moves an entire place
setting slightly to the left.

GEORGE

Her ladyship said not to lay for them.
The stuff's ready if they get here in
time. We can stick two more places on
in a jiffy.

JENNINGS

When they arrive, you'll be dressing
Mr Blond, Arthur. George, you'll have
Lord Rupert. If they're very late,
they can change by themselves. You can
tidy up when they're downstairs. Is Mr
Nesbitt settled?

GEORGE

I'll go up and finish him off now.

ARTHUR

And Mr Novello?

JENNINGS

Mr Weissman's man will attend to him.
Right. As soon as you're done, join me
in the drawing-room for the drinks.

He goes. George folds up the ruler and puts it away.

GEORGE

What's the matter with you?

ARTHUR

Nothing... only I thought I'd be doing
Mr Novello, that's all.

GEORGE

And now you won't see him in his under-
drawers? Never mind. Better luck next
time.

Arthur attempts to conceal his furious blushing.

18 INT. NOVELLO BEDROOM. EVE.

Henry is tidying things while Ivor stands in white tie and tails
before a pier glass.

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED:

IVOR

So, how's it going? Are you enjoying yourself?

HENRY

Very much. Are you, sir?

19

INT. TRENTHAM BEDROOM. EVE.

Constance, wearing the blue dress we saw Mary ironing and the sapphires, is sitting in front of her looking glass. Mary arranges a small tiara in her mistress's hair.

CONSTANCE

Rather a mixed bag... That Mr Weissman's very odd. Apparently he's in films. He directs something called "The Charlie Chan Mysteries." Or does he produce them? I never know the difference.

MARY

Really? I enjoy those, milady.

Constance lights a cigarette. She isn't interested in Mary's movie-going.

CONSTANCE

I suppose it's fun to have a film star staying but there's always so little to talk about after the first flush of recognition. And why has Freddie Nesbitt brought that awful, common wife of his? Isobel only asked him because a gun dropped out and that's no excuse to inflict her on us all. And I'm told he's been sacked from his bank now. Thank heaven he's a younger son... So, what's the gossip in the servants' hall?

MARY

Nothing, really, milady.

But Constance knows better than that as she puffs away.

CONSTANCE

Nonsense. Out with it.

MARY

Well... is it true that Sir William could have married Lady Stockbridge? If he'd wanted to?

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

Is that what they're saying?

MARY

Only that Lord Carton was after Sir William for one of them and he didn't care which...

CONSTANCE

What would you say if I told you they cut cards for him?

MARY

What? They didn't, did they?

For a moment Constance relishes the shock on her maid's face.

CONSTANCE

Of course not. Now, tomorrow morning I'll breakfast in bed and get straight up into the tweeds. What shirt have you brought?

MARY

The pink with the green check.

CONSTANCE

Oh no, dear. Quite wrong. Always something very plain for country sports. The one I had on today will do.

MARY

But it's soiled.

CONSTANCE

Well? You can wash it, can't you... God, I hate shooting. Why does one have to do these things?

MARY

Couldn't you stay indoors? Lady Sylvia wouldn't mind.

CONSTANCE

Maybe not but *he* would. He's terribly touchy. Worse since they made him a baronet. Now he thinks he's the last Plantagenet and takes offence accordingly.

19 CONTINUED: (2)

She turns a searching eye on her image in the glass, smearing rouge into her cheek.

20 INT. MCCORDLE DRESSING ROOM. EVE.

Probert is putting the finishing touches to Sir William's evening dress. The new baronet looks at the reflection of himself. His dog also checks out the final effect.

WILLIAM

And you really don't think a handkerchief?

PROBERT

No, sir.

McCordle reluctantly accepts his valet's judgement. Probert (and the camera) crosses the door at the moment it opens and Sylvia appears, her hard beauty accentuated by the superb cut of her clothes. When she speaks, it is difficult to mask her indifference.

SYLVIA

I'm going down. Lewis said you wanted me.

WILLIAM (VO)

Who's next to me at dinner?

SYLVIA

You know who. Aunt Constance and Lavinia.

WILLIAM

Why do I have to have the old trout the whole bloody time? Why can't I have Louisa?

SYLVIA

Do you really want me to explain the Table of Precedence now? Or can it wait?

Her voice is dripping with sarcasm.

WILLIAM (VO)

Who gives a shit about precedence?

Probert walks over to put something into a tall-boy near Sylvia in time for us to see her shrug, speaking wearily as she would to a tiresome child.

(CONTINUED)

SYLVIA

You rage when people look down on you
and then you insist on behaving like a
vulgar ignoramus.

Her contemptuous words have their effect. This is how she
controls him.

WILLIAM (VO)

Has Constance asked you for any money
yet?

The camera has followed Probert as he continues to tidy the
dressing-room. Now he takes a crested, ivory clothes brush from
a tall-boy and returns to Sir William.

SYLVIA

No.

WILLIAM

Raymond says she's been complaining
that her allowance isn't big enough.
I've a good mind to stop it
altogether.

SYLVIA

I thought it was settled for her
lifetime.

WILLIAM

Says who?

His manner is bullying and unpleasant but Sylvia is
uninterested.

SYLVIA

Will that be all, sir?

Probert restrains a smile as he carries the clothes brush back
to the dressing-table.

WILLIAM (VO)

I wish Anthony wasn't here. Try and
make sure he doesn't get me on my own,
can you?

SYLVIA (VO)

Why?

WILLIAM (VO)

I'm pulling out of his scheme.

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED: (2)

Probert brings the camera back to them and he stands, waiting to speak.

SYLVIA

Oh? Have you told him?

WILLIAM

No. And I'm not going to if I can help it. Louisa thought I should do it next week. Then he can sob in private. Spare Lavinia's blushes.

SYLVIA

Far be it from me to contradict Louisa... Poor little Anthony. I thought he was looking unusually pathetic at tea... Get away from me.

She shoves Pip off her foot as Probert bows.

PROBERT

Will there be anything else, sir?

WILLIAM

No, thank you, Probert.

21

INT. GALLERY. EVE.

As Probert emerges, Elsie is coming down the gallery looking harrassed.

PROBERT

Everything all right, girl?

ELSIE

Honestly, I don't know how I'll manage. She's forgotten her hairpins. She hasn't packed the right shoes. I'm making bricks without straw, Mr Probert. Really I am.

Mary appears, carrying the dirty shirt.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you've got any hairpins to spare, have you?

MARY

Hang on a minute.

She rummages in a *châtelaine* and finds a few. Muttering thanks, Elsie hurries away.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

PROBERT

On your way down? I'll take you.

MARY

I thought I'd just nip up to my room
for a minute...only...

PROBERT

Yes?

MARY

Which way is my room?

22 INT. GALLERY. EVE.

George is emerging from the Nesbitts' bedroom as Elsie arrives.

ELSIE

Is he done?

He nods, raising his eyebrows, and goes. She reaches for the door handle when there is a movement at the end of the gallery. William and his dog are both looking at her. With a secret smile, Elsie returns his gaze before she opens the door.

23 INT. NESBITT BEDROOM. EVE.

Mabel is at the dressing table and, for a moment, it seems that Freddie has his wife's wrist in his fist. He swings round and, if he did have hold of her, he releases it.

ELSIE

I've got some pins, madam. From Lady
Trentham's maid.

FREDDIE

We should be downstairs already.

MABEL

You go on. I'll be as quick as I can.

FREDDIE

Try and make her look respectable.

He says this to the maid and goes without a comment from either woman. They stare at each other through the glass. Mabel with her pasty face and lank hair looks terrible.

MABEL

Well, there's no harm in trying.

24

INT. DRAWING-ROOM. EVE.

Jennings carries a salver with two martini glasses to Ivor who is playing the grand piano. Is it "I Can Give You The Starlight"? He and Weissman take the drinks.

WEISSMAN

Thank you, Mr Jennings.

JENNINGS

Just Jennings, sir.

WEISSMAN

Then thank you, Jennings.

JENNINGS

I'll clear the piano for you, sir.

He lifts the photographs and albums that litter the closed lid of the grand as Sylvia approaches. Ivor stands but she makes him play. Behind her, the others drift in.

SYLVIA

Jennings, can I have a martini when you've done that? Oh, don't get up. Go on. Please. What is it? I don't believe I know it.

IVOR

Nothing... an idea I've been fiddling with...

WEISSMAN

By the way, Jennings. I've a telephone call booked. For California. If you could let me know as soon as they get through.

JENNINGS

Very good, sir.

SYLVIA

I can't imagine how one could ever invent a tune... How do you start?

IVOR

It's rather hard to say exactly.

SYLVIA

Well I think it's too clever for any words.

(CONTINUED)

She strolls back to join the others. Weissman watches her as Jennings finally lifts the lid of the piano, filling the room with music. He starts back to the drinks table.

WEISSMAN

How do you manage these people?

IVOR

You forget. I make my living impersonating them. What does he want?

Across the room, Henry has come in. He lingers by the door as Jennings approaches

JENNINGS

Can I help you?

HENRY

You know... I really enjoy the way you do things, Mr Jennings.

JENNINGS

I beg your pardon.

Weissman has left the piano and crossed the room.

WEISSMAN

What is it, Henry?

HENRY

Nothing. I just wanted to be sure you have everything you need. Sir.

WEISSMAN

Yes. Thank you.

Henry goes, leaving Jennings completely bewildered. Weissman acknowledges him.

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

It's so good to find a servant these days who takes an interest.

INT. SERVANTS' HALL. EVE.

A table is laid for dinner with a nervous boy ready to serve. All the indoor servants except the kitchen staff are here including two housemaids, May and Janet. Merriman nods at Mary. Jennings enters with George and Arthur.

DOROTHY

Everything satisfactory, Mr Jennings?

JENNINGS

Yes, thank you, Dorothy. They have their drinks. We can take our leisure for half an hour, I think.

At the head of the table, he looks at Renee who stands on his right. His brow darkens.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

What's this?

DOROTHY

I did tell her, Mr Jennings.

RENEE

I believe this is my place, Mr Jennings.

JENNINGS

Oh? Since when did a baroness outrank a countess? Or is that some foreign custom you've picked up on your travels?

Renee purses her lips but says nothing.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

Miss Trentham? Would you like to come and take the seat of honour?

But Mary does not recognise her 'name'. He repeats it and Arthur nudges her.

MARY

I'm all right here, Mr Jennings, thank you.

DOROTHY

Go on. Don't keep him waiting.

Jennings stands. Mary, blushing, moves to his right hand side, displacing Renee who moves to Jennings's left but even that does not satisfy him.

JENNINGS

Miss Meredith, you may come to my left if you please.

As Renee stalks down the table, Mary turns queringly to George. He whispers.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Her mistress married a baron so she
lost her rank as an earl's daughter.
Renee always tries to catch Mr
Jennings out but no one can.

LEWIS

Naturally I'm nothing when there's
visitors in the house. Never mind. I'm
used to it.

No one pays her any attention as the housekeeper, Mrs Wilson,
makes her own stately entrance and takes her place at the far
end between Robert and Probert.

MRS WILSON

Good evening, Mr Jennings.

Jennings nods, says Grace and they sit. The boy holds a plate
for Mrs Wilson and then the butler. Unlike upstairs, they pass
vegetable dishes across the table.

JENNINGS

Right. Start when you get it. No time
for loitering.

HENRY

Can I ask a question?

JENNINGS

Certainly, Mr Weissman. How can we
help?

HENRY

I just wondered. How many people here
had parents in service? And was that
why they chose to go into it?

JENNINGS

That's an interesting point and one I
can't answer. All those of you whose
parents were in service raise your
hand.

Most hands go up. We hear "not both of them" or "just for a bit,
before they married," "I s'pose they expected me to," and so on.
Only Dorothy, Barnes and Robert are left.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

Not you, Dorothy?

(CONTINUED)

DOROTHY

My dad was a farmer, Mr Jennings. A tenant of Lord Carton's.

JENNINGS

Mr Meredith?

BARNES

Factory hands. Both of them. And if you ask me, they were better off.

HENRY

What about you, Mr Stockbridge?

Robert looks up. Something in this attracts Mrs Wilson's attention. He shrugs.

GEORGE

What's the matter? Don't you know?

ROBERT

Yes I know. I know what both of them did as a matter of fact. But it didn't have no effect on me. On my choice.

MRS WILSON

Why is that?

ROBERT

Because I grew up in an orphanage.

This wrong foots the company. Jennings quickly pulls a veil over matters.

JENNINGS

Thank you, Mr Weissman. For giving us something to think about... I must compliment Bertha on this stew. And Mrs Croft on the choice of the beef, of course. It's delicious.

Mary now has George on her other side. She whispers to him.

MARY

Where is Mrs Croft?

GEORGE

Always eats with her own staff.

MARY

Does she take her pudding to Mrs Wilson's room? Our cook does that.

GEORGE

Not likely. She wouldn't set foot in there if her life depended on it. They hate each other.

JENNINGS

Something amusing, Miss Trentham? Can we share it?

Mary is saved by the arrival of Lady Sylvia McCordle. In her couture clothes and jewels, she is an enchanted creature from a fairy kingdom. The company jumps up.

SYLVIA

I am so sorry to disturb you all but a major crisis has arisen. I've just learned that Mr Weissman doesn't eat meat. Is it a Jewish thing? I always thought that was pork and prawns... But the point is: What are we to do? I can't tell Mrs Croft. I simply don't dare.

MRS WILSON

Everything's under control, your ladyship. Mr Weissman's valet informed me as soon as they arrived. We've prepared a special version of the soup, he can eat the hors d'oeuvres and the fish and we'll do Welsh Rabbit for the game course. I'm not sure about the entree but we'll think of something.

Sylvia's response is not as warm as it might be.

SYLVIA

Thank you, Mrs Wilson. Of course you're ten steps ahead. Which one of you is Mr Weissman's valet?

HENRY

I am, your ladyship.

Sylvia turns to deliver some patronising *bon mot* but she is absolutely arrested by the man's beauty. For a moment, she simply stares.

25

CONTINUED: (5)

SYLVIA

Are you, indeed? Heavens... well... thank
you for being so efficient. Please
don't let me interrupt you further.

She hurries away and they sit, dazed. George looks across at
Henry with a wink.

GEORGE

You're all set, then.

A few junior servants giggle which does not amuse Mr Jennings
one bit.

JENNINGS

Yes, George?

GEORGE

Nothing, Mr Jennings.

They transfer their attention to their plates.

26

EXT. KITCHEN COURT. NIGHT.

Mary, carrying a cup of tea, is walking across the courtyard
towards the garages for the visitors' cars. We can see Merriman
there working on Constance's car. There is a sound from the
shadows. Bertha is sitting by herself, smoking.

MARY

You gave me a turn. I didn't see you
there. Aren't you cold?

BERTHA

It feels good to be cold after a day
in that kitchen.

Mary walks on until Merriman comes towards her.

MARY

I thought you could do with this.

MERRIMAN

That's kind, love. How are you getting
on?

Before Mary can answer, they are interrupted by the arrival of
an open roadster which sweeps in, all headlights and bright
colour. It pulls to a halt and two young men, Lord Rupert
Standish and Jeremy Blond, hop out.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

RUPERT

Can we get in this way?

MARY

Wouldn't you do better round the front, sir?

JEREMY

Exactly what I said.

RUPERT

The thing is we've got bags and guns and everything and neither of us has a man to carry them. I thought it made more sense to bring them to the back door. If I give you the keys perhaps someone can sort it out.

MARY

Of course.

As she stands back to allow the men into the house, something makes Jeremy turn. Bertha is watching them, smoking as she leans against the outside wall.

27 OMITTED

28 OMITTED

29 INT. SERVERY. NIGHT.

Dorothy and Janet tend a serving table, stacking plates and setting out clean ones from the heating cupboard. George passes with a dish of partridges, helping himself to a taste as he goes into the dining-room. Elsie arrives and starts to follow him.

DOROTHY

You can't go in there when you're not serving. What would Mr Jennings say?

ELSIE

Keep your hair on. It so happens I've got a message for your precious Mr Jennings.

30 INT. DINING-ROOM. NIGHT.

The party is at table. Because they are twelve, William sits at one end and Raymond

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

at the other. George holds the dish for Constance on William's right. Arthur waits with a tray of game crisps, breadcrumbs, bread sauce and gravy.

CONSTANCE

I was wondering if I could have a word with you. Alone. After dinner.

WILLIAM

I don't think I should leave my guests, do you...

He leans down to feed Pip who sits beneath his chair.

CONSTANCE

You'll make that dog sick.

Weissman is talking to Louisa.

WEISSMAN

Of course I'm going out with them. Ivor's promised to look after me.

LOUISA

Ivor's going with you?

WEISSMAN

Certainly. He says he's looking forward to a good walk.

LOUISA

Is he? Doesn't sound very like Ivor. He normally stays in bed and comes out with the ladies for luncheon.

WEISSMAN

Well, he wants to show me how it all works.

Before she can respond to this, a dish is brought by Arthur to Weissman's left side.

LOUISA

Welsh Rabbit? Is that a vegetarian game course?

Freddie is on Sylvia's left.

FREDDIE

It was just a misunderstanding.

(CONTINUED)

SYLVIA

Oh? Aunt Constance seemed to think it was more serious than that.

FREDDIE

Only because she got her version from my father.

On her right, Raymond eats in silence. There is a crack of thunder as she turns to him.

SYLVIA

Ivor and Mabel are talking in the wrong direction so you'd better join us. It never seems to work when I'm not at the end. What a filthy night it's turning into. I'm afraid you'll all be drenched tomorrow but of course you'll say it doesn't matter.

RAYMOND

It doesn't.

Beyond him, Isobel is listening to Anthony on her other side.

ANTHONY

What do you mean he's losing interest in that sort of thing?

ISOBEL

Not just that. The whole Empire. He thinks the steam's gone out of it.

Anxiously Anthony talks down the table, making the conversation general.

ANTHONY

That's not true is it, William? That you think the Empire's finished?

FREDDIE

Surely everyone feels the war changed things. Don't they?

LAVINIA

I don't care what's changed or not changed as long as our sons are spared what you all went through.

SYLVIA

Not *all*. You never fought, did you, William?

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM

I did my bit.

LOUISA

Of course you did.

SYLVIA

Well, you made a lot of money but it's not quite the same as charging into the cannon's mouth, is it? Thank God for Raymond. At least the family had one representative in the front line.

Mabel turns to Ivor on her right, speaking sotto voce.

MABEL

What about Commander Meredith? He must have done something right.

IVOR

Not much. After ten years in the navy you're made Lieutenant Commander if you're not dead or in prison. No, Stockbridge was the hero. Once he captured an entire battalion single-handed. He walked into the middle of them by accident and instead of panicking he told them he was the advance guard whereupon they all flung down their rifles on the spot. Trouble was there were three thousand of them and only one of him.

MABEL

But how *splendid*!

SYLVIA

It was splendid. How many times were you mentioned in despatches, Raymond?

RAYMOND

I forget.

Throughout this, George and Arthur move round the table. Jennings stands surveying his troops. He moves forward from time to time to replenish an empty (red) wine glass. He is at the table when he sees Elsie. Crossing over to her, he is almost fierce.

JENNINGS

What do you think you're doing here?

ELSIE

Mrs Wilson asked me to tell you that
the others have come.

This does ameliorate her fault. He goes to Sylvia's right,
speaking in a low voice.

JENNINGS

Lord Rupert Standish and Mr Blond have
arrived, milady.

SYLVIA

No, they're too late. Give them a tray
in the billiard room. They can join us
later.

JENNINGS

Very good, milady.

Isobel has heard. She leans over eagerly, her plain face flushed
with pleasure.

ISOBEL

Is Rupert here? Shall I go and say
hello?

SYLVIA

I don't think so. Thank you, Jennings.

As Jennings walks away, we can just hear one final interchange.

MABEL

But I'm not a country girl at all.

IVOR

Oh?

MABEL

No. I grew up in Leicester. My father
had a glove factory. One thing I do
know is how a glove should fit.

FREDDIE

Really, darling! You're boring poor Mr
Novello to death!

Off camera, Ivor protests "Not at all" as Jennings reaches the
door.

31

INT. BILLIARD-ROOM. NIGHT.

Arthur is carrying a tray and he moves discreetly as the two young men play billiards in a pool of light from the overhead fitting. They pay the footman no attention.

JEREMY

Face it. You're a younger son. With the tastes of a marquess and the income of a vicar. Here's the solution. She likes you. Her mother likes you. She's not exactly a show-stopper but you can't have everything.

RUPERT

Why's it so important to you?

JEREMY

Because if you marry badly, who's going to give me decent shooting in my old age?

RUPERT

The father's not keen on the idea.

JEREMY

He'll come round. 'Have you met my daughter, Lady Rupert Standish?'

RUPERT

Maybe... He thinks I'm after her money.

JEREMY

Of course he does but you can't let that put you off... "Faint heart never won fair lady." Or, in this case, rich lady.

RUPERT

He's more of an obstacle than you think.

JEREMY

Then you must overcome it, mustn't you?

During this, Arthur quietly unloads plates from a tray onto a bridge table laid with a cloth, silver and glass. He strikes a match to light the candles in its centre. The noise and flash of flame alert the young men to his presence and they straighten up.

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR

Her ladyship asks if you would join
her in the drawing-room after you've
finished.

RUPERT

Certainly.

ARTHUR

If you'd ring when you're ready for
your next course...

He indicates a bell pull in the dado.

JEREMY

We will. Thank you.

Arthur goes. As he leaves Rupert speaks softly.

RUPERT

Do you think he heard?

32

INT. DINING-ROOM. NIGHT.

The men are standing as the women leave. Jennings is the only
servant present.

SYLVIA

Now, don't be too long.

William shuts the door and returns to his seat, inviting the
other men to join him.

WILLIAM

Move up, all of you... Thank you,
Jennings.

They sit at his end of the table, irrespective of where they
were before.

WEISSMAN

I don't suppose there's any sign of my
telephone call?

JENNINGS

Not yet, I'm afraid, sir. The lines
can be very busy..

Jennings places a decanter of port in front of William, removing
its stopper.

(CONTINUED)

32

CONTINUED:

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

Would you like me to ask Lord Rupert
and Mr Blond to join you, sir?

WILLIAM

Leave them be. They can entertain the
ladies. Give Mr Novello a rest.

FREDDIE

Is that Rupert Standish? Has he
arrived?

ANTHONY

Why? Do you know him?

FREDDIE

Certainly. We younger sons have to
stick together. We've a lot in common.

He imagines this will amuse William but, instead, his host looks
at him with disdain as he pours himself a glass and passes the
port to his left. Jennings brings the cigars.

WILLIAM

Yes. I expect you have.

The butler leaves and we go with him.

33

INT. SCULLERY. NIGHT.

Among the bottles in this ancillary room, there are two with the
skull and cross bones sign of poison. Bertha checks the contents
of a drawer. Mrs Croft is watching her.

BERTHA

Arthur said he had to shout it down
the table. Makes you feel sorry for
him.

MRS CROFT

He's got nothing to be ashamed of.
It's not his fault if they put him in
an orphanage.

BERTHA

It's nobody's fault if it comes to
that.

MRS CROFT

How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

BERTHA

No. It's not here. And Mr Jennings is certain he hasn't got it?

MRS CROFT

So he says.

BERTHA

But if it's a silver carving knife, he *must* have it. It's just gone in the wrong drawer in the silver pantry. It wouldn't have been put in here.

MRS CROFT

That's what I told him.. How old would you say he was?

For a moment Bertha is puzzled then she remembers what they were talking about.

BERTHA

What do you think? Thirty one or two? Why?

MRS CROFT

No reason... I think I'll turn in. We've got an early start.

34

INT. WEISSMAN BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Weissman, in his dressing-gown, reads a book by the fire in this sumptuous room.

WEISSMAN

Of course he won't mind. I'll just say I want you with me... By the way, I talked to Sheehan at the studio. The figures are worse than they thought. Not a single winner in the year. He sounded pretty desperate.

He looks at the valet.

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

Will you come back later?

HENRY

I don't think I should risk it, do you?

There is something smug in the way he says this. He goes to the door.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

WEISSMAN

Oh Henry, don't forget those. Or
they'll think you don't care.

Coolly, he nods at his dirty shirt, socks and underpants on a
chair. They exchange a

look. Silently, Henry picks them up and leaves.

35 INT. SYLVIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Lewis helps Sylvia into a silk *peignoir*. The four-poster bed has
been turned down. An embroidered, gauze blanket-cover has
replaced the counterpane.

LEWIS

Pleasant evening, milady?

SYLVIA

Not really... I'm worn out.

She throws herself back among the pillows. Lewis strains to hang
the frock. She is old and the effort is great. But if there is
irony in their situation, neither is aware of it.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Is there any chocolate left in that
pot?

Lewis pauses to lift the lid of an exquisite little Sèvres pot
on the dressing table.

LEWIS

I'll go down and make some more.

36 INT. GALLERY. NIGHT.

Lewis vanishes through the door to the back staircase as Henry
Denton enters the gallery. He is passing Sylvia's door when it
suddenly flies open.

SYLVIA

Lewis!

The suddenness of her apparition startles him for a moment. He
returns Sylvia's gaze.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I was looking for my maid.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

She's just gone downstairs. Can I help?

SYLVIA

She's fetching some chocolate for me but I'd rather have a glass of milk.

HENRY

Would that be hot milk? Or cold?

SYLVIA

What do you think?

HENRY

I couldn't say, milady.

SYLVIA

Hot, then... and with something to make it sweet...or I know I'll never shut my eyes.

HENRY

Why? Do you have trouble sleeping, milady?

SYLVIA

Well, I've a feeling I will tonight. In fact, I know I'll be wide awake at one and bored to sobs...

HENRY

Then we must try to think of something to amuse you -

As Barnes appears through a door further down, they break off, their contract made. Sylvia closes her door as Henry hears Anthony's voice.

ANTHONY (VO)

I knew it. I knew he had something like this planned -

Barnes rolls his eyes in Henry's direction as they push through onto the back stair.

Mary is climbing the stairs. At the top, she stops. She is clearly lost. After a moment, she goes to one of the doors and knocks. There is an invitation to 'come in.'

38

INT. ROBERT'S ATTIC ROOM. NIGHT.

Henry is in his shirtsleeves. He looks up as Mary enters. She stands, dumbstruck.

MARY

Oh... I'm ever so sorry... I must have taken the wrong stairs...

But Henry is too quick for her. He pushes the door shut behind her.

HENRY

Don't want to be seen up here or you'll be for it.

MARY

I'd better go down...

HENRY

There's no rush, is there? Since you're here now...

She is frozen, receiving his advances like a gazelle cornered by a tiger.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What about a drink? I think we've both earned one.

Out of his bag on the bed, he takes a bottle of whisky and sloshes some into two toothmugs on the wash stand. Holding out the glass with one hand, he slips the other round her waist, pulls her to him and leans to kiss her when, she is suddenly transformed into a vicious, spitting, fighting cat. As he backs away, stunned, they hear the noise of someone on the stairs. Quick as a flash, Mary pulls herself together. When the door opens and Robert enters, there is no trace left of the rumpus. Naturally, he is amazed to see her.

ROBERT

What's this? Why are you in here?

MARY

I came up the wrong staircase...I was just waiting 'til the coast was clear.

ROBERT

Well, you'd better get down again. Before anyone catches you.

(CONTINUED)

Holding open the door, he checks the corridor and nods. She goes. He shuts the door.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I think she's nice, that one.

HENRY

Then you'd better go after her. You know what they say. He who hesitates is lost.

This is not Robert's style at all but, if anything, he is amused by his companion's brashness. Henry scoops up the fallen mug and smoothly pours two more drinks.

HENRY (CONT'D)

So what do you make of the place?

Robert shrugs. He sips the drink and sits, watching Henry hang his things.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I mean, is this a well run house, would you say? Do you think Sir William would be good to work for?

ROBERT

No.

He does not elaborate. After a moment, Henry continues.

HENRY

How long have you been doing this?

ROBERT

What? Valeting? About seven years. I was a footman before that.

HENRY

And working for Lord Stockbridge. Is that a promotion?

ROBERT

No. I used to be with the Earl of Flintshire.

HENRY

Then why did you move?

ROBERT

'Cos I felt like it.

(CONTINUED)

Henry nods. Beside Robert's bed there is a framed but old photograph of a woman.

HENRY

Who's that?

ROBERT

My mum.

HENRY

Where's she live?

ROBERT

She doesn't. That's why they put me in the orphanage.

HENRY

Of course. I'm sorry... What happened to her?

ROBERT

What d'you mean?

HENRY

Well... why did she die. I mean, was she young? Was it in childbirth?

ROBERT

You're not very curious, are you? Yes, she was young. She worked in a factory, she had me and a little while later she died. End of story.

HENRY

So why didn't you say she was a factory worker at dinner?

ROBERT

'Cos I didn't fancy discussing my private life with a table of strangers.

He picks up a book. Even Henry is aware that he has overstepped the mark.

HENRY

I'm sorry if I spoke out of turn, mate. Didn't mean to offend you.

ROBERT

I'm not offended. And don't call me 'mate.'

38 CONTINUED: (3)

He returns his attention to his book. During this last exchange, Henry has put his jacket and tie back on again. He looks down at Robert. Clearly he is not going to get any more out of him.

HENRY

Well. See you later. I've got a date with a glass of milk.

He slips out of the room.

39 INT. ELSIE'S ATTIC ROOM. NIGHT.

Elsie pulls off her cap and shoes and slips out of her dress. Mary is finishing unpacking. She is still a little shaken. Elsie flops onto the bed.

ELSIE

Shouldn't worry about it. Goes with the territory... I'm bushed. I think Mrs Wilson forgets I do Miss Isobel on top of everything else.

She is flicking through a Hollywood fan magazine. "Watch Your Step, Ann Dvorak!" or "Joan Crawford and Douglas Fairbanks: Of Course It's For Keeps!" Until...

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Ooh, look.

There is a still of Ivor Novello with Benita Hume. Mary looks over her shoulder.

MARY

Just think of him sleeping downstairs...

ELSIE

I shall have to watch you, my girl. I can see that.

MARY

Her ladyship says that Mr Weissman's a Hollywood producer. He makes the Charlie Chan films.

ELSIE

I like those. I enjoy a bit of a fright in the cinema.

MARY

You could go with his valet. He'd give you a fright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They laugh together. Mary wrinkles her nose.

MARY (CONT'D)

You'd better keep your eye on him. I think he's a funny one. He's not from Scotland for a start. At least not from any part of it that I know.

Elsie shrugs and goes back to her magazine.

MARY (CONT'D)

What's Mrs Nesbitt like?

ELSIE

She's O.K. I feel a bit sorry for her, really... 'Course it never works.

MARY

What never works?

ELSIE

When a man like that marries beneath him. He hasn't got the brains to carry it off.

MARY

I think it's romantic. To marry for love.

Mary picks up Elsie's dress and cap. Elsie is more interested in her magazine.

ELSIE

Oh, it wasn't love. Not him. He's a nasty piece of work. The 'honourable' Freddie Nesbitt. That's a laugh. It was her father's money he was after but there was less than he thought. Now it's spent and all he's got to show is a wife he's ashamed of. And he's lost his job. He wants Miss Isobel to put in a word with Sir William.

MARY

Will she?

ELSIE

She might.

MARY

Why should she?

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2)

ELSIE

Well, listen to you. Miss Nosie
Parker... What's the matter?

Mary has been distracted by the sight of a crumpled shirt on the
chest.

MARY

I never washed that shirt. That's me
in trouble...unless I do it now...

ELSIE

Do you want me to come with you?

MARY

No, no. You stay there. I'll be all
right.

40 INT. STILL ROOM. NIGHT.

Mary pulls the plug from the sink and wrings out the shirt. Then
leaves the room, crossing the corridor on her way to the ironing
room.

41 OMITTED

42 OMITTED

42A INT. IRONING AND SEWING ROOM. NIGHT.

Mary enters the dark room, turning on the light. There is a
scuffling sound.

MARY

Is someone there?

There is silence. Then a smothered giggle.

MARY (CONT'D)

Come on. Who is it? You're scaring me.

Shyly, Bertha emerges from the shadows, smoothing down her
skirts.

MARY (CONT'D)

What are you up to?

She speaks as she lowers the drying rack over the stove,
arranges the shirt on it and winds it up again. Bertha shrugs.

BERTHA

Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

42A CONTINUED:

She's not giving anything away. Mary nods and moves off but as she is about to leave the room, she looks back into the dark corner where a shaft of moonlight illuminates black shoes, crumpled trousers and underpants revealing the hairy lower calves of a man. The rest of him is in shadow. He is quite still. Without a word, she hurries out.

43 INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR, NIGHT.

Mary is walking down the corridor when Mrs Wilson emerges.

MRS WILSON
Miss Trentham? Can I help you?

MARY
I was just washing a shirt of her ladyship's.

MRS WILSON
I hope you found everything you needed. Lady Trentham's tea will be laid out in the still-room any time after seven tomorrow. We've remembered the cucumbers. Her breakfast tray may be collected at a quarter to nine.

MARY
She likes it at half past eight.

MRS WILSON
I know but the shooting breakfast can delay the trays a little. It won't be later. They move off at nine. Does she have to have marmalade? Dorothy made too little last January so we've run out of our own. She wouldn't care for strawberry jam, I suppose?

MARY
Not really...

MRS WILSON
Very well. It isn't a problem.

There is a noise. Sir William McCordle is approaching down the corridor.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

Oh... I was rather hoping for a word
with Mrs Wilson.

MARY

Of course, sir.

WILLIAM

Mrs Wilson, I wonder if you could tell
Jennings that I want the soup after
the fourth drive tomorrow...

Is this really what he came to say? As Mary goes, Mrs Wilson has
closed the door.

44 INT. FOOTMEN'S ATTIC CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Henry backs out of the bedroom door, shuts it carefully, and
sets off down the stairs.

45 EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

It is a grey morning. Men gather as two wagonettes are pulled up
to the front.

46 INT. TRENTHAM BEDROOM. DAY.

A fire crackles merrily in the grate. Constance is sitting up in
bed. She smooths the sheet before her, eagerly anticipating the
tray that Mary is carrying in from the door.

CONSTANCE

They always send up a good breakfast
here. I'll say that for Sylvia. She's
not at all mean in that way...

Mary places the pretty tray across her mistress. Constance lifts
the lid of a china jam pot and wrinkles her nose.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Bought marmalade! Dear me. I call that
very feeble... Oh well. I suppose one
can't have everything. Mary, I don't
think I *will* wear that shirt after
all. The check's warmer and that's all
I care about.

She starts to eat. Mary, suppressing irritation, looks out of
the window.

(CONTINUED)

46

CONTINUED:

MARY

They're just getting ready to move off.

CONSTANCE

Ugh. Look. It's already starting to rain.

MARY

You'll enjoy the luncheon.

CONSTANCE

Nursery stew in a howling draft? I doubt it.

47

EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

Strutt is with the loaders. It is drizzling slightly.

STRUTT

We're only six guns now and, apart from Sir William, they're shooting doubles or singles so we won't need you all. D'you want to toss for it?

DERWENT

What happened?

STRUTT

The American gentleman. He's a vegetarian. And vegetarians don't shoot, apparently.

CROSBIE

Bloody hell...

They all start to laugh, including Strutt, but then he quietens them down.

STRUTT

That'll do. And remember, no comments on the skills of the gun you're loading for unless you're asked. Understood? That goes for you too, Baker.

BAKER

Honestly, Mr Strutt. I thought he had asked...

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

STRUTT

Well, he thought he hadn't. And
straight faces. Even if they can't hit
a barn door.

48 INT. SERVANTS' HALL. DAY.

Henry, in his overcoat, is being interrogated by Barnes, Robert, George and Arthur. Probert is polishing a fob watch and a couple of the maids, including Mary, look on.

BARNES

What d'you mean you're *'going shooting'*?

HENRY

Mr Weissman wants me to accompany him.
Nothing wrong in that.

ARTHUR

But what for? You're not even loading.
He hasn't got a gun.

HENRY

Well... he might need something.

GEORGE

What could he need?

George is imitating Henry's voice insultingly. Probert comes to Henry's aid.

PROBERT

Of course the very idea of service is
offensive to you, George, but there's
no need to take it out on the rest of
us. Please forgive our ill manners, Mr
Weissman.

Henry smiles a trifle nervously as he heads for the door.

BARNES

I think he's got something to hide,
that one.

PROBERT

We've all got something to hide, Mr
Meredith.

Robert catches Mary's eye as he picks up a newspaper from the table.

49

EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

Henry, out of place in his coat, slips from a side door looking around for Weissman.

BAKER

Who's that?

STRUTT

Haven't a clue. Right. Baker, you take Lord Stockbridge. You won't have to teach him much. Derwent and Crosbie, Sir William as usual. Tozer, Mr Nesbitt there...

Once instructed, the men break away from the group and approach the gun they have been allotted to. William has three guns shared between his two loaders. Stockbridge, Standish and Meredith all have a pair. Nesbitt and Blond have one each. William holds out a slotted pouch containing flat, ivory spills. One by one, the guns choose a spill and read a number although William keeps his finger fixed on one. At the end, he pulls it out before gathering the others.

WILLIAM

I'm Four. Right. We're turning on six. Evens go up two, odds down two. No ground game. Any white pheasants will cost you a fiver.

WEISSMAN

I'll come and cheer you on.

But this suggestion does not seem to find favour. As Weissman settles himself into the wagonette, Raymond, next to him, speaks softly.

RAYMOND

He won't let you. He can't stand witnesses.

WEISSMAN

But I keep hearing how he's such an expert.

RAYMOND

He's an expert gunsmith. It isn't quite the same as being a good shot...

WEISSMAN

Why wouldn't he let anyone have number four?

(CONTINUED)

RAYMOND

Why do you think? It's the best peg...
That fellow's trying to attract your
attention.

Weissman looks over to where the oddly-dressed Henry stands and
beckons him over.

WEISSMAN

It's just my man... It's all right for
him to keep me company, isn't it?

Raymond looks at him. Clearly this is an amazing suggestion.

50

INT. ISOBEL'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Isobel gazes out at the garden.

ELSIE

Do you want to change now, miss? Or
shall I come back later?

ISOBEL

He won't do it.

ELSIE

Who won't do what, miss?

ISOBEL

My father... He won't give Freddie a
job. I spoke to him last night and he
said he'd think about it but this
morning, he says it isn't up to him -
when of course it is...

ELSIE

Why not?

ISOBEL

I don't know. Something to do with why
Freddie was sacked but I can't get a
straight answer out of either of them...

ELSIE

Well, you've done your best. Mr
Nesbitt can't ask more than that.

ISOBEL

Oh, but he can. *Much* more... He says
he's going to tell him.

(CONTINUED)

50

CONTINUED:

She has risen to her feet and is roaming the room like an animal. This is a facer.

ELSIE

Do you think he will?

ISOBEL

I don't know. He says Daddy'll give him a job to keep him quiet.

She hesitates. She turns back to Elsie, her awkward face vivid with desperation.

ISOBEL (CONT'D)

Could you say something?

ELSIE

To Mr Nesbitt?

ISOBEL

To Daddy.

ELSIE

Really, miss. Why ever would you think I could make any difference?

Her tone is disingenuous but Isobel looks at her coolly.

ISOBEL

Will you?

51

EXT. AN OPEN DRIVE. DAY.

The drive is about to begin. A horn blows. McCordle is ready, gun in hand. Behind him stand his loaders, Derwent and Crosbie, each holding a gun. The first flush of birds fly over. Sir William lifts his gun and fires both barrels, one after the other.

WILLIAM

Damn!

He swiftly changes guns with Derwent who reloads as Sir William fires again.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Blast!

He changes guns with Crosbie who starts to reload. More shots from Sir William.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I think I pricked that one.

From the expressions of the loaders as they share a look, it is clear they do not agree. The shooting is heavy now until suddenly a shot just misses them. All three duck.

DERWENT

Bugger me!

CROSBIE

You all right, sir?

WILLIAM

No. I am not all right.

To his and their astonishment, a tiny trickle of blood marks his ear.

CROSBIE

Blimey.

WILLIAM

Where the bloody hell did that come from?

DERWENT

Further down the line, sir.

WILLIAM

At the end of the drive, find Strutt. See if he knows. If he does, he can tell the gun responsible to go back to the house.

CROSBIE

Here they come again, sir.

WILLIAM

Right.

With a sigh of recovery, he takes up his gun again and fires.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Crosbie looks over to Derwent and rolls his eyes skyward.

52 INT. TRENTHAM BEDROOM. DAY.

Mary comes in. Constance is at the dressing-table. Sylvia lies on the bed. Louisa and Lavinia are seated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They are all dressed for a shooting lunch in rather heartier tweeds than they travelled in. They wear walking shoes and are already in country hats.

CONSTANCE

Did you find one?

MARY

Oh yes.

She kneels down by her mistress and takes out a brown shoelace. With Constance's foot on her lap, Mary removes the broken one and replaces it during the scene.

LAVINIA

Well?

SYLVIA

There's no point in looking at me. If I open my mouth on the subject, it'll only make things worse.

LOUISA

I've already tried. I don't mind having another go but it won't do any good.

The door opens and Isobel appears. She is now in her tweeds which are not becoming. The others whisper conspiratorially. 'Come in!' or 'Shut the door!'

ISOBEL

Jennings says the cars are ready.

CONSTANCE

Goody. I'm starving. I do love a shooting luncheon.

Mary looks up. Sylvia is examining her daughter dispassionately.

SYLVIA

What are you wearing?

ISOBEL

Why? Don't you like it? You bought it.

SYLVIA

Did I? How extraordinary of me... Come on. We'd better get going. Where's the wretched Mabel? Is she downstairs?

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: (2)

CONSTANCE

And has anyone checked her outfit?
She's probably in black velvet with a
feather in her hair.

LAVINIA

She's in the morning-room looking
perfectly normal. And don't be such a
snob, Aunt Constance.

CONSTANCE

Me? I haven't a snobbish bone in my
body.

She goes, indignant at the charge. Isobel at the rear, shares
this moment with Mary.

53 INT. ROBERT'S ATTIC ROOM. DAY.

MRS WILSON

I'm sorry, I didn't realise you were
in - just my routine inspection.

ROBERT

What can I do for you?

MRS WILSON

I'm sorry? So how are you settling in
with Lord Stockbridge? I know you
haven't been with him for long. You
know smoking isn't allowed up here.

Stubs cigarette - sees photo.

MRS WILSON (CONT'D)

I hope you have everything you require
to make his Lordship comfortable. We
haven't forgotten anything.

ROBERT

I can't believe you forget much Mrs
Wilson.

54 EXT./INT. OPEN FIELD/TEMPLE. DAY.

George is in the back of a farm truck with large baskets
surrounding him. There are also crates of wine, jugs and bowls
of various sizes, covered with white cloths.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The vehicle approaches a temple with a terrace on which we can see that the guns, Ivor, Weissman and the ladies have gathered. Below it, Jennings is running forward.

JENNINGS

Where have you been? They've already broken for luncheon. Take the Bloody Mary. And hurry.

George lifts two covered jugs from a bucket of ice on the floor of the wagon and starts toward the temple. He passes McCordle and Strutt. The latter is shaking his head.

STRUTT

Well, they didn't, sir. It was a heavy drive, the loaders were busy and nobody saw. I'm sorry.

George, carrying his jugs, takes the camera over to the bottom of a stone staircase where Raymond and Sylvia stand. As usual, we hear only what the footman hears.

RAYMOND

I'm warning you.

SYLVIA

What? What exactly are you warning me of?

She falls silent as she sees the footman. At the top of the stair, George enters the temple. Jennings hurries in behind him and starts to unload the stew from the baskets. Henry Denton watches as George arranges glasses on a tray.

HENRY

Can I do anything to help, Mr Jennings?

Jennings is threatened with the spectre of bad management. After a second, he nods.

JENNINGS

Well, since you're here.. you might take the sherry round..

Henry lifts a tray with a decanter and glasses. As he and George start for the terrace, they pass the Merediths who appear to be arguing out of sight of the other guests.

LAVINIA

Just calm down.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

You don't seem to understand how serious this is.

LAVINIA

We'll manage, we always have.

ANTHONY

Oh yes. And how long do you think we'll go on managing if he sticks to it. I don't see why you can't get your sisters to help.

LAVINIA

Darling, I've tried. Of course I've tried. But you know what they're like.

ANTHONY

I know they couldn't care less if we go under. Why should they? Their dressmakers will still be busy and their dinners served on time.

LAVINIA

What does that matter? Why can't you see that we've got what they'll never have. And they know it. Do you honestly think I'd change places with either of them?

ANTHONY

That's not the point.

LAVINIA

Isn't it? Anyway, promise me you'll leave it for now. This is not the right moment.

ANTHONY

There is no sodding right moment!

Anthony moves outside. McCordle is talking to Jeremy and Rupert. Anthony waits for him as George and Henry start to hand round the drinks. We follow them and hear snatches of what is being said. All these exchanges overlap each other.

FREDDIE

That's your problem.

ISOBEL

But I don't see what more I can do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

In the background, Sylvia is winding a gramophone. She lifts the needle and it starts to play "The Land Of Might Have Been." A few clap as Ivor bows to his hostess.

IVOR

Very tactful.

SYLVIA

I thought so. I borrowed it off Lewis.

CONSTANCE

Isn't this fun? There's nothing like a day out with the guns, is there?

SYLVIA

Nothing. Shall we go in? It's going to pelt in a minute.

Ivor moves over to Weissman taking a telegram out of his pocket.

IVOR

I nearly forgot. This came for you.
About an hour ago.

Henry joins them as Weissman reads it.

HENRY

Good or bad?

WEISSMAN

Neither. Winfield Sheehan wants to talk to me. I'll call him later.

He explains to Ivor.

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

The Head of Production at Fox. He's handling the next Charlie Chan.

Isobel has left Freddie and joins Rupert, passing Jeremy and Raymond on the way.

JEREMY

You had a fantastic one in the third drive. It was a mile high.

RAYMOND

That's generous but I don't think so.

RUPERT

Would you like to come and see how we manage it at Stanton?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (4)

RUPERT (CONT'D)

Next month perhaps. I can give you
four dates to choose from.

This is to Isobel who smiles. Then she sees as Jeremy winks at
Rupert. Behind, McCordle crosses. Anthony pounces.

ANTHONY

William!

He tries what he imagines is a casual chuckle.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You weren't serious last night, were
you?

WILLIAM

I'm afraid so. I was going to tell you
next week but since you asked.

William is irritated. This is exactly what he wanted to avoid.
He looks about for help and seeing George, he holds up his glass
for some more.

ANTHONY

The thing is... I don't think you've
grasped what this would do to the
whole project. What it would do to me.

WILLIAM

Come on. It's not as black as all
that.

ANTHONY

Yes, it bloody well is.

WILLIAM

Well, I'm sorry to hear it, Anthony.
But business is business. I'm not a
Charity Commissioner, you know.

ANTHONY

For Christ's sake, William, I'm
begging you -

Impulsively, he siezes the other man's forearm forgetting about
the full glass of Bloody Mary. It shatters on the paving.
Anthony is horrified. He takes out a handkerchief, offering it
to McCordle.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, old man.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (5)

WILLIAM
Just leave it.

His anger is obvious but contained as George stoops to pick up the pieces and Jennings comes into the doorway. He is just in time. The rain is starting again.

JENNINGS
Luncheon is served.

The company hurries in to the gorgeous table where the servants wait for them.

CONSTANCE
I love a picnic, don't you?

55 INT. MAIDS' ATTIC CORRIDOR. DAY.

Elsie, in a dressing-gown and carrying a sponge bag, opens a door at the end of the corridor. We hear a squawk and a splash.

56 INT. SERVANTS' ATTIC BATHROOM. DAY.

The room is small and spartan without decoration of any sort. Mary, embarrassed and covering herself, has been surprised in the bath.

MARY
Shut the door for heaven's sake.

ELSIE
It's only Lewis. If any of the men
were found up here they'd be sacked on
the spot. Worse luck.

She settles herself on the mean, cork-covered stool. Mary finishes her washing, uneasily concealed behind her arm and her flannel. Elsie watches her, amused

ELSIE (CONT'D)
Don't tell me you're a convent girl.
Or is it Presbyterian modesty? Is the
water hot?

MARY
Not very.

ELSIE
No. And it won't be 'til the guns come
home. I'd better get into yours.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Her Ladyship says Sir William loves his shooting.

ELSIE

Yeah, he does. Can't hit a barn door but he does love it. Sweet, really.

MARY

Last night - no, I shouldn't say.

ELSIE

Yes, you should. What is it?

MARY

Only that...when I went down to wash that shirt, I think he was in the ironing-room. With one of the kitchen maids.

ELSIE

No. It wouldn't have been him.

She is surprisingly definite.

MARY

I think it was. Leastways, he came down the passage a moment later and I don't see how -

ELSIE

No, it wasn't him. Hurry up.

She starts to undress.

56A INT. SERVANTS ATTIC BATHROOM. DAY

Now Mary is putting on her dressing-gown and drying her hair while Elsie is in the bath. She is more comfortable to bathe with a witness than Mary was. They have settled into a gossip.

MARY

You know when you said Sir William could have had his pick? Between Lady Sylvia and Lady Stockbridge?

ELSIE

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

56A CONTINUED:

MARY

Well, I asked her Ladyship about it
and she said...they cut cards for him.

She shares the wicked thought with Elsie.

ELSIE

No!

MARY

I can't believe it either. I s'pose it
was a joke.

ELSIE

I wouldn't be too sure. I heard...

She breaks off with a sigh, catching herself out.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Just listen to me.

MARY

What?

ELSIE

Why do we spend our time living
through them...? Look at poor old
Lewis. If her own mother had a heart
attack, she'd think it was less
important than one of Lady Sylvia's
farts. He always says -

She remembers herself and breaks off.

MARY

Who? Who says what?

ELSIE

Never mind. Doesn't matter...I
dunno...all I want is to be at the
centre of my own life. 'Course if you
say that in this house, Mr Jennings
thinks you're planning to blow up the
Romanovs.

There is a bang on the door. From outside we hear an anguished
voice.

LEWIS

Are you ever coming out?

57

INT. TRENTHAM BEDROOM. EVE.

Mary is fastening Constance into another of the dresses that we saw being hung up earlier with another of the sets of jewels. The mistress is in a jolly mood.

CONSTANCE

You *must* know. You can't fool me. If there's one thing I *don't* look for in a maid, it's discretion. Except with my own secrets, of course.

MARY

Well, I don't know much, milady... Apparently, he was counting on Sir William for an investment and had "guaranteed his interest" — whatever that means... Anyway, Mr Barnes — the Commander's valet — said he wanted to leave at once but Lady Lavinia's persuaded him to stay until tomorrow. To make less of a thing of it.

There is a brisk knock and Sylvia enters. She completely ignores Mary.

SYLVIA

I'm on my way down. This is just a quick warning. For God's sake be careful not to rub him up, tonight.

CONSTANCE

I don't know what you mean.

SYLVIA

You know exactly what I mean. He's in a filthy mood. With everyone... He's talking about stopping your allowance.

CONSTANCE

But it's for life! That was settled! He can't do that!

SYLVIA

Just you watch him. He's absolutely spoiling for a fight and if you'll take my advice, you won't give him one... I've got to go.

She hurries out. This exchange has been in and out of vision as we follow Mary putting things away. Constance catches her eye through the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE
Now that you can be discreet about...

58 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. EVE.

Jennings, with whisky, glasses etc., crosses the hall. Weissman is on the telephone.

WEISSMAN
What am I going to do about it? I'm
going to call his Goddamn bluff. I'll
meet his fucking deadline. That's what
I'm going to do about it!

We just see Sylvia and Louisa respond to his language as
Jennings gets to the library.

59 INT. LIBRARY. EVE.

Jennings opens the door without knocking. He stops dead. Three
men are seated round the fire. William, Novello and Henry.
William is surly as he pets his dog.

WILLIAM
Is her ladyship down yet?

JENNINGS
They're just assembling in the drawing-
room now, sir.

WILLIAM
Well, it won't kill them to wait five
minutes.

He starts to pour as Weissman comes in behind him, taking a
drink from the tray.

WEISSMAN
Wait for it: Sheehan wants a final
script by the fifteenth.

IVOR
That's crazy. You've only just worked
out the story.

WILLIAM
That's all, Jennings.

WEISSMAN (VO)
He knows that. He's just wants an
excuse to renegotiate.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

WEISSMAN (VO) (CONT'D)
He thinks he's losing the studio..
There's talk about Zanuck coming in..

But during this Jennings has left and we with him.

60 INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. EVE.

Jennings is walking toward his own room when Mrs Croft sees him.

MRS CROFT
Oh, Mr Jennings, has that knife turned
up yet?

JENNINGS
Not now.

He goes into his room and shuts the door. Further down the corridor, Mrs Wilson is watching. Mrs Croft retrieves her dignity and retreats into the kitchen.

61 INT. DINING-ROOM. EVE.

Dinner is almost finished. In contrast to the night before, the atmosphere is terrible. George, Arthur and Elsie are carrying round the savouries. Jennings pours wine. William is sulking. A few of the guests are trying to keep things going.

LAVINIA
Goodness, isn't it pretty, here? The
house has such a lovely position.

RAYMOND
The best view's from the old water
tower. We might walk up there
tomorrow. I suppose you really do have
to get back to London?

ANTHONY
I'm afraid we should. When you're
ruined, there's such a lot to do.

This succeeds in further flattening the company as well as exasperating Lavinia and infuriating William. The servants exchange glances as they labour on round.

CONSTANCE
Would anyone care for a game of bridge
after dinner?

FREDDIE
I wouldn't mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONSTANCE

Who else? What about you, Louisa?

LOUISA

I don't think so. I've rather gone off cards. I've never been very lucky with them.

Almost inadvertently, she catches William's eye. He holds her glance, subdued.

WILLIAM

Nor me.

For some reason, this both annoys Sylvia and spurs her into her duty as a hostess.

SYLVIA

Tell me again, Mr Weissman, what's this film you're working on?

WEISSMAN

"Charlie Chan in London." It's a detective mystery.

MABEL

Set in London.

WEISSMAN

Not really. Most of it takes place at a country house-party. Rather like this one... That's where the murder happens.

CONSTANCE

How horrid! And who turns out to have done it?

WEISSMAN

I couldn't tell you that. It'd spoil it for you.

CONSTANCE

But none of us will ever see it.

Her rudeness is quite unconscious. Rupert feels sorry for Weissman.

RUPERT

And are you thinking of making it here?

(CONTINUED)

WEISSMAN

Oh no. We'll build it in the studio. I just wanted to experience a little country living while I was in England and Ivor was good enough to say he could fix it for me.

IVOR

It was William who could fix it.

JEREMY

Are you interested in films, sir?

SYLVIA

Not likely.

WILLIAM

Why shouldn't I be? You don't know what I'm interested in.

SYLVIA

Well, I know you're interested in money and in fiddling with those dreary guns but I agree. When it comes to anything else, I'm stumped.

ELSIE

That's not fair, is it, Bill? You always -

With these words, she has broken the basic rule of domestic service. She has released terrible reverberations by speaking as she did to William. Not only has she called him 'Bill,' *she has engaged in the conversation of the family.* The table is as silent as the dead, forks are stilled in mid-air, glasses half-way to lips. Elsie realises that in one tiny second, in less than a second, she has terminated her employment in that house. After a moment of total immobility, William throws down his napkin and storms out.

Raymond is the first to break the silence. With his voice, normality returns.

RAYMOND

Sylvia, did you ever manage to track down that magnolia you were after? Because, if not, I may have rather a good substitute...

62 INT. MAIDS' ATTIC CORRIDOR. EVE.

Mary comes out of her room, heading for the stairs when Elsie, in tears, pushes past.

MARY

Elsie? What's the matter?

But the girl only goes into the room and slams the door.

63 INT. DINING-ROOM. EVE.

Mary slips in. George and Arthur, with butler's trays, are clearing. George, in baize gloves, helps himself to the end of the odd wine glass. Lingerin in the room are Probert, Barnes, Sarah, Renee, Robert, Dorothy, Lewis and May.

MARY

It's true then?

GEORGE

You should have seen it.

RENEE

What's going to happen to her?

LEWIS

She'll be lucky if they don't boot her out before the morning.

MARY

But she's worked here so long...

BARNES

Shall I tell you what that means to them? Bugger all.

PROBERT

Please, Mr Meredith. There are ladies present... Where is he now?

GEORGE

In the library and he won't come out again tonight.

At this point the door opens and Jennings appears. He looks around at the company.

JENNINGS

May I ask what is going on?

(CONTINUED)

PROBERT

We were just...

JENNINGS

George, will you join me in the drawing-room, please? May, stay and help with the clearing. The rest of you can go back downstairs. I must say I'm surprised at you.

DOROTHY

But Mr Jennings -

To her dismay, he simply turns and leaves. George winks at Mary as he follows.

GEORGE

Bet you're glad you came.

64

INT. DRAWING-ROOM. EVE.

Janet has brought in a tray. She goes into the dining room as George takes the tray to hand round the coffee. Constance is at the bridge table waiting. Rupert is talking softly to Isobel. Sylvia approaches Ivor by the chimneypiece.

SYLVIA

Ivor, darling, is it too awful to ask you to play something? And brighten things up a bit? It would be such a treat...

IVOR

Of course.

He and Weissman walk towards the piano.

WEISSMAN

I've booked a passage and I'll live on the 'phone 'til I sail. But I have to get back to London tomorrow. I can go by train, if you'd rather stay.

IVOR

No, no. I'll take you.

WEISSMAN

You're providing a lot of entertainment for nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IVOR

Morris. I'm used to it.

He starts to play "The Land of Might Have Been". Rupert and Isobel go to take their places at the card table. Jeremy whispers to Rupert.

JEREMY

Good work, old chap. You're doing awfully well.

RUPERT

You don't understand. I -

George holds the tray for Constance who looks up as she pours herself a cup at Mabel lingering for a moment by the card table behind Freddie.

CONSTANCE

My maid was saying how sensible you are to travel light. After all, why *should* one wear a different frock every evening. We're not in a fashion parade.

The players have drawn for dealer and Constance has won. As Isobel cuts the cards for her, Mabel wanders over to the piano in her humiliation.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. EVE.

Robert and Mary are walking towards one of the two green baize doors.

ROBERT

How could she let him touch her?

MARY

You sound as if you don't like him.

ROBERT

You'd be surprised.

MARY

All right then. Surprise me.

ROBERT

Maybe I will.

But she is distracted. From the drawing-room comes the sound of music.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

MARY

Listen.

66 INT. DRAWING-ROOM. EVE.

Ivor is singing another song. The players are bidding. Constance is already bored with the music.

CONSTANCE

What a lovely, long repertoire.

Rupert whispers to Isobel over their cards.

RUPERT

I was wondering if we could have a word later.

ISOBEL

Of course. If you like...

Nearby, Jeremy winks in approval, which Isobel notices. As Constance has won the bidding, Freddie is dummy. Having laid out his cards, he stands.

FREDDIE

I won't be a minute.

He walks to the door. Mabel, by the piano, watches him go.

67 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. EVE.

Mrs Wilson appears with a tray of coffee things. She crosses the hall.

68 INT. LIBRARY. EVE.

William works at his gun table. The tools of his hobby surround him. He has re-routed his rage and now he files a metal part with angry passion and finesse. The door opens.

WILLIAM

What do you want?

MRS WILSON

I've brought you some coffee.

WILLIAM

If I'd wanted coffee I'd have rung for it!

With an impatient gesture he knocks the tray out of her hand. She starts to pick it up.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Never mind that! Just get me some
whisky!

Silently, she stands with the tray and goes to pour the drink.
Her back is to him and she takes her time. He ignores her as she
sets the drink before him and leaves.

69

INT. DRAWING-ROOM. EVE.

Ivor is still singing. The house-party has had enough. Rupert is
dealing the next hand.

CONSTANCE

You're spoiling us, Mr Novello. *Quel
embarras de richesses...* Where on earth
has Freddie got to?

JEREMY

I'll play if you like. Until he gets
back.

He sits between the lovers. At the other end of the room,
Anthony silently steals from the room. Lavinia starts towards
him.

LAVINIA

Anthony -

But he has gone. She returns to her seat on the sofa. Meanwhile,
Jennings, near the door, is in heaven. George tips the remainder
of the milk jug into a cup. He then turns to the enraptured
butler and whispers to him.

GEORGE

Better get some more milk, Mr
Jennings. I won't be a moment.

He holds the empty jug for Jennings to see. He goes to the
dining-room door.

70

INT. DINING-ROOM. EVE.

As he comes in, Janet and May have paused in their clearing.
Arthur stands unashamedly by the connecting door. George almost
bumps into him.

ARTHUR

Why ever have you come out?

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

GEORGE

You can have enough of a good thing.. I want a fag.

He goes.

71 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. EVE.

Renee, Barnes, Sarah and Probert and a reluctant Lewis creep out of the green baize door. Sarah looks back down the stairs.

SARAH

Where's Mr Denton?

The others 'sssh' her, further emphasising the illicitness of their presence.

LEWIS

This isn't right, Mr Probert.

PROBERT

Oh, go on. We're not the only ones.

He nods towards Mary standing listening a little way off. She smiles guiltily.

MARY

I couldn't resist. I was just saying to Mr Par -

She looks round and to her surprise, he has gone.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh. He's gone.

72 INT. THE BASE OF THE KITCHEN STAIRS. EVE.

Mrs Croft, the kitchen maids and Dorothy listen. Mrs Wilson comes downstairs.

MRS WILSON

What's going on? Dorothy. Get on with your work.

MRS CROFT

Excuse me, but Dorothy is under my jurisdiction as well, you know. And i say she can listen to a spot of music if she likes.

Without another word, Mrs Wilson goes into her own room.

73 INT. MAIDS' ATTIC CORRIDOR. EVE./NIGHT.

Henry arrives at a door and knocks gently. Elsie opens it. She has been crying but she is calm now.

ELSIE

Yes? What do you want?

HENRY

I thought you might need cheering up...

ELSIE

Did you? Well, you were wrong.

She shuts the door, leaving him alone.

74 INT./EXT. BACK DOOR/COURTYARD. NIGHT.

The door opens and a pair of male legs and feet, clad in black trousers and shoes appear (it could be any of the men, above or below stairs). It is raining and, for a second, the feet hesitate. Their owner appears to spy some large, muddy walking over-shoes left by a gardener in the porch. The man slips his feet, still in their black pumps, into them. There is a noise. He freezes. Mrs Croft appears through the crack of the open door. She pulls it to and we hear the bolt. After a moment the legs approach. They strain but the door won't budge.

75 INT. DRAWING-ROOM. NIGHT.

Constance, bored to sobs, looks around as she takes a liqueur from Jennings.

CONSTANCE

Where's Anthony? You don't suppose he's gone to worry William again, do you?

SYLVIA

Even Anthony couldn't be that stupid.

Mabel looks over sharply at Constance who greets her with a cheery smile.

76 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

The boots enter the front door, leaving a muddy trail. The music is quite audible.

77 INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

A secret door in the bookshelves opens gently as the booted feet slip in. Leaving a trail of mud, he moves softly across the floor until William's feet come into view. The camera moves up to reveal William in a fiercely concentrated position, holding some part of a gun quite still. He seems frozen. The empty glass is on its side on the table. The hand of the intruder lifts into sight. It is covered in a green baize glove, the type we have seen in Scenes 15 and 61 and it holds the missing knife. With a semi-circular arc, the blade flashes down, over William's shoulder and into his heart. Silently, William slumps forward onto the table, his face crushed into the tools of his hobby. Below him, the wretched Pip whines. After a fraction of a second, the unknown assailant retreats. The concealed bookcase door closes behind him.

78 INT. DRAWING-ROOM. NIGHT.

Freddie returns. Jeremy makes to rise but Freddie stops him as Mabel comes over.

FREDDIE

No, no. Finish the hand.

MABEL

Where have you been?

FREDDIE

Never mind.

Now Anthony Meredith slides back into the room. In answer to Lavinia's enquiries, he just shakes his head reassuringly. George returns with the jug. Jennings speaks sharply under his breath.

JENNINGS

Well if that's a 'moment' I'd like to know what happens when you take a real break. Now give her ladyship some more coffee.

George takes the tray and approaches Sylvia. She holds out her cup.

SYLVIA

George, do you know what's become of Sir William?

GEORGE

I believe he's still in the library, milady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Louisa gets her refill. She is helping herself to milk and sugar so George is still and we can see Sylvia raising her eyebrows at her sister as she drops her voice.

SYLVIA

What are we going to do?

LOUISA

I could try and fetch him if you like.

SYLVIA

Would you, really? He much prefers you to me.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR / RED SALOON. NIGHT.

Mary, Probert and Lewis are still listening as Robert rejoins them. He carries two hot water bottles and hands one over to Mary. It is in a cover bearing the coronetted 'T.'

ROBERT

Here. I did yours as well. Before the rush starts.

Probert and Lewis acknowledge it is time to get to work. They walk away, past the door of the red saloon where we see Louisa. In front of her, Pip noses his way out of the almost closed library door and looks around. Louisa picks him up.

LOUISA

Come here you horrid little thing.
William, I -

But the rest of her speech is swallowed in a scream. At once, the music stops. The guests, followed by the different groups of listening servants, cluster into the red saloon. Isobel cranes forward but Rupert shields her until a sob from Probert brings them all to the door of the library. Mabel screams.

GEORGE

Bleedin' hell...

The body of Sir William McCordle is slumped over his work table. The eyes are open in the red face and the tongue is lolling out. It is clear that Sir William is very dead.

OMITTED

81 EXT. GOSFORD PARK. NIGHT.

A police car arrives. The driver, Constable Dexter, is joined by Inspector Thompson. Vain and clottish, he feels he belongs 'upstairs'. The house party will not agree.

82 INT. SERVANTS' HALL. NIGHT.

The servants are all seated round the table. Some of them, including Elsie, are in dressing-gowns. The atmosphere is mixed. The news is shocking but not particularly sad. Apart from Elsie and the upper servants, many of them, even the resident staff, hardly knew William except by sight. The 'front door' bell jangles on the bellboard.

JENNINGS

I'll go.

Jennings leaves. Elsie is sobbing aloud. Mrs Croft leans over and squeezes her hand. She speaks softly but loud enough for Bertha to hear her.

MRS CROFT

Come on, love. No man's worth it. At any rate, he isn't.

JANET

What are you going to do now, Mr Probert?

PROBERT

I don't know... I can't think straight...

GEORGE

When I leave here, I want to open a garage... Nothing gawdy. Just enough for a decent living.

RENEE

That's a funny ambition for a footman. Why aren't you a chauffeur?

LEWIS

I don't understand. Head footman in a house like this! You could be a butler if you play your cards right. And your future's taken care of!

BARNES

Future's taken care of? Don't make me laugh. Another twenty years and we'll have vanished like the Dodo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEWIS

That's what they said in 1914 but here
we still are.

Mary looks over at Robert, deep in thought. George follows her
eyes.

GEORGE

You're very quiet. What's your
ambition?

ROBERT

I don't think I've got one. Not now.

SARAH

I'm saving to open a hatshop. Very
exclusive, regular clients...

GEORGE

Yes, I bet you'll have regular
clients.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR./SALOON.

Weissman is on the telephone as Jennings crosses to the front
door.

WEISSMAN

I don't understand... I thought they'd
agreed it was a birdshoot... Why is fox
hunting more cinematic? Who said
that?...Oh... Well, OK, if it's a big
deal, make it a fox hunt but what the
hell are we doing here?

Jennings opens the door to the two policemen.

JENNINGS

We've been expecting you.

THOMPSON

Good evening. I'm Inspector Thomp -

Sylvia strides purposefully towards them, talking as she does
so.

SYLVIA

You must be the police.

THOMPSON

Just so. I'm Inspector Thomp -

(CONTINUED)

SYLVIA

I'm Lady Sylvia McCordle. We haven't moved him but I didn't know whether to ring for a doctor or not. William's real one's in London and it seemed very hard to wake him at this time of night.

THOMPSON

The police doctor will be here in a minute.

SYLVIA

Good. I mean I suppose it doesn't really matter if it's a stroke or a heart attack or whatever but we might as well get it right... Let's go straight to the red drawing-room. I've got everyone rounded up there.

Thompson glances at Weissman who is getting heated but Sylvia is in control.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Oh, don't mind him. He's just an American who's staying with us.

She has led them into the saloon, Jennings follows. All the upstairs members of the party are gathered in varying states of shock. Pip is in the corner, whining.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I'd better tell you who we all are then we can go to bed and leave you with poor William. Is that a good plan?

DEXTER

Do we need to worry them just now, sir? We could do it in the -

THOMPSON

Perhaps I should introduce myself. I'm Inspector Thomp -

SYLVIA

This is my aunt, Lady Trentham -

THOMPSON

Of course. The Countess of Trentham. How d'you do?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

83

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

I once had the pleasure of serving on a committee with the late Earl... I'm only sorry we have to meet in such tragic circumstances...

His pompous enunciating of Constance's full title tells her everything about his *petit bourgeois* origins. She wasn't aware that they were 'meeting' at all. Sylvia continues.

SYLVIA

My brother-in-law, Lord Stockbridge. My sister, Lady Stockbridge, ...my youngest sister, Lady Lavinia Meredith, and her husband, Commander Meredith. Mr Novello, I suppose you knew that without my telling you... That'll be all, thank you Jennings...no, wait. Would you like to talk to any of the servants tonight, Inspector -

THOMPSON

Thomp -

SYLVIA

Perhaps you should see Probert. My poor husband's valet. Would you tell him to come up, Jennings? Now, where was I? This is Mr and Mrs Nesbitt, my daughter, Miss McCordle, Lord Rupert Standish and Mr Blond...

But Jennings has picked up Pip and left before she has finished the list.

84

INT. SERVANTS' HALL. NIGHT.

They are still seated as Jennings enters. He gives Pip to the odd man who takes the dog reluctantly. After a moment, Mrs Croft speaks.

MRS CROFT

Well? Don't leave us on tenterhooks.

JENNINGS

The police would like to see you for a moment, Mr Probert.

PROBERT

Me? Why? I don't know what I can tell them...

(CONTINUED)

But he goes, with a sigh and on the edge of tears, followed by sympathetic glances.

JENNINGS

There's no point in the rest of you waiting up.

ELSIE

What about me, Mr Jennings?

JENNINGS

You can leave as soon as the police release you. I dare say that'll be some time tomorrow.

MRS WILSON

Until then stay in your room.

ELSIE

I'm not contagious, you know.

BARNES

I'm sorry, Mr Jennings, but my two want to get away. So we'll be off early.

JENNINGS

Nobody's going anywhere... Now, those of you with remaining duties, see to them as quickly as you can. Otherwise, good night everyone.

He stands aside to let them pass. We hear some exchanges about the dog as they go. 'What's going to happen to it?' 'I should think she'll have it put down.' 'Best thing for it, nasty little beast.' 'No one can stand it except Sir William.' Alone among them, Elsie gives the animal a stroke. 'Don't do that, dear. He'll have your hand off.' While this is going on, Henry hesitates, unusually ill at ease.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

Yes, Mr Weissman?

HENRY

I'm afraid I have a confession to make...

He speaks in an American accent.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Probert walks mournfully past Weissman, still on the telephone.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

WEISSMAN

Warner Olund wants cast approval?
Don't make me laugh! Warner Olund
doesn't have the right to approve his
own toilet!

86 INT. ELSIE'S ATTIC ROOM. NIGHT.

The two young women lie, trying to sleep. Elsie's half-packed
case is visible.

MARY

I'm really sorry... about everything...

ELSIE

Don't feel sorry for me. Pity that
poor Dorothy. She's got all the early
morning teas to do, then trays and
she's got to get Miss Isobel down to
the dining-room - if she can find
anything in black. I'm well out of it.
She's the one who needs your sympathy.

MARY

I should think Miss Isobel might stay
in bed tomorrow.

ELSIE

Unmarried girls don't have breakfast
trays. Not at this house.

They are silent for a bit.

MARY

I wish I could help.

ELSIE

Well, you can't.

87 INT. STOCKBRIDGE BEDROOM. NIGHT

Renee is arranging the blanket cover on the bed. Behind her,
Louisa sits at the dressing-table, wiping her eyes. In an open
doorway, Raymond stands quite still as Robert slides his gown on
and then comes round to set the lapels and tie the sash.

ROBERT

Is that everything, m'lord?

RAYMOND

Yes, thank you, Parks. I think we'd
all better try and get some sleep.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

He nods at Renee and the two servants retire together, just in time to hear:

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Do stop snivelling. Anyone would think you were Italian.

88 INT. SALOON. NIGHT.

George is tidying up. He gives a cold glance over to where Henry is helping himself, Weissman and Novello to brandy from a tray. Ivor remarks his expression.

WEISSMAN

That's the main problem. Fox hasn't got anyone. Apart from a few washed-up silent stars... How are you getting on?

HENRY

Mrs Wilson's put me in the meanest room she could find.

IVOR

What did you expect? The State Bedchamber? You've made them feel like idiots. And they don't like it... Has anyone told Sylvia?

WEISSMAN

She'll be OK. She can take a joke.

Henry and Ivor exchange a look. They are not so sure.

IVOR

You'd better be the one to say it. I should go now. Before she hears it from someone else.

WEISSMAN

But don't tell her 'til afterwards. I wouldn't want to spoil it for her. Tonight of all nights.

His bitter tone does not merit an answer. Henry goes to the door. Weissman follows.

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

Wait! I didn't mean that... Henry... will I see you later?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

I spent last night staring at the ceiling listening to the ramblings of a sleep-talking valet... I really think I need some rest, don't you?

He goes. Weissman turns disconsolately back into the room.

IVOR

That's not like you. Don't tell me you're jealous. He's not in the least interested, you know. He's just using you.

WEISSMAN

Why shouldn't he? I'm using him. It's a deal and I stick to my deals... I'm just surprised McCordle was right about her, that's all.

IVOR

I suppose a man knows his own wife. Besides, she has a point. Good-looking servants are the best. They don't dine with your friends.

INT. SYLVIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Sylvia, dry-eyed, lies on her bed as a sniffing Lewis goes round turning off the lights.

LEWIS

I'll say goodnight then, milady. Unless you'd like me stay with you?

Lewis goes. Sylvia crosses to the window. A noise tells her Henry has come in. He stands, hesitating to speak.

SYLVIA

What is it? Please tell me you haven't come with condolences.

She looks very beautiful and he is reluctant to jeopardise his fun.

HENRY

No, I - I was just wondering if you wanted some company.

He is Scottish again. She stares at him steadily for a moment before she answers.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

SYLVIA

Well... after all, I suppose life must
go on...

90 INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

Probert is in tears. Dexter is sympathetic. Thompson is rather
embarrassed.

THOMPSON

Try and pull yourself together, Mr
Probert. I know it's hard but if you
could be patient. They'll be here any
minute...

PROBERT

Couldn't I just make him comfortable,
sir? Please?

William, his face crushed into his tool collection, does look
very uncomfortable in his present position. Probert's grief has
brought Ivor and Weissman to the door.

IVOR

Come on, Inspector.

DEXTER

It wouldn't be wise, sir. And it's not
long to wai -

THOMPSON

Oh, very well. I don't suppose it can
do any harm.

Probert takes hold of the dead man's shoulders. Is there a
moment of tenderness? He gives a cry and the body falls back. As
William's arms flop open and his head drops back, mouth gaping,
his chest is revealed. The handle of the knife protrudes from
it. By this time, Weissman has joined them. The five live men
stare at the dead one.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Right. Well. Now you can see why we
have the rules... Yes, Dexter? What is
it?

DEXTER

Only that... there doesn't seem to be
much blood, sir.

This is true and Thompson registers it. The fact is everything
has changed.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

IVOR

What happens next?

It's a good question.

91 EXT. GOSFORD PARK. EARLY MORNING.

The dawn of a new day. An undecorated hearse, laden with a coffin, drives away. The only sign of life is the small dog watching sadly from the steps.

92 INT. KITCHEN. EARLY MORNING.

The scullery maid blows on the range fire, trying to get it going. Bertha is laying out breakfast food. Ellen puts the silver entrée dishes in the warmer. Mrs Croft consults a menu book and writes her proposals for the day. Pip sniffs around.

BERTHA

George says Mr Novello was in on it.
And Sir William. He says it was a joke
on Lady Sylvia but I can't see that...
The point is he's playing a butler in
the next Charlie Chan and he wanted to
make it authentic.

ELLEN

Well, he'd better not model his
performance on Mr Jennings or they'll
think he's as stiff as a board.

Their laughter is stilled as Thompson's head looks round the door. They all freeze, watching him. At first he faces the wrong way and so the room must appear empty to him. Then Ellen giggles and he spins round, stands and enters. Dexter is with him.

THOMPSON

Ah... Mrs Croft? I wonder if you could
spare a few minutes. My name's
Inspector Thomp -

MRS CROFT

I've no time for this now. I'm just
doing the breakfast...

THOMPSON

It won't take long. Is there somewhere
we could go? They're still cleaning
upstairs... You can manage without her,
I dare say?

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

If this is a pleasantry, it falls on deaf ears. The others just watch him.

MRS CROFT

Well... I suppose you'd better come in here... Bertha, I'm leaving you in charge. Mind you see the menus go up on her ladyship's tray. And get that filthy dog out of here.

92A OMITTED

93 OMITTED

93A INT. MRS CROFT'S ROOM. DAY.

Mrs Croft has ushered Thompson into a cosy, little room at the back. He glances at an old tinted photograph of a baby in blue ribbons on her desk.

THOMPSON

My word, but you've a bonny lad there. What's he up to these days?

MRS CROFT

He's dead.

Once again, his jocularly has failed. He smiles nervously. Mrs Croft is quite cold.

MRS CROFT (CONT'D)

I don't know what I can tell you. Shouldn't you be looking for signs of a break-in?

THOMPSON

I gather there's no one here who's worked for Sir William longer than you have... Sad day...

94 INT. TRENTAM BEDROOM. DAY.

Mary pours tea. On the tray, as we saw in 92A is a dish of sliced cucumber.

MARY

But why one of the knives from the silver pantry? Doesn't make sense.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

He must have forgotten to bring one.
And when you think what they have to
carry about, all those gemmies and
torches and skeleton keys... it's a
miracle anyone ever gets burgled at
all. It's worse than shooting. Anyway,
it wasn't in the silver pantry. It's
been missing since last night.
Obviously, William had taken it and
when the fellow surprised him, there
it was on the table as handy as you
like... By the way, are any of the
others getting up for breakfast? The
women, I mean.

MARY

I think Lady Lavinia may be.

CONSTANCE

That settles it. Come back at half
past eight and I'll get dressed. The
greatest bore of course but I don't
want to miss anything.

She takes two of the slices of cucumber, lays them on her eyes
and lies back.

94A

INT. ISOBEL'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Isobel, in night things, is discussing it all with Elsie who is
now in civilian clothes.

ISOBEL

But...do they know where he got in? Did
he take anything?

ELSIE

No, but... I s'pose he ran for it... when
he saw what he'd done... Are you going
to be O.K.?

There is a knock. Elsie ducks behind the door as it opens on
Dorothy.

DOROTHY

I wondered if you needed anything,
miss...

ISOBEL

If you could just get a bath ready for
me...

(CONTINUED)

The maid nods and closes the door. Isobel goes to a drawer and fetches an envelope.

ISOBEL (CONT'D)

When I came up last night I found this
on my dressing-table.

ELSIE

What is it?

Isobel hands it over.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

'This is your final warning. If I have
not received an offer from your father
by luncheon tomorrow, I will tell him
everything. Freddie.' Stupid idiot. At
least he's off your back. That's
something. He's got no one to tell
now. At least, no one who'd give him a
job to shut him up.

ISOBEL

You can't be sure. He might tell
Rupert just for the fun of it... No
doubt I'll hear from him soon enough.

The girl shrugs, limp with misery.

ELSIE

I'd better be off. I might not see you
again. I'm only staying 'til the
police give the nod.

ISOBEL

You're not in any... difficulty, are
you?

ELSIE

Other than having no job and no home,
you mean?

She relents, lightly stroking her stomach. Isobel, after all,
has done her no harm.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

No. No worries there.

ISOBEL

I was forgetting. You're much cleverer
than I was.

95 OMITTED

96 INT. BRUSHING ROOM. DAY.

Mary and Renee are working on some tweeds when Robert walks in carrying his employer's tweed suit.

MARY

I don't know why we're bothering.
They're bound to cancel the shooting
today.

ROBERT

Why?

The others are silenced for a moment by his response. Then:

MARY

I wonder what Lady Sylvia will do now.

RENEE

If I were her, I'd go to London. Set
up as a glamorous widow with all the
gentlemen chasing me for my money.

ROBERT

Not me. I grew up in London.

MARY

Is that where the orphanage was?

ROBERT

On the edge. Isleworth.

MARY

And you don't get homesick?

ROBERT

I don't think you're homesick if
you've never had a home... Have you
heard about Mr Weissman's valet?

RENEE

What about him?

ROBERT

Turns out he's a fraud. He isn't
Scottish at all.

MARY

I could have told you that. Who is he,
then?

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

A horrible thought strikes her.

MARY (CONT'D)

You don't think he's the murderer, do you?

ROBERT

Worse than that. He's an actor.

MRS WILSON

Your breakfast is ready in the Servants' Hall. After that the water should be hot enough for the baths.

How long has she been listening?

97 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. DAY.

Weissman is on the telephone which Thompson wants. Jennings is with them.

THOMPSON

I'm afraid I must insist.

WEISSMAN

I'll have to call you back. Don't go to sleep.

DEXTER

It might be more sensible if I drove you down to the village, sir.

THOMPSON

Thank you, Dexter. I know what I'm doing. This really is the only one, is it?

He is very important as he considers the exposed position of the implement.

JENNINGS

There's an extension in the servants' quarters. If you'd rather use that.

THOMPSON

I don't think so, thank you.

WEISSMAN

How long are you going to be?

(CONTINUED)

97

CONTINUED:

THOMPSON

I have no idea... Hello? Yes, I want to place a Trunk Call. To London.

The camera moves away from him into a side corridor where Sarah stands listening.

98

INT. GALLERY. DAY.

Sarah, Renee and Barnes, carrying towels and bags are queuing at a door.

RENEE

You listened to the Inspector on the telephone? That's disgusting.

SARAH

I couldn't help it. I was just crossing the hall.

BARNES

So? What was he saying?

RENEE

Don't tell us. I don't want to know. It's eavesdropping.

But hers is not the consensus. And, at last, even Renee must admit she is curious.

RENEE (CONT'D)

Oh, go on, then.

SARAH

Well. He was talking to a lawyer in London. And it sounded to me as if Sir William had decided to change his -

The door opens and Isobel McCordle appears. The sight of her silences them.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I hope we didn't disturb you, miss... we're ever so sorry about...

Isobel just nods and hurries away. Barnes is starting to rinse and prepare the bath, when he sees Renee looking at her watch.

BARNES

What's the matter? Is yours in a hurry? Y'can go before me if you like.

(CONTINUED)

98

CONTINUED:

RENEE

That's very kind. Are you sure? Won't Commander Meredith mind?

BARNES

Sod him. Let him wait. I don't care.

RENEE

Well, Sarah? Don't keep us in suspense.

Sarah continues to relay her findings as, a little way down the gallery, Lewis listens with interest.

99

INT. NESBITT BEDROOM. DAY.

Dorothy has brought Mabel's breakfast tray as Freddie comes in finishing his tie.

FREDDIE

Where's that George? Really, the slightest upset and these fellows go completely to pieces. How am I supposed to manage?

MABEL

Don't talk nonsense. You dress at home without any help.

FREDDIE

Well, I certainly never get any help from you.

MABEL

Pay no attention. He's in a bait and I know why.

She gives Dorothy a friendly wink.

100

INT. GALLERY/UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR.

May passes with her box as the Merediths emerge. They start down the stairs as Barnes comes out of their room, just in time to hear what Anthony is saying.

ANTHONY

There is one thing: The bastard's death may have saved my bacon.

LAVINIA

For God's sake be quiet. What is the matter with you?

(CONTINUED)

100

CONTINUED:

Barnes's face assumes a look of power. He makes a V-sign at Anthony's back. As the Merediths reach the hall, Janet walks past Weissman who is on the telephone.

WEISSMAN

I know what time it is there.. Of course I want you to wake him up. How else would you suggest I talk to him..? Is that you? Well.. what did he say? Clara Bow? You're not serious. He wants to try that again!

The Merediths and Janet go towards the dining-room as Arthur arrives from downstairs carrying an entrée dish and opens the door.

101

INT. DINING-ROOM. DAY.

Rupert, Jeremy and Raymond are eating while Jennings stands by. Constance, choosing her food, looks up as the Merediths come in. The men read newspapers.

CONSTANCE

Good morning, dear. Have you heard? Too tiresome. That frightful inspector won't let anyone leave! So we're to be treated to another day of Mr Weissman shouting down the telephone.

IVOR

He has a problem with his work in Los Angeles, I'm afraid.

CONSTANCE

Well, he conducts his business very oddly. Coming down stairs just now, I thought I'd been transported to a bar in Marseilles.

Ivor doesn't contradict which is the right way to handle her.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

I gather they carted poor William off this morning. So strange and sad. Will they want to delay the funeral? I do hope it's not next week. I was meant to be with the de l'Isles and I was so looking forward to it.

IVOR

You must try not to upset yourself.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

Anthony and Raymond laugh which earns them a black look.
Weissman comes in.

WEISSMAN

I have a call coming through and I
want to take it no matter what.

JENNINGS

Very good, sir.

WEISSMAN

Now, could I have some eggs and is
there any tomato?

JENNINGS

Of course, sir. Or perhaps you'd like
to come and choose for yourself.

WEISSMAN

Oh? What? Cafeteria style?

At this, Raymond looks up from the paper he is reading as he
eats.

RAYMOND

An Englishman is never waited on at
breakfast.

WEISSMAN

Well, that's interesting because an
American is.

He stands and goes to the sideboard, Thompson looks in, as
gauche as ever.

THOMPSON

Ah. Good. Tell me, will Lady Sylvia be
down soon?

CONSTANCE

I shouldn't think so. She has
breakfast in her room and then she
usually goes for a ride.

THOMPSON

Possibly. But I doubt she will this
morning.

He is very assured but their expressions tell us that they do
not agree.

(CONTINUED)

101

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

In that case... Lady Trentham, I wonder if I might have a few words? We're in the library. Whenever you're ready.

CONSTANCE

If you wish, Inspector. I'm afraid I won't be much help... but I suppose on a day like this we all have to pull our weight.

The door opens and Isobel enters. Her black frock and air of sadness cast a pall on the room. Rupert jumps up to help her with breakfast and Jeremy looks on.

102

EXT. KITCHEN COURT. DAY.

Robert is emerging from the laundry. In one corner of the yard is a game larder. Ellen is there holding some birds and Bertha comes out with more. She nods at Robert.

ROBERT

Do you want a hand?

He relieves her of some of the birds as Pip jumps up at them.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Get away! Ugh. These smell as if they could walk in on their own. I don't know how they can eat them like that.

ELLEN

You heard Mr Denton's made a right chump out of Mr Jennings.

BERTHA

Never mind that. What about Sir William? Apparently he wasn't stabbed after all. I mean he was but that's not why he died. He was poisoned. That's what killed him. The Inspector told Mrs Croft. They don't know why the killer stabbed him as well but he must have been dead already. That's why there was no blood. Dead bodies don't bleed, you know.

Robert looks at her. She's awfully proud to have the facts. Ellen bursts out laughing.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

ELLEN

Trust Sir William to be murdered twice.

103 INT. BUTLER'S PANTRY. DAY.

George and Arthur, supervised by Jennings, clean the huge centrepiece with various tools. Among these, one jar is labelled poison. Probert watches but does not help.

ARTHUR

Did he say anything about changing his will, Mr Probert?

PROBERT

Not in so many words...

They all look at the valet. Clearly he does know something whatever he says.

PROBERT (CONT'D)

Well, I remember him looking at a picture of her ladyship a week or two ago... the one on the tallboy in his dressing-room where she's laughing... Anyway, he said 'her nose is due for re-setting' and I said 'why' and he said 'cos it's about to go out of joint.'

ARTHUR

Except it isn't.

GEORGE

Exactly.

ARTHUR

Why do you think he was murdered, Mr Jennings?

JENNINGS

Don't talk nonsense. Of course he wasn't murdered! Not like that. Some ruffian broke in, thinking the library was empty, Sir William surprised him and paid the price for it. And very tragic it is, too.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

GEORGE

I can't see that, Mr Jennings. I mean,
I don't think ruffians go about
poisoning people and then stabbing
their corpses. Apart from anything
else, they're usually in a bit of a
hurry.

JENNINGS

What are you suggesting?

GEORGE

I'm not suggesting anything. Just...

JENNINGS

Just what?

GEORGE

Well, it looks to me like Sir William
was killed by someone who meant to do
it. That's all. No wonder they won't
let anyone leave. Tough luck on
whoever's got any secrets to hide...

JENNINGS

If you can only talk rubbish, George,
I suggest you don't talk at all.

George's tone was almost jocular. Jennings's is not. George
catches Arthur's eye.

104 INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Mrs Croft is in the kitchen with the others.

MRS CROFT

Right. They've cancelled the shooting
so Muggins here's got to pull a dining-
room luncheon for God knows how many
out of the hat...Is her Ladyship back
yet?

BERTHA

No.

MRS CROFT

Then she'll have to take what she's
given.

ETHEL

I dunno... Why would anyone want to kill
Sir William?

(CONTINUED)

MRS CROFT

Well he wasn't Father Christmas.

This gets the attention of all the girls which she shrugs off.

MRS CROFT (CONT'D)

He made a few enemies in his time.

LOTTIE

What d'you mean, "enemies"? When?

BERTHA

Was this before the war? When you were a factory worker?

MRS CROFT

Excuse me, I was not a factory worker. I was never a factory worker. I was a cook in one of his factories. He had four, two in Isleworth and two in Twickenham. And all full of girls so you can imagine...

ELLEN

But wasn't it risky? With factory girls? Suppose they'd complained?

MRS CROFT

Who to, exactly?

BERTHA

But suppose they got...?

MAUD

Got what?

MRS CROFT

I don't know why you're looking so shocked. Didn't happen that often but if it did, he'd arrange an adoption.

BERTHA

But if you didn't want it adopted? If you wanted to keep it?

MRS CROFT

Then you lost your job. Kicked out. You take my word for it. He was a hard-hearted randy old sod.

ELLEN

So the business with Elsie...

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: (2)

MRS CROFT

Just shows a leopard never changes his spots. Now come on the rest of you. Just because Sir William's died doesn't mean the clock's stopped.

105 EXT. KITCHEN COURT. DAY.

Lewis stands in the back entrance watching as her mistress canters into the yard. To the maid's surprise, Raymond steps out of the shadows. He hurries to Sylvia as she dismounts. We can only just hear that Sylvia is indignant. "Why shouldn't I? I wanted some air." Raymond appears to be remonstrating as soon as the groom leads the horse away. Drawn by curiosity, Lewis edges nearer until she is within earshot.

RAYMOND

They seem to be asking a whole lot of questions about things that can't possibly have anything to do with William's death... and I thought...

He hesitates, noticing the approaching maid.

SYLVIA

Never mind Lewis. The Seal of the Confessional's got nothing on her. Has it, Lewis?

LEWIS

I should hope not, milady.

Sylvia smiles at her indignation, addressing Raymond in a stage whisper.

SYLVIA

She's rather anti-Catholic... So?

RAYMOND

It's only that the police seem to be raking about, looking for their grubby motives, and I don't want them muddled with with silly tales from the distant past...

SYLVIA

But darling, you're quite safe. I'm sure it's not illegal. Even for someone who does it as badly as you do.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

She shares this with Lewis who, despite the personal morality of a Carmelite nun, delights in her mistress's defeat of a mere man.

RAYMOND

That's exactly what I'm talking about.
You say things to be funny that can't
be unsaid... And it's not important.

SYLVIA

But isn't it for them to say what's
important and what isn't? Yes, Lewis?
What is it?

LEWIS

The Inspector's been asking for you,
milady, and I wanted you to know... he's
been talking to the lawyers in
London...

SYLVIA

Has he, indeed? Well, he'll have to
wait. I want a bath. Who's in the
firing line at the moment?

LEWIS

I think Lady Trentham's in the library
just now, milady.

SYLVIA

God help them.

106 INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Mary is by the door. Thompson has been talking to Constance.
Dexter is an observer.

THOMPSON

Ah, come in Miss Maceachhh... er... I'm
Inspector Thomp -

CONSTANCE

There you are, Mary. This is all too
tiresome and absurd. They're making
the greatest fuss over -

THOMPSON

If you don't mind - I've some
questions I'd like to ask the young
lady.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

Well, I'm certainly not leaving if
that's what you think.

Thompson looks to Dexter. This is just the kind of woman he
could do without.

THOMPSON

Would it bother you if Lady Trentham
stays?

MARY

Why should it?

THOMPSON

No reason. Only... we understand that
there may have been some difficulty
between the late Sir William McCordle
and your employer -

CONSTANCE

Really, this is too vulgar almost to
be believed -

MARY

I wasn't aware of that, sir. They got
on well as far as I could see.

Constance relaxes with a superior smile at Thompson as he flails
about.

THOMPSON

So you weren't conscious of any
trouble over an allowance? An
allowance, I might add, that Sir
William's death has now made secure.

MARY

What sort of an allowance would that
be, sir?

Constance regards the girl with far more interest than she has
ever done before.

INT. IRONING AND SEWING ROOM. DAY.

Dorothy is mending a black dress. She looks up. Jennings is in
the doorway.

JENNINGS

I wondered who was in here. I hope
you've got enough light for that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

Black on black. Don't want you going blind on top of everything else.

DOROTHY

Miss Isobel's only got two black frocks and this one's torn.

JENNINGS

I'm sorry the business with Elsie's landed you with so much work. That's what you get for being so reliable.

This comment, simply meant, lights a fire in Dorothy's soul.

DOROTHY

Never mind me... Have you spoken to the police again?

JENNINGS

Not yet...

DOROTHY

I suppose they have to ask their questions.

JENNINGS

Oh yes...

DOROTHY

Will they be talking to all of us?

JENNINGS

I shouldn't think so... Well, I'll leave you to it. I could ask Miss Lewis to give you a hand with that if you like...

Plainly he is distracted with some sort of worry. She looks at him tenderly.

DOROTHY

No need. It's nearly done... Mr Jennings... You know I'd say anything you want me to..

JENNINGS

What?

DOROTHY

Anything at all. I don't care what I tell them. If it'll help. You know that, don't you? You've only to ask.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (2)

Her face has never been more suffused with feeling. Jennings is horrified to be confronted with this unwanted declaration of love.

108 INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

George is arranging tea on a table for Thompson, Dexter and Sylvia.

THOMPSON

No. The point I'm trying to make is only that if he had signed it, then your position would have been quite altered.

SYLVIA

I suppose so. But he didn't.

THOMPSON

Precisely... May I pour you some tea?

In his brain, he is Poirot as he reaches down and picks up the milk jug.

SYLVIA

How kind you are. But could you bear to put my milk in afterwards?

She smiles, enjoying his gaffe as he clumsily replaces the jug and picks up the pot.

109 INT. JENNINGS'S ROOM. DAY.

Gathered at the door, the servants listen to Jennings.

JENNINGS

I assume, by this time, you all know that Mr Denton has played a trick on us in posing as a valet. Since Sir William was aware of the plan, it is not for me, or any of you, to criticise it. However, it leaves us with a few adjustments to make for this evening. Arthur, you can take over dressing Mr Weissman. Which leaves us with the problem of Mr Novello. I really don't want to ask Mr Probert.

ARTHUR

I don't mind, Mr Jennings.

(CONTINUED)

JENNINGS

No, you've got enough on your plate.

Arthur's hopes are dashed again. Robert looks up.

ROBERT

I'll do him if you like.

JENNINGS

That's very generous of you, Mr Stockbridge. Otherwise, I could always do him, myself.

ROBERT

No, no. It's no trouble. It's only for a night or two.

JENNINGS

Good. That's settled then. And I think Mr Denton can dress himself. Thank you all. You can go.

With Lewis muttering 'cheeky beggar,' they file out leaving only Probert and Mrs Wilson. Jennings goes to a table where he has a bottle of port, a decanter, a glass and a funnel. He starts to open and then taste and decant the port with care.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

I'm giving them a glass of the 1912 tonight. They'll need a bit of cheering up.

MRS WILSON

What about you, Mr Probert? How are you getting on? Have you made any plans yet?

PROBERT

I think I'll go to my sister's for a week or two. Sort something out. I've an idea she and I might open a little hotel together, well, a B and B really. We've talked about it and this might be the moment...

MRS WILSON

What? You mean you won't stay on in service? I am surprised.

JENNINGS

Are you Mrs Wilson? When every day one reads of another house sold as a school or demolished to make way for a hospital? Maybe Mr Probert's right. Maybe we're nothing but a race of dinosaurs...

He smiles sadly at his little joke. His next words confirm this is the end of an era.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, I too may be leaving here soon.

MRS WILSON

I very much hope not.

JENNINGS

Me too. Me too... but one is not Always in control of these things...and please don't concern yourself. Believe me, I have fully deserved whatever comes.

MRS WILSON

There are worse people than you in this house.

INT. BOOT ROOM. DAY.

Robert and Mary are cleaning evening shoes. They wear aprons and gloves.

ROBERT

Certainly they'll give her a good reference. Otherwise they'd have to explain why they were giving her a bad one.

This makes her smile. She gets her nerve up.

MARY

Mr Parks -

ROBERT

Robert.

She is torn between pleasure at this mark of his regard and the question that's been troubling her.

110 CONTINUED:

MARY

Robert, then...it's just...when you said, last night, that you'd surprise me...you didn't mean anything by it, did you?

ROBERT

What do you think?

MARY

Don't frighten me.

ROBERT

Why? Don't you like surprises?

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Better get cracking. I've got two grown men to dress.

He stands, taking off the apron. Then he reaches out and gives a soft pinch to her cheek.

111 INT. LIBRARY/UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. DAY.

Barnes, the valet, is being questioned.

THOMPSON (VO)

"The bastard's death may have saved my bacon..." What do you think he meant by that?

BARNES

Isn't it obvious?

Nothing is obvious to Thompson.

THOMPSON

Is it?

DEXTER

Perhaps he meant that the investment Sir William had agreed would have to be paid now. By the executors or who-

THOMPSON

What about the low shot that was fired when they were out that morning? Do you think it might have been intended for Sir William?

BARNES

Well, it nearly took his ear off.

(CONTINUED)

111

CONTINUED:

THOMPSON

Thank you, Mr Barnes. You've been very helpful. Now, perhaps you would ask Captain Meredith to join us.

BARNES

You won't... tell him what I said, will you, Inspector - ?

THOMPSON

Thompson. My name is Inspector
Thompson. Now please fetch him down.

Barnes, slightly unnerved by the anger he has released, retreats. As he closes the door, we can hear Weissman on the telephone. Barnes walks past him through the hall.

WEISSMAN

You tell me: Who is Ray Milland? O.K. but no Clara Bow, no Janet Gaynor. Tell him I'll sign Milland if we can be free of the un-dead. No, the study was fine. No the shoot-out in the study is fine. Yes, I'm sure. Philip may be writing it but I'm living it. The stables? Why would anyone be murdered in the stables?... What is it with Sheehan and these fucking horses?

112

INT. KITCHEN CORRIDOR. EVE.

George is smoking and gossiping with Arthur. Nearby May and Janet are unloading coal scuttles full of a mixture of coal and debris from the upstairs fires. The men make no effort to help.

ELSIE

Pssst!

They look up. Elsie is above them on the stairs. Again, she is wearing her own clothes.

GEORGE

They'll be coming in a minute. The dressing bell's just gone.

ELSIE

I'm going mad up there... I've read all me magazines twice over... You couldn't pinch one from the library, could you? I don't care if it's "Horse and Hound" so long as I haven't read it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Renee, Sarah, Barnes, Mary and Robert are in the corridor, carrying bits of clothing.

RENEE

What's yours wearing? We've only got dark green...

SARAH

I don't think mine's bothered. She hasn't got any black here, anyway.

MARY

Funny lot, aren't they? When you think about it. Changing for dinner on a day like this -

She breaks off as Henry Denton appears, behind Elsie, on the stairs. There is a pause.

BARNES

Well. We are honoured. In case you've forgotten, this is the servants' area. Sir. Yours is on the other side of the door at the top, there. Sir.

HENRY

It was just... I wanted to explain...

GEORGE

No explanation's necessary, Mr Denton, now if you'll excuse us, we have work to do. Come on, Arthur.

The footmen take the scuttles and go. The others push past him. Robert is the last.

HENRY

Robert, surely... It was just a laugh...

ROBERT

Then perhaps you'd better enjoy your laugh in the drawing-room, sir.

He speaks without malice but, having spoken, he too is gone. Elsie speaks.

ELSIE

They're afraid you'll repeat things. That you won't be discreet.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY

But I'm very discreet. That's what I'm known for. My discretion.

ELSIE

You never give up, do you?

113 INT. GALLERY. EVE.

Robert is walking down the gallery. He hears voices coming from an open doorway.

ISOBEL

You can tell him but he won't give you any money...and Mummy wouldn't pay five pounds to save me from the gallows...

FREDDIE

Don't keep talking as if I was enjoying this. What I wanted was a job...

As Robert reaches them, by Isobel's door, they are silent. Then, after he has passed:

ISOBEL

My chequebook's in the library. I'll do it after dinner.

Freddie leaves as Robert is hailed by Raymond at the far end of the gallery. Before the valet can reach him, Raymond sees Anthony approach, looking haggard.

RAYMOND

You look as if you've had rather a pasting.

ANTHONY

They kept on and on about that low shot yesterday...They wouldn't let it go. I told them it was nothing to do with me.

RAYMOND

I'm sure you did. But another time, Anthony, try to be less greedy.

Before Anthony can protest, Raymond addresses Robert who's nearly reached them.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Ah, Parks. Can you see to Mr Novello first? I want to have a word with her ladyship.

With a quick "very good, m'lord", Robert moves off. Anthony has been hovering, trying to get a word in.

ANTHONY

Raymond, I don't know why you -

RAYMOND

I saw you. Of course it was an accident. When a man's as short as you are, it must be hard to gauge the height of the birds. But, next time, do be more careful. Please.

His tone is quite dismissive as he goes into the room and shuts the door, leaving Anthony completely humiliated in front of the valet.

114 INT. TRENTHAM BEDROOM. EVE.

Constance is finishing her toilet with Mary's help.

MARY

You heard he was cutting Lady Sylvia out in favour of Miss Isobel?

CONSTANCE

That's nothing. Wait for *this*...in the new will he'd left Lady Stockbridge a *hundred thousand pounds*. Can you imagine? Sylvia thinks it's a huge joke. Particularly since she won't have to pay it.

MARY

But were they...?

CONSTANCE

Well, as the saying goes, the time to make up your mind about people is never... Which reminds me, I haven't complimented you on how you managed those horrible little men in the library... I've been thinking, Mary. You're not a trainee any more. It's time your salary reflected your skills. We'll talk about it when we get home.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

The power balance, between these two has been quite altered by the last 24 hours.

115 INT. NOVELLO BEDROOM/GALLERY. EVE.

Robert crouches on the floor holding a shoe horn inside the back of a pair of evening pumps as a black-socked foot enters the frame and is guided into the shoe.

IVOR (VO)

He was an odd mixture. Better and worse than people thought him. It's strange but he always seemed to me the luckiest man I'd ever met... until now. I wonder what his star sign was.

Robert stands and starts to brush Ivor's tails. He speaks without thinking.

ROBERT

Gemini, sir.

IVOR

How on earth do you know that?

Robert picks up two shirts and some underwear.

ROBERT

I think I'd better have these washed, sir. They still won't say how long you're going to be here.

116 INT. STOCKBRIDGE BEDROOM. DAY.

With a swift know, Renee opens the door. A savage row is in progress.

RAYMOND

Don't lie to me, you bitch!

Suddenly they are aware of the maid. There is a frozen moment. Until:

RENEE

Lady Lavinia won't be in black, milady. So we should be all right. But we ought to get started..

With a supreme effort, Raymond regains control. He walks to the door.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

RAYMOND

We'll talk about it later.

LOUISA

If you like. I've got nothing else to say.

RAYMOND

I just want you to be honest with me.

LOUISA

Do you Raymond? And suppose I want you to be honest with me?

117 INT. SERVANTS' HALL. EVE.

Barnes, Probert and the other valets and ladies' maids are relaxing. The boy is wiping down the table after the servants' dinner. Jennings looks in.

JENNINGS

You don't know where Commander Meredith might have got to, do you?

BARNES

No.

JENNINGS

Only he's never come downstairs and he's not in his room.

BARNES

Mr. Jennings, I have washed him and dressed him. If he can't find his way to the drawing room, it's not my fault.

JENNINGS

Well, we can't delay dinner much longer.

BARNES

Then he'll have to go hungry, won't he?

The others are torn between shock and amusement. Pip wanders up to Barnes' chair and he savagely kicks him away. Probert looks at Jennings and raises his brows.

118

INT. STILL ROOM. NIGHT.

Dorothy comes in with a tray of things for the morning. She starts. Sitting alone in the darkness, is Anthony Meredith. He is in evening dress.

DOROTHY

I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to disturb you...

ANTHONY

No, no. Please... Come in... I'm afraid I'm in your way...

DOROTHY

No... it's no bother... Are you all right, sir?

ANTHONY

I've been questioned by the Inspector... I feel a little bruised.

He glances out of the dark window. When he speaks, he does not turn to her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Why is it, would you say, that some people seem to get whatever they want in life? Everything they touch turns to gold... While others can strive and strive... and have nothing...

He looks across with a face devoid of hope. Still she stands, listening.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I wonder... Do you believe in luck? Do you think some men are lucky and some just... aren't, and there's nothing they can do about it?

Dorothy ponders for a moment. Of course he has asked her own question.

DOROTHY

I believe in love. Not just getting it... giving it. I think as long as you can love somebody, whether or not they love you, then it's worth it...

For a moment the defeated duo look at each other. The Master and the Maid. He nods.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

ANTHONY

Good answer... I'd better go up. They
must have finished dinner by now...
Thank you...

He is gone.

119 INT. DRAWING-ROOM. NIGHT.

The mood is subdued. Constance, Louisa, Lavinia and Raymond are playing bridge. George takes the coffee tray to Isobel and Rupert at one end of the room.

ISOBEL

If only I could believe you...

RUPERT

I wish you would.

George moves on to Sylvia who is reading a magazine. Henry sits near her.

HENRY

There's an article in that on
Blenheim. Are you interested in
houses?

SYLVIA

Not very.

She answers without looking up. Behind, Ivor plays "Keep the Home Fires Burning".

MABEL

Oh, how that tune used to make me cry.

Turning to say this, her eye is caught by Isobel handing something to Freddie by the door. Louisa speaks from the card table as she takes a drink from Jennings.

LOUISA

Couldn't you play something a little
more cheerful, Mr Novello? We're all
quite emotional enough as it is.

Ivor obliges, moving into waltz time. Weissman leans over to him as Jennings arrives.

WEISSMAN

That's if they have emotions.

(CONTINUED)

IVOR

You're too hard on them. Don't you agree, Jennings?

JENNINGS

Sir?

IVOR

Mr Weissman is criticising the aristocracy but he wouldn't if he'd been here during the war, would he, instead of lazing about in California? We admired their stiff upper lips then, didn't we, Jennings?

JENNINGS

Much more than I realised at the time, sir.

His voice is choked with emotion. Surprised at the intensity he has provoked, Ivor nods at Weissman with raised brows.

IVOR

See.

Mabel and Freddie are talking softly as Jennings arrives back at the drinks table.

MABEL

What was Isobel giving you just now?

FREDDIE

I don't know what you mean.

She holds out her hand as Anthony enters. Sylvia looks up and returns to her reading.

LOUISA

Anthony. There you are. Where have you been? You're too late for dinner but I'm sure they can bring you a tray if you're hungry.

ANTHONY

No. I don't want anything, thank you..

LAVINIA

Isobel, come and take over will you?

As she goes to Anthony, Henry jumps up. George has tipped a coffee pot over him.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE

I do apologise, sir. I can't think how that happened.

120 INT. SERVANTS' HALL. NIGHT.

A wireless plays music. Arthur is practising dance steps with Ellen. Mary and Robert listen while Dexter drinks tea. Lewis mends lace, Sarah and Renee sew by the fire. Bertha is scraping out scallop shells with a wire brush. Barnes reads. Probert has a leather collar box and he is sorting collars into sizes. Pip hovers.

BERTHA

What's the point of that, Mr Probert?
Won't it all be chucked out?

PROBERT

I'll know I've left it in good order.
It's all I can do for him now.

ROBERT

Leave him alone.

Barnes glances at Bertha scraping away as Mrs Wilson looks in.

BARNES

I wish you'd stop that. It's making my teeth go funny.

BERTHA

I can't help that. Put that dog out someone.

MRS WILSON

Constable, I'm glad I've caught you.
I'm assuming that the Inspector won't keep everyone beyond tomorrow but I thought I'd check with you.

DEXTER

Well...we haven't spoken to all the serv

Thompson looks in.

THOMPSON

There you are, Dexter. Come along.
We're going home.

(CONTINUED)

120

CONTINUED:

MRS WILSON

I was just asking the Constable how long our guests will be staying. Only Mrs Croft has the meals to arrange and one of the housemaids is anxious to get away...

THOMPSON

Oh that'll be all right. I'm not bothered about the servants. Just the people who might have had a real connection with the dead man.

The others watch Mrs Wilson. They are interested to see how she answers.

MRS WILSON

I see... yes, I suppose you would be.

THOMPSON

Still, I think they can go home. We've got their addresses after all. Dexter will come in tomorrow to confirm it. But don't worry... It won't end there. I'll find him. Whoever he is. I always do.

He leaves. Before Dexter can follow him, Bertha speaks.

BERTHA

Does he?

Dexter hesitates.

DEXTER

It's been known.

121 OMITTED

122 OMITTED

123 INT. IRONING AND SEWING ROOM. NIGHT.

George enters. There is a sound of scuffling. He turns on the light. Bertha is on the floor with Jeremy Blond. In silence the latter stands, tucking in his shirt and fastening his fly buttons. He refuses to make the smallest gesture of embarrassment.

GEORGE

Right. Beg your pardon, sir. I was just collecting Mr Nesbitt's shirts.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

Without a word, Jeremy leaves. George looks at Bertha. After a moment, they both dissolve into giggles.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
You naughty, naughty girl.

BERTHA
Poor bloke. We were in 'ere on Tuesday
and one of the visiting maids walked
in. He must think I did it on purpose.

She goes to the door as George is taking some shirts from one of the great cupboards.

BERTHA (CONT'D)
You won't tell, will you?

GEORGE
I won't tell. But you're lucky your're
in the kitchen and not under Mrs
Wilson. She'd sniff it out without any
help from me.

124 INT. SYLVIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Lewis is settling Sylvia for the night when they both hear the door opening. Henry stands there. Sylvia continues to read her book. Lewis takes her cue.

LEWIS
Will that be all, milady?

SYLVIA
Don't go, Lewis. There's no need.

She ignores the hapless Henry until he is provoked into something like anger.

HENRY
I just don't see what's changed!

Sylvia at last takes her eyes from the page.

SYLVIA
Then you are a fool as well as a liar.

124A INT. STILL ROOM. NIGHT

Dorothy is wiping the surfaces at the end of a long day. Mrs Wilson looks in.

(CONTINUED)

124A CONTINUED:

MRS WILSON
Quickly. I need your help.

125 INT. SERVANTS' HALL. NIGHT.

The room is dark. The sole occupant, Jennings, is slumped onto the central table. A glass and an empty bottle are near his hand. Mrs Wilson and Dorothy hurry in.

MRS WILSON
We have to get him to his own room.
Nobody must see him like this.

DOROTHY
Don't you worry, Mr Jennings.
Everything's all right.

With a massive effort, they get him upright and half walk, half drag him to the door.

126 INT. JENNING'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

The two women, seriously disshevelled by their efforts, struggle in with the nearly unconscious man. They dump him onto the bed and set to work.

MRS WILSON
Take his shoes off while I loosen his
collar... There. Now go to bed and don't
say anything about this.

Dorothy kisses her finger and secretly presses it to the forehead of the sleeping man.

127 INT. ELSIE'S ATTIC ROOM. NIGHT.

Mary is in bed. Her valise is open on the chest. She is watching while Elsie packs a battered case which is on her bed.

ELSIE
So George got his own back on Mr
Denton. Good.

MARY
He gave me the creeps.

There is a light knock and Isobel enters.

ISOBEL
You're still here then.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

ELSIE
Only 'till the morning.

Isobel nods. She hesitates to speak looking at Mary.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
Don't worry about her. What is it?

ISOBEL
I...I thought you'd like to know that
Mabel Nesbitt left this on my dressing-
table...I think it's over.

She hands Elsie an envelope with the torn cheque and a note.
Elsie nods, pleased.

ISOBEL (CONT'D)
And I just wanted to be certain...You
never did speak to Daddy about it that
night? About Freddie and everything?

ELSIE
I told you. I never had a moment...

ISOBEL
No, I'm glad...that he wasn't bothered
with it before he...Well...I suppose
I'd better go...Good luck, Elsie.

ELSIE
Good luck to you, Miss.

A thoughtful Elsie holds the door as Isobel slips away. Mary
looks curiously at her companion.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
Don't ask.

MARY
Do you think Sir William was in love
with you?

ELSIE
Nah. I was a bit of fun, that's all.

MARY
What about you?

ELSIE
I didn't love him but... I didn't mind
'im.. I liked the way he'd talk.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

127

CONTINUED: (2)

ELSIE (CONT'D)

He only talked to me 'cos he was sick of 'er but I liked it. He used to tell me I could be anything I wanted... if I wanted it enough...

MARY

You're not sorry, then. Even with the way it's turned out.

ELSIE

No. I'm not sorry... it's time for a change. Who knows? Might be the making of me. What was it 'e used to say? Carpe Diem. Sieze the day.

This strikes a chord with Mary. She gets out of bed and puts on her dressing-gown.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

What's up? What have I said? Where are you off to?

128

INT. ROBERT'S ATTIC ROOM. NIGHT.

Robert is sitting on his bed. The door opens. It is Mary. He is dumbfounded.

ROBERT

What are you doing here?

But she is silent, trembling in her sad little, candlewick dressing-gown.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You'd better get back to your room. They mustn't find you up here.

For a moment, she cannot decide if she wants to put the next question.

MARY

You didn't really dislike him, did you...? Not really...? At least... not enough to kill him...

But he says nothing. Her eyes fill.

MARY (CONT'D)

You can't have! You didn't know him! You'd have to hate him and why would you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She is so desperate that he should not be guilty. Robert's eyes meet hers

ROBERT

Can't a man hate his own father?

Mary could scarcely be more shocked if he'd hit her. She stares at him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Sir William McCordle was my father. He didn't know it. But he was.

MARY

But... you said you were an orphan...

ROBERT

I said I grew up in an orphanage.

Now he decides to tell a little bit of the truth.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Not long before I left, a group of us got into the Warden's office one night. We unpicked the lock and took out our files. It was a prank, really. I didn't expect any shocking discoveries. Just a birth certificate with my mother's name and 'father unknown'. This picture was with it.

She takes the picture and studies it.

MARY

But how did Sir William come into it?

ROBERT

They had my admission form. I was two days old. Guess who brought me to the door.

MARY

But that doesn't mean -

ROBERT

Yes it does. After that, I found out. She was a factory worker. She wasn't the only one... either the authorities didn't know or they didn't want to know. They took the babies and they took his donations.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

What happened to her?

ROBERT

I asked them once. She died. When I was little... I always say she died of a broken heart but it was probably cyrrosis of the liver... "Broken heart" sounds a bit nicer, don't you think?

MARY

Is that why you took the job with Lord Stockbridge? To get to Sir William? To poison him?

ROBERT

I didn't poison him.

MARY

What?

ROBERT

I didn't poison him.

This is wonderful news.

MARY

But then you didn't kill him...Tell me you didn't stab him either.

At this he is silent. Nevertheless it is still good news.

MARY (CONT'D)

I know you didn't. I'm sure you didn't...Even if you did, that didn't kill him. And whoever did it knew that. No one could stab a corpse and not know it.

ROBERT

Is that right? When did you last stab a corpse?

MARY

But...who really murdered him?

ROBERT

I don't know. And I don't care.

With those words, she knows her theory is correct. The mood has altered between them. He comes to her. When he takes her in his arms, she does not resist his kiss.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED: (3)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I've been wanting to do that since I
first set eyes on you.

129 INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING.

The morning light glints through the drawn curtains. The door opens softly and Janet, the little housemaid, wearing a long, 'kneeling' apron and carrying a bucket of coal tiptoes to the fire. She puts on thick, felt gloves and sets to work.

HENRY (VO)
Who is it?

The voice startles the girl. She turns. He sits up.

JANET
I'm ever so sorry, sir.

HENRY
Sorry for what?

JANET
I'm supposed to get the fire lit
without waking you.

HENRY
Why does everyone treat me as if I was
just one of the guests? I spent half
the week downstairs with you all.

JANET
But you can't be on both teams at
once, sir.

HENRY
More's the pity.

He is sad as he watches her light the fire. With a nervous bob, she hurries out.

130 INT. MRS CROFT'S ROOM. DAY.

Mrs Croft is at her desk. Bertha looks in.

BERTHA
It's official. They're off after
breakfast. The constable told me.

MRS CROFT
Well, thank God for that. What about
him?

(CONTINUED)

Together they look through the glass of Mrs Croft's office to where Dexter hovers in the corridor.

BERTHA

He's going too. Soon as he's seen Mr Jennings... Did you tell them any of that stuff in the end?

MRS CROFT

I did not. I'm sorry if I shock you, Bertha, but the plain fact is he only got what he deserved. There. I've said it.

BERTHA

I can't stop thinking about those girls...the ones that got...you know...

MRS CROFT

I don't wonder at it. The way you carry on. Just make sure it never happens to you, my girl.

She is severe but not unkind. It is clear that she knows what Bertha is up to.

BERTHA

But the ones who kept their babies...who wouldn't give them up...Didn't he ever let them back?

MRS CROFT

There was one time... but... that was because her baby died..

But Mrs Croft has said enough. With a sigh, she stands. It is the beginning of a new working day.

MRS CROFT (CONT'D)

Come on. Enough of this gabbing. Let's get started.

She moves away from her desk, revealing once more the poignant little tinted photograph of the long-dead, unforgotten infant.

INT. JENNINGS'S ROOM. DAY.

Jennings is bringing his cellar list up to date. Dexter looks in.

131 CONTINUED:

DEXTER

We'll be in touch. From now on we'll be working from the station. See if we can't manage things better from there.

JENNINGS

What about the poison? Haven't you traced that, at least?

DEXTER

Hardly. This house is a poisoner's paradise. We found the stuff in practically every room. And unfortunately no one's got a police record. 'Cept you, of course.

He chuckles but Jennings freezes. His worst nightmares are made flesh.

JENNINGS

What do you intend to do about it?

Dexter is genuinely surprised. He'd only been joshing.

DEXTER

What? You mean - ? Nothing. What should we do?

JENNINGS

Nothing?

DEXTER

Nah. I had a brother who was a conscientious objector. He did a bit of time, too. Why? Don't they know? Haven't you told them?

Jennings just looks at him.

DEXTER (CONT'D)

I should forget about it. The war's over. And you're too old to fight in another one. Right. Better be off. 'Bye then, Mr Jennings.

He is gone. A huge, leaden weight slides off the butler's shoulders.

132 INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. DAY.

George is carrying the Nesbitts' cases down the stairs. They follow, talking softly.

FREDDIE

You're a fool. Now what are we supposed to do?

MABEL

Oh Freddie. Do try not to be so frightened all the time.

They move off camera as Arthur, climbing the stairs, takes us up to Barnes who is carrying luggage down with Sarah. Behind them are the Merediths.

ANTHONY

I don't know... I got to the door of the library and then I just thought... what's the point...? The truth is, I've made rather a fool of myself.

LAVINIA

Maybe... but you're my fool.

She squeezes his arm as they turn into the entrance hall where Jennings is seeing out the Nesbitts and Weissman is on the telephone.

WEISSMAN

What do you mean the butler didn't do it? If he didn't do it, then who the hell did?

Jennings, both wounded and mortally offended by this, holds the door for Anthony and Lavinia as the servants take out their things.

WEISSMAN (CONT'D)

What? Are you sure? When? Check it and call me in London.

Absently, he gives a smile to Jennings but the butler only returns a hurt glare as Renee passes by.

133 INT. STOCKBRIDGE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Renee enters. Raymond stands by the window. Louisa reads a newspaper. She looks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENEE

Beg pardon, milady, but what am I to do about the packing? Only you said last night that you might be staying on for a while...

Louisa does not answer but instead looks enquiringly at Raymond.

RAYMOND

It's not my decision.

LOUISA

On the contrary. It is entirely your decision.

She holds his gaze. No arm wrestlers in a dock-side pub could be more absorbed in their contest of wills. It is Raymond's knuckles which hit the tables first.

RAYMOND

Very well.

LOUISA

Don't say it if you don't mean it.

RAYMOND

I do mean it...I won't mention the subject again.

His capitulation is clear: He has purchased a scandal-free zone at the cost of never challenging his wife again over the whole William question. She is content.

LOUISA

Then thank you, yes, do pack. I'll be leaving with his lordship after all.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND CORRIDOR. DAY.

On the stairs, Jeremy and Rupert whisper behind Arthur who carries their cases.

JEREMY

Did you ask her?

RUPERT

Not quite

JEREMY

On reflection, I think it's just as well.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

134

CONTINUED:

JEREMY (CONT'D)

According to the servants' hall gossip, she doesn't get any of the capital until her mother dies and if that's true it's too long to wait. You can do better.

Rupert opens his mouth to answer but before he can, Isobel steps round the corner at the base of the staircase. She must have heard. She looks carefully at Rupert.

ISOBEL

Have you checked your room? You mustn't leave anything behind.

135

INT. ELSIE'S ATTIC ROOM. DAY.

Elsie lies stretched out on her bed, reading a film magazine. She is smoking. The door opens. It is Mrs Wilson. Elsie glances over and then back to her magazine.

MRS WILSON

You know smoking up here is strictly forbidden.

Elsie takes a long, deep drag on her cigarette and blows a smoke ring.

MRS WILSON (CONT'D)

The other guests aren't leaving by train so the luggage car can run you to the station. You'll find it outside the front.

ELSIE

And that's it?

MRS WILSON

Let us know where you would like your reference to be sent.

She is about to go as Elsie stands.

ELSIE

I didn't mean nothing to him, you know. It was never serious...

MRS WILSON

Does it matter?

136 EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

George and Arthur are loading the last things into Jeremy's roadster. Off screen, the two young men and Isobel loiter by the vehicle.

ISOBEL (VO)
No, I shouldn't think of it. I know
how your father hates it when
someone's been in the papers and I'm
afraid I'm bound to be.

RUPERT (VO)
What about January? When things have
cooled off a bit...

The footmen come round to open the doors making them visible.

ISOBEL
Let's play it by ear, shall we? Well,
goodbye. And thank you so much for
coming. I am sorry it's all been so...
dramatic.

Before Rupert can answer, she has gone, across the gravel,
towards the house.

JEREMY
That was pretty painless.

RUPERT
No it wasn't.

In answer to Jeremy's curious stare, Rupert follows Isobel with
his eyes.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Not for me, anyway.

Amazing as it would be to Isobel, Rupert is in love with her.
But it will do no good for she will never believe him now. With
a sigh, he climbs into the car and starts it up.

137 INT. HALL/EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

As Jennings waits by the door, Weissman and Ivor cross the hall,
dressed for travel.

IVOR
Why? What's happened?

(CONTINUED)

WEISSMAN

They've brought in Sidney Kent as the new President of the Studio. He likes the Chan series and he's over-ruled Sheehan. The deadline's been dropped and I can cast whomever I like. Panic over.

IVOR

Just like that? What a weird and savage world you live in.

They have come out through the front door. Henry is already in their car. Pip sits alone and unloved on the steps watching as, at the far side of the house, Elsie's case is being put into one of the estate vehicles. Mary is with her.

MARY

Good luck. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

ELSIE

Well, at least I know now that gives me some room for manoeuvre.

To their surprise, Weissman hails her from across the forecourt.

WEISSMAN

Hey! You there! Where are you going?

ELSIE

To the station.

WEISSMAN

Do you want a ride to London?

When she compares the battered farm car to the gleaming lagonda, the choice is easy.

ELSIE

Sure. Why not?

With a laugh, she siezes her case and runs to the car. As she climbs in she is distracted for a moment. The head of the unloved Pip makes a brief appearance from the top of her hold-all. Firmly, she pushes him back and climbs into the car. Ivor turns to see a look of disapproval on Jennings's face, though he can't know if he saw the dog. Maybe he did.

IVOR

I know, Jennings... but doesn't every creature deserve a second chance?

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2)

With a wave, he too climbs in and the vehicle moves off.

138 INT. TRENTAM BEDROOM. DAY.

Mary is putting the last things in the suitcase, each carefully encased in a layer of tissue paper with crushed tissue to ease the folds. Constance is in travelling clothes. She addresses two envelopes, seals them and leaves them on the dressing-table.

CONSTANCE

Honestly, it's getting so expensive. By the time one does Jennings, and leaves something for the housemaids, one might as well have taken a suite at the Ritz. Tell me, what happened to William's little maid. I never saw her again after that dinner.

MARY

She's gone.

CONSTANCE

Pity really. I should have thought it was a good idea to have someone in the house who's actually sorry he's dead.

Sylvia looks round the door. If she heard she doesn't show it. Or, possibly, care.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

There you are, dear. Did you have a nice ride?

SYLVIA

I feel rather guilty. Apparently they've all gone. Except for you and Louisa... but there's no hurry. Why not stay for luncheon?

CONSTANCE

I'd better be off. Leave you in peace...

Sylvia, once more in jodphurs, sits on the bed near where Mary is packing, idly fingering a garment that is waiting to go in the case. Constance is applying lipstick.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Now you will telephone with the funeral plans?

SYLVIA

You don't have to come if it's a bore.

(CONTINUED)

CONSTANCE

Nonsense. Of course I'm coming... Have you decided what you're going to do?

SYLVIA

Not really. I thought I might travel for a bit... Amelia Northbrook rang up this morning. They've taken a house in Alexandria for the winter and she's given me an open invitation...

CONSTANCE

That sounds lovely... and what about Gosford?

Sylvia shrugs, holding a scarf against herself to test the colour.

SYLVIA

I don't know... William loved it, of course. Fiddling with his guns... Tramping over his acres... not killing his pheasants... Poor William...

She finds another scarf better suited to her colouring. Constance nods, carefully patting her lipstick dry with a handkerchief she keeps for that purpose.

CONSTANCE

Yes... Poor, dear William. We shall miss him... So will you keep the place going, then?

SYLVIA

It's so difficult... I mean, these days, does one want the bother? It's not a family house, after all. Just bought with William's ill-gotten gains. I suppose I could shut it up for now and then make a decision when my head stops spinning.

CONSTANCE

Mrs Wilson can manage things until you're ready.

SYLVIA

Oh yes, *she* could manage things. Let's not worry about *that*... No doubt she'll sieze the chance to get rid of the wretched Mrs Croft.

138 CONTINUED: (2)

CONSTANCE

Why are they such enemies?

SYLVIA

Who knows? Something to do with when they were both in one of William's sweat shops. Mrs Croft was the senior then. She was a cook when Mrs Wilson was a lowly factory worker. Now she's gone up in the world and Mrs Croft can't adjust. Usual rubbish...

CONSTANCE

Was there ever a Mister Wilson? I Can't imagine it.

SYLVIA

Nor me. Although, funnily enough, I think there must have been.

CONSTANCE

Really? You amaze me.

SYLVIA

Well, unless she just changed her name...I know she had a different one when she first worked for William. Parker or Parkis or something.

A missing piece has fallen into place for Mary. She shuts the case and stands.

MARY

I'll go down and fetch the jewels.

CONSTANCE

Tell Merriman to come and get the bags.

139 INT. MRS WILSON'S ROOM. DAY.

Mrs Wilson is making notes in a linen book. She puts down her pen.

MARY

You're busy.

MRS WILSON

No, no. I was just checking the linen rotation. If I left it to the maids, the same twenty sheets would be used until they fell into rags...

(CONTINUED)

She smiles her professional smile as she waits for what Mary has to say.

MARY

Why did you do it?

Mrs Wilson stands and strolls over to the window, watching the activity outside.

MARY (CONT'D)

How did you know it was him? Was it the name? Or did you see the photograph in his room?

MRS WILSON

Ah. The photograph... What a miracle it survived... His mother put it in his blanket... She just wanted to feel he had something of hers, I suppose... What does he think happened to her?

MARY

They said she died. Just after he was born.

MRS WILSON

Well she didn't die. She gave him up. He promised the boy would be adopted. Said he knew the family. Turns out we all clung to that dream - all us girls. A better chance in life for our children and all the time he was dumping them - *his children* - in some godforsaken place - and I believed him. Maybe it was easier that way. My sister has always hated me for it.

MARY

Your sister?

MRS WILSON

Mrs Croft. Didn't you know? She kept hers - not many did, and it was very hard for her. She lost her job and then he died anyway - Scarlet Fever.

MARY

But how did you know Robert meant to harm his father?

Mrs Wilson looks at her for a moment.

139 CONTINUED: (2)

MRS WILSON

What gift do you think a good servant has that marks them apart from the rest? It is the gift of anticipation. And I am a good servant. I am better than good, I am the best, the perfect servant. I know when they are hungry so the food is waiting. I know when they will be tired so the bed is made and warmed. I know before they know it themselves.

MARY

Will you ever tell him?

MRS WILSON

Why would I? What purpose could it possibly serve?

MARY

What if they find out?

MRS WILSON

It's not a crime to stab a dead man. They can never touch him. That's what's important now, his life.

MARY

And your life? Isn't that important?

MRS WILSON

What do you mean? Didn't you hear me? I'm the Perfect Servant. I have no life.

There's a slight knock and George's head appears. He speaks to Mary.

GEORGE

Her ladyship's leaving now, miss.

MRS WILSON

Thank you, George. You should go now, Miss Trentham.

140 EXT. GOSFORD PARK. DAY.

In the foreground, Robert and a chauffeur are strapping luggage to the rack at the rear of a car. Raymond and Louisa stand with Sylvia. The sisters are quite cool.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISA (VO)

Well, goodbye. Let us know if there's anything we can do.

SYLVIA

Are you going away at all?

LOUISA

Not once the shooting's finished. I think we'll just put our feet up. Won't we, Raymond?

She glances at her husband. She is prepared to live in peace if he is.

Nearby stands Constance's car. Merriman puts in the luggage. Mary comes out, with dressing case and valise, as the Stockbridges get in. Robert strolls over as Renee tucks in Louisa and climbs into the front seat. The rear dicky is waiting for Robert.

MARY

Goodbye then.

ROBERT

Goodbye.

She hesitates, trying to think of what to say, but he touches her cheek.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It's all right... It's over. It's finished.

Raymond opens his car door impatiently.

RAYMOND

Parks, for heaven's sake, can we get started?

With a smile, Robert crosses to the car, jumps in and they are away with Sylvia waving them off. As Mary walks over to give Merriman her valise, she sees Mrs Wilson's face, pressed against the basement window watching the dark head in the dicky as it moves off down the drive. Merriman takes the case and straps it on.

MERRIMAN

Crikey. Well. We've got something to write home about.

Constance, in travelling clothes, emerges from the front door.

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED: (2)

CONSTANCE

I've signed the book, though some of
the others seem to have missed it.
Goodbye dear. Chin up.

She kisses her niece and climbs into the car. Mary leans in and straightens the rug on Constance's knees, finds the basket with the thermos and sandwich box and places it nearby. Clearly while, in one way, everything has changed, in another, nothing has.

Mary climbs in and with a wave to Sylvia, the car moves off.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Heavens, what a relief to be going.
It'll take me a month to recover.

141 INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALL. DAY.

Mrs Wilson is on her way past the servants' hall when she catches sight of Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Have they gone?

MRS WILSON

Yes. I'll ask her ladyship if we're to
lay luncheon in the dining-room. She
may want a tray upstairs.

Dorothy nods but Mrs Wilson hasn't quite finished. She lowers her voice.

MRS WILSON (CONT'D)

Thank you for your help last night,
Dorothy.

DOROTHY

You don't have to thank me. You know
I'd kill for him if I had to.

This naked exposure of feeling is rather more than Mrs Wilson bargained for. She recoils slightly and, in doing so, moves until she can see into the servants' hall. George, Arthur and several others, headed by Mrs Croft, are sitting, doing various tasks. One by one they look up at the house-keeper but Mrs Croft is their spokesman.

MRS CROFT

What is it, Jane? Did you think you
were the only one who could?

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

Her voice is quite gentle. She has forgiven her sibling. Did she guess the danger when she heard Robert's name at supper? At any rate, she and they know now.

142 INT. CONSTANCE'S CAR. DAY.

Constance has relaxed a little. She winds down the window that divides her own seat from the two servants and speaks to the maid.

CONSTANCE

Mary, do you suppose, if there's a trial, I'd have to testify? Or you? I do hope not. I can't think of anything worse. Imagine a man being hanged because of something one said in a courtroom..

Mary looks at the countryside flashing by, thinking for a moment.

MARY

I know... and what purpose could it possibly serve?

Constance looks at her maid curiously for a moment before she winds up the window.

As the final credits roll, Constance picks up the thermos from the seat beside her and feebly tries to open it. Once again, she fails and reaches for the speaking tube. But this time, instead, she replaces the tube and tries the top of the thermos again. With the tiniest bit of effort she opens it, pours herself a drink and, with something like a sense of achievement, she sits back. Perhaps things have altered, after all. Just a little.

143 THE END

