

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

EPISODE 1

Written by  
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Based on the novel by Agatha Christie

Draft 1

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1

EXT. BEACH. DAY

1

A glorious day in high summer. 1937. A perfect blue cloudless sky. Sand-dunes. The faintest breeze moves the loose sand, the grey-green dune grasses wave. A woman wearing pale linen shorts and a cotton blouse is walking up the sand-dune. We see her strong, lean, tanned calves, flexing and extending as she walks. Her finger and toenails are painted crimson. Accompanying her is a child. A small boy. They climb up the dunes, the woman walking easily, the child using his hands to help pull himself up. Perhaps he's not the strongest of children. He's got roughly touseled mousy hair, round glasses and wears sandals and sky-blue trunks decorated with boats. It is silent, but for the boy's breathing, he sounds excited, eager and the sussuration of sand, of grasses, the cries of gulls.

They reach the top of the dunes. Ahead of them, the glorious beach and the wide calm pellucid sea under the bowl of sky. A little way out, a small rock. The little boy, CYRIL OGILVIE HAMILTON shades his hand with his eyes, like a seasoned mariner. He looks up at the woman. Now we see her. Her hair is glossy, loose and blows in the breeze. She wears sunglasses. Her blouse is tied at the waist rather than properly buttoned and underneath she wears a scarlet, ruched swimsuit. She wears lipstick to match her nails. She is VERA CLAYTHORNE. Cyril looks at her with a hopeful smile. Vera looks down at him. She takes off her sunglasses. And smiles, a smile of great warmth and genuine sweetness. She holds her hand out to Cyril and he takes it. Oh, how he loves her. They stand there, sharp against the blue of sea and sky. The colour, the refracted light so sharp, so bright they hurt the eyes. An image branded onto the memory. Something terrible, fateful about it's crystalline innocence. Gulls cry and wheel. The hush-hush of the sea. The breeze minutely shifting the sand.

And the crack of a gunshot!

CUT TO:

2

EXT. SOLDIER ISLAND. DAY

2

No sign of the house, just rock and waves crashing against rocks, thick glistening ropes of seaweed swirl and surge in the tide.. A gun, gleaming blue black, falls to the rock, bounces into the sea and is submerged in seawater and tangled in weed.

The sound of a cough. Someone doing vocal warm ups.

ACTOR  
(V/O) Me me me me me me meeeeeee

CUT TO:

3 INT. RECORDING STUDIO. NIGHT

3

A dimly lit studio. An old fashioned microphone. An ACTOR in his forties is doing vocal warm ups, clearing his throat. Sips from a glass of water. He has a few pages of typewritten script. He runs through the lines under his breath. When he addresses the other person, we don't see who it is, they are in shadow.

ACTOR  
And this is for a play? In the West  
End? Will I be credited in the  
programme?

Perhaps he receives a nod in response, the Actor smiles a little. Good. Clears his throat. Ready. A light for recording goes on.

ACTOR (CONT'D)  
Ladies and Gentlemen! Silence,  
please! You are charged with the  
following indictments!

CUT TO:

4 INT. ISAAC MORRIS' OFFICE. LONDON. DAY

4

An attic office. Summer, 1939. On the door: ISAAC MORRIS SKILLED PERSONS BUREAU Ltd. The office is squalid, poor. Ricketty. A mousetrap in a corner. Sullen pigeons patrolling the windowledge. The dismal geometry of London rooftops. The air is thick. A small desk fan does nothing to dispell the torpor. Flies buzz fatly at the windows. At a smaller desk, a dressy brightly coloured young woman AUDREY is typing.

Audrey has a marcel wave, plummy lipstick, a dress that shows off her figure. Without pausing in her typing, she allows her eyes to rove over Vera, who sits opposite Isaac Morris' desk. Audrey's eyes take in everything. The dowdy clothes. The flat, 'undone' hair. The plainness. Unpainted nails. Audrey pities her, you can tell. You know she's thinking 'Poor spinster'. She returns to her typing.

Vera looks very different beyond the drab clothes and unmade up face. She is very different, as though some catastrophic event has taken place between then and now. She looks as though her actual skin might hurt. Her nerves stretched. The noise of the typewriter rattles like machine gun. She knows Audrey's pitying eyes are on her. She knows what Audrey's thinking. Perhaps she wants everyone to think that.

Across from her, ISAAC MORRIS. Overweight. There is a tiny piece of paper stuck to a razor cut on his chin. A miniscule stain of blood that Vera can't drag her eyes away from. Her slightly febrile POV means we can even take in the grain of the paper with the blood. His hair is greasy and there are beads of sweat at his temples that he dabs with a hanky. Swelling half-moons of sweat under the arms of his shirt. His tie seems to be strangling him and under the next at some point he loosens it. His sleeves are rolled up. He has papers. Vera's resume. A letter that he consults.

ISAAC MORRIS

The position is for a secretary.

VERA

Then the agency shouldn't have given you my name. Not for a secretarial post, my typing and shorthand isn't good enough-

ISAAC MORRIS

Assistant, then. With some minor secretarial duties, shorthand, typing doesn't matter to her. You're who she wants.

VERA

Really?

ISAAC MORRIS

I sent her all the details. She chose you. (off the letter) Engage Miss Claythorne! You're a teacher?

VERA

Games mistress. Yes.

ISAAC MORRIS

Teachers are good at organising. Mrs Owen is expecting a lot of guests. Guests need organising.

VERA

Whereabouts in the country?

ISAAC MORRIS

The Devon coast. Soldier Island.

And Vera suddenly tenses, a shift in atmosphere as Isaac Morris talks on-

VERA

..The coast?

ISAAC MORRIS

Audrey's been telling me about it from her magazines- haven't you Audrey?

(MORE)

ISAAC MORRIS (CONT'D)

Some Hollywood film star was supposed to have bought it but no, it's Mr and Mrs Owen-

VERA

So you've met them?

ISAAC MORRIS

No, everything by letter. (a thought) Perhaps Mrs Owen is a pseudonym and she *is* a Hollywood film star! Audrey is very envious.

AUDREY

(slightly pointed to Vera's dowdiness) It'll be very glamorous.

ISAAC MORRIS

So glamorous! You won't want to go back to teaching girls.

VERA

An island? By the sea?

ISAAC MORRIS

..Well, yes. Islands are generally by the sea. In the sea. The box, if you please Audrey.

And with Audrey as she opens a desk drawer and gets out a petty cash box. We quickly glimpse the letter she's typing "I understand you are a specialist in female nervous disorders. My wife is suffering.. " There is a pile of other letters.. Perhaps we glimpse the address of the uppermost envelope 'Miss Emily Brent.. 3a Talbot Villas, Lock Road, Teddington..' Audrey takes the cash box to Isaac who unlocks it in the face of Vera's uncertainty.

VERA

I don't.. (she collects herself) Maybe I'm not suited-

ISAAC MORRIS

You are who she wants. No-one else will do, only Miss Claythorne! And it's very well paid.

VERA

Yes, but-

Isaac Morris takes crisp banknotes from the cash box and fans them on the table. A train ticket.

ISAAC MORRIS

For immediate expenses.

Vera stares at the crisp money. Isaac Morris and Audrey watch her. Silence except for the sound of pigeons and distant traffic from London, the drone and clack of the electric fan..

CUT TO:

5 INT. TRAIN. DAY

5

The clack of a little train as it rocks it's way through lush green countryside. The sun blazes through windows. The train is busy, crowded with day trippers, holiday makers.. people and kids in summer clothes..

Very tight on what looks like a hangman's noose, swinging against the sky.. And then slowly it resolves itself into the pulley cord for the window-blind as Vera wakes up. (Perhaps she has bought herself new stockings, a new blouse.. But she is still under-playing herself and unpainted.) A few benches away, a man is watching her. CAPTAIN PHILIP LOMBARD, mid-30's. His clothes sit easily on him, a sense of coiled, restless danger. He's good looking and he knows it. He probably knows everything about himself and understands and accepts that not much of it is good. Vera meets his eyes distrustfully, his lips curl in a smile and she realises that in her sleep her skirt rucked up and he can see her stocking tops. Vera pulls her skirt down, shoots a glare at Lombard who just smiles back, amused, appreciative. Vera stands up, takes her small case from the rack and leaves the carriage...

Lombard grins to himself.. On the seat near him, GENERAL JOHN GORDON MACARTHUR, early 60's, a spine like a ramrod, the consummate military man. An excellent suit, the kind of hand-lasting shoes that last a lifetime. Some medal pins on his lapel to indicate outstanding military service. He reads a newspaper. The headlines of German aggression. He folds the paper as if he can't bear to read anymore.

With Vera as she walks down the corridor, there are small compartments. An elderly woman and a middle aged man sitting seperately. Both look utterly respectable in a plain way. WILLIAM BLORE, late 40's. An air of self-importance, an officiousness. Rules and regulations. Spit and polish, belt and braces. A neatly trimmed moustache. Portly. EMILY CAROLINE BRENT, 60. Tidy grey hair. A neatly trimmed summer hat. She looks cosy. Sweet but her appearance belies a fierce rectitude, a narrowness of mind. Her way is the only way. She reads from a small battered bible. Vera enters the compartment-

Blore immediately stands to help her lift her case into the rack. When he speaks, it's with a South African accent-

BLORE

Allow me.

VERA

Thank you.

Emily's quick eyes assess and judge Vera. She may be young but she's unpainted. Decent. Emily approves. Blore gets out his cigarettes, Emily coughs a little.

BLORE

Beg your pardon, ladies.

He gets up and leaves the compartment-

And go with Blore. Standing by an open window in the corridor, blowing smoke. To himself, Blore rehearses his act, his accent.

BLORE (CONT'D)

(sotto,) Davis is the name.  
Imports, exports. That's right,  
South Africa. Natal. Natal is, you  
might say, my natal spot.

He rehearses his own laugh at his own weak joke. Then his face returns to it's normal setting of watchful, calculating. He turns a little, behind him in a first class compartment, another man, impeccable in dark suit. His eyes are closed but he's not asleep, his hands rest on the carved ivory handle of a walking stick. JUDGE LAWRENCE JOHN WARGRAVE. A man accustomed to everyone deferring to him. He turns chaos and depravity into order and justice. He has had the power of life and death in the palm of his hand but now his beautifully cut, expensive clothes, even his skin, seem a little large for him, as if there has been a sudden wasting, a diminishing of his actual self..

And in the carriage with Wargrave. Clipped to his lapel is what looks like a fine black cord. It goes into his breast pocket. Perhaps he is aware of Blore looking at him through the glass of the compartment door because he turns, hooded deep eyes. Blore immediately turns away... and Wargrave turns back to the window, beautiful England rolls past, the sun dapples his face. The train jolts and Wargrave closes his eyes in pain, his knuckles tighten on the handle of his walking stick.

CUT TO:

6

EXT. ROAD. DAY

6

A smart expensive car. Open-topped. DOCTOR EDWARD GEORGE ARMSTRONG 45, expensively dressed in summer linen. A panama hat on the passenger seat. He is relaxed, his elbow resting on the opened window. The breeze moves his hair. Attractive, sophisticated, successful, wealthy. The sort of doctor women fall in love with, the sort of doctor who likes women falling in love with him even while he finds their interest predictable, pathetic and ultimately contemptuous.

He's very pleased with himself, enjoying the drive, the smooth purr of the car-

And suddenly a roar of a powerful engine behind him and he's overtaken by a sports car, it's so sudden that Armstrong swerves, hits the verge and bumps to a halt. Furious he gets out of the car, shouts impotently at the sports car disappearing-

ARMSTRONG

You stupid bastard!

But the sports car is gone. Just Armstrong and the sound of skylarks, wildflowers and cow parsley dancing in the sun. Some cows study him incuriously from a field. Armstrong's composure momentarily shaken and he's furious about that.. And perhaps jealous of the car.

CUT TO:

7

EXT. ROAD. DAY

7

The thrilling guttural roar of the sports car, ANTHONY JAMES MARSTON, 23, beautiful as a sun god, utterly devoid of introspection, he is almost entirely composed of petrol and testosterone, he gleams with wealth and entitlement. The world (if he considers it beyond what appears to him in that moment) is His. The road is His. He floors the accelerator, changing gears with skill, the countryside whips by.. He is euphoric at his command of the road and the car... and as he drives, he suddenly throws back his head and whoops with pleasure.. Puts his foot down harder and the sports car is gone... dust and grit rattle on the road... and a rabbit who didn't stand a chance against Marston's speed, thrown into the air and hitting the road, the breeze soft in it's fur, it's wide surprised eye going dull and bright blood gleaming on the tarmac.

CUT TO:

8

EXT. RAILWAY STATION. DAY

8

Clouds of steam from the train. This is the last stop. The train station blossoming with flowers in tubs, you can immediately tell you're by the sea. The air sparkles. That giddy atmosphere of holiday. An excited flood of whooping children, slightly harrassed parents calling after them stream out of the station..

And among them, Blore, Vera, Emily, her face twitching in annoyance at the lively children.. MacArthur.. Lombard strolling easily behind Vera..

Last off the train is Wargrave, he obviously has some difficulty, moving slowly. Blore glances round at him.. And as if he's setting himself a challenge approaches..



NB: from now on, till challenged, Blore speaks with his South African accent.

BLORE

Can I call a porter for you, Sir?

WARGRAVE

Is there one?

BLORE

Doesn't seem to be. Well, can I take your case for you till a porter hoves into view?

WARGRAVE

Very kind. Thank you.

Wargrave moves away, Blore picks up Wargrave's bag, grins to himself, preens almost, he wasn't recognised.

They all head towards the exit..

The children and holiday makers stream like water round a rock past FRED NARRACOTT, sailor. Weatherbeaten, he hasn't bothered to shave this morning. Shirt collar open, and his trousers held up with string. Hands dark with engine oil. He smokes, eking out to a wet discoloured scrap. He holds a sign SOLDIER ISLAND. He has a small trolley for luggage. With Vera as she sees the sign and heads towards him, the rest of the group assemble behind her under next. A quick glance at each other, all heading to the same destination..

Narracott doesn't stand on ceremony. a strong Dorset accent.

VERA

I'm Miss Claythorne. Mrs Owen's secretary. You'll be expecting me?

NARRACOTT

Wasn't give no names. Just told, meet six off the train. Get more later.

He does a quick head count.

NARRACOTT (CONT'D)

And that's six.

He gathers the cases. The group all look at each other, heading in the same destination only Lombard doesn't seem surprised.. Blore of course isn't surprised, though as Davis he must pretend to be. Vera takes charge.

VERA

Well! As we're all heading for the same destination, perhaps we should all introduce ourselves. I'm-

LOMBARD  
Miss Claythorne. The secretary.

Vera slightly frosty.

VERA  
Mister--?

LOMBARD  
Lombard. Captain.

BLORE  
Davis. From South Africa. Natal.

Quickly take a flicker of a raised eyebrow from Lombard about Blore's accent.

EMILY  
Miss Brent.

MACARTHUR  
General MacArthur.

WARGRAVE  
Good lord. An honour to meet you.  
Wargrave.

MACARTHUR  
The justice? The honour is mine.

WARGRAVE  
Retired from justice now.

NARRACOTT  
All acquainted? Follow me. Short  
walk to the boat.

Quickly take Vera's face, a slight pinch at the thought of the boat as Narracott heads off without ceremony. Emily's raised eyebrows.

EMILY  
Extraordinary manners.

MACARTHUR  
Sea-dogs, Miss Brent. A different  
breed.

VERA  
We should follow, we don't want to  
lose him in the crowd.

Vera, Wargrave, MacArthur and Emily head away. Blore and Lombard at the rear.

LOMBARD  
Natal, did you say?

BLORE

That's right. You might say it's  
my natal spot.

Blore's weak laugh at his own joke. Lombard doesn't join in.  
The moment lasts longer than is comfortable or polite.

LOMBARD

You're a long way from home, Mr  
Davis.

Lombard strolls on, Blore narrows his eyes at him. Chalks him  
up swiftly as dubious.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. CAR/ TOWN. DAY

9

The roar of Marston's sports car.. The horn sounding,  
sending holiday makers scattering... people point at the  
gleaming machine.. Little boys excited..

We go with Marston as he drives on to the harbour and  
parks... crowds gathering to admire the car. On a bench  
nearby, an OLD MAN asleep in the sun. Roughly dressed,  
bearded. a bottle lolls near him. Marston gets out and  
stretches, knowing he's drawing just as many admiring glances  
from the girls in their summer dresses. He takes his case,  
locks the car and enjoying the admiration of the girls, he  
strolls onto the harbour quay.. Leaving the boys exclaiming  
over the car.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. HARBOUR. DAY

10

A curve in the harbour wall, a rock outcrop. Around the  
harbour and quayside the bright colours and bunting and happy  
calls of holiday makers. A little boat moored up. Narracott  
unloads the cases onto the boat. Emily is already aboard.  
The sort not to let a boat un-nerve her. MacArthur, Wargrave  
and Blore aboard. Vera looks down... mooring ropes tangled  
with weed, the slap and suck of the oily water. She's  
battles the overwhelming instinct to get away as fast as  
possible.

EMILY

Oh come along, Miss Claythorne.  
It's perfectly safe.

NARRACOTT

Finest little tub you'll ever get  
in.

VERA

I can't see the island.

NARRACOTT

Nor you won't. Till we're 'yond the harbour on open water.

LOMBARD

You won't see it at all if you don't get in.

He offers his hand, Vera glances at it almost angrily but doesn't take it... a deep breath and she steps into the boat, aware of Lombard's amused look as she struggles to keep her skirt over her knees.. Lombard gets in, Narracott gets ready to cast off-

MARSTON

Hey! Wait!

And he arrives at the quayside in all his brash immediacy.

MARSTON (CONT'D)

Narracott?

NARRACOTT

That's me.

MARSTON

Excellent.

He hurls his case into the boat and jumps easily in, the boat rocks- Emily cries out a little, Vera grabs the seat.. Lombard raises an eyebrow, Blore, MacArthur and Wargrave openly disapprove-

MACARTHUR

Have a care! There's ladies aboard.

Marston gives them the benefit of a huge charming smile.

MARSTON

Apologies. I shall sit perfectly still like a good boy. I promise.

Narracott starts up the boat, the waters churn and they chug out of the harbour.

CUT TO:

11

EXT. BOAT/SEA. DAY

11

The little boat chugs out beyond the harbour wall and turns into the sea... Miss Brent, her back straight, her hat precise, nothing would shake her composure. Vera keeps her eyes down, not wanting to look at the open water, Lombard relaxed. Blore already looks a little sea sick.

MacArthur has a small, almost boyish smile, enjoying the ride. Wargrave glances at Blore's slightly green face.

WARGRAVE

Best to keep your eyes on the horizon, Mr Davis.

Blore nods. Fixes his eyes on the horizon, breathing hard through his mouth. Marston is taking proper stock of the occupants, sees Lombard in age and demeanour is a natural ally.

MARSTON

Rum bunch.

Lombard shrugs.

MARSTON (CONT'D)

(to Narracott) Big place is it? Soldier Island.

NARRACOTT

Big enough.

MARSTON

(to Lombard, a grin) It's going to need to be.

NARRACOTT

You'll see it now.

And the little boat round the harbour and there, in the sea is Soldier Island. A dark bulk in the sunlit, dancing water and the sky wheeling with gulls. Very close in on Vera, the island looks ominous, hostile.. The tiniest shudder. As she turns back, she is aware of Lombard's eyes on her, a heart beat and then she looks down and away.

CUT TO:

12

INT. HOUSE. SOLDIER ISLAND. DAY

12

A gleaming white modern house. Bold touches of colour. A wide staircase with a window to the sea. THOMAS ROGERS, late 40's, the butler, an apron over his shirt and trousers, comes down the stairs, pauses to look out of the window to the sea and then hastens the rest of the way down, taking off his apron..

We go with him, across gleaming parquet floors, glistening white rooms, huge windows open to the sun and the salt air. The house sparkles, a large gong in the hallway, heavy and baronial, almost deliberately out of place.. The copper burnished like the sun.. An art deco mantel clock, the numbers on the face strange and distorted, A huge mirror.

The floors echo Rogers footsteps as he goes into the 'serving area' , narrow passageways of sculleries and larders, to the kitchen.

Many years of professional deference make Rogers almost unreadable when he's being a butler but away from that, as he is now, there is a sharpness to him, an edge, a sense that life hasn't given him what he deserved, an impatience with weakness, vulnerability-

CUT TO:

13

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

13

Into the kitchen and ETHEL ROGERS (mid-40's) is preparing dinner. An apron over black dress with white collar and cuffs. The oven roaring, she bastes a large joint of beef. Lobsters, their claws bound, gesture helplessly. There are meats, cheeses, eggs, pans full of potatoes.. Piles of gleaming lemons. An Aladdin's cave of food and drink. Cartons of cigarettes and cigars. canteens of gleaming cutlery, snowy table linen, gleaming crystal glasses..

At the kitchen window, a red curtain. It's drawn, the sun shines through so the kitchen is full of rosy light.

On a hanger, Rogers' butler's jacket. A clothes brush. Hairbrushes. A small mirror.

Ethel was probably pretty once, but now is thin, her shoulders a perpetual slump, her clothes hang on her, her hair is limp and lank. She seems drained, unravelled. Next to her, Rogers himself looks like a bull, full of health and force. He looks dangerous. He fills the room.

ROGERS

Look sharp. They're coming.

Rogers twitches the curtain back, light spills into the room. Ethel winces.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

What you got this drawn for?

ETHEL

The light. It..

She gestures to her eyes. A moment. Rogers hard eyes on her, she avoids looking at him. Then he puts his jacket on, hands her the clothes brush to tidy him up while he smooths his own hair in the mirror. A vain man.

ROGERS

You going to ruin this?

ETHEL

No.

ROGERS  
You're being a drip.

ETHEL  
I'm sorry. It's just my eyes.

ROGERS  
Christ's sake. I can't keep  
carrying you, can I? How's that  
fair? Everything I do, it's you  
what holds me back. Be better off  
on my own.

A moment, some little shiver. Rogers studies her in the  
mirror. She fleetingly meets his eyes.

ROGERS (CONT'D)  
What?

Ethel shakes her head, drops her eyes.

ETHEL  
I won't ruin it.

ROGERS  
Mind you don't. Now shift yourself.

Rogers leaves. Ethel takes off her apron carefully, buttons  
her cuffs, smooths her hair.

ROGERS (CONT'D)  
(O/V) Et!

ETHEL  
Coming.

And she takes a small pair of wire framed glasses out of her  
pockets, small tinted lens to protect her eyes. They give  
her a strange, spectral appearance.

CUT TO:

14

EXT. BOAT/SOLDIER ISLAND JETTY. DAY

14

Thick, glistening black ribbons and ropes of seaweed and  
bladderwrack at the jetty. Narracott expertly steers the  
boat into the jetty, Lombard has the mooring rope, ready to  
make fast. Quick practised, skillful movements, quickly we  
see Blore notice this. The guests disembark. MacArthur  
helping Emily, Wargrave requiring help. Blore a little shaky  
from his sea sickness. Lombard and MacArthur both offer a  
hand to Vera, she takes MacArthur's hand.. Lombard's amused  
smile.

As the guests look up, silhouetted against the sun, the  
figures of Rogers and Ethel. Dark and strange.. And then they  
come forward so their faces can be seen.

Rogers deferential now, Ethel silent, the peculiar little tinted glasses. Rogers bows a little as Narracott unloads cases.

ROGERS

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Soldier Island.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. SOLDIER ISLAND. DAY

15

Rogers, carrying Wargrave and MacArthur's cases, leads the group across the bare rocky island to the house, Vera, Lombard, Marston, Blore carry their own cases. Ethel carrying Miss Brent's brings up the rear. We can see Narracott watching the from the jetty.

ROGERS

You are the first to arrive. Your rooms are ready so you may rest after your journey.

EMILY

I'd like some tea.

MARSTON

I'd like a stiff drink.

ROGERS

We will bring you whatever you require.

And with Narracott, watching the group leave to the house. He's lights a freshly rolled cigarette... pulls loose shreds of tobacco from his lips... spits. Turns back to the boat.

CUT TO:

16 INT. HOUSE. DAY

16

The guests open mouthed at the extraordinary house.. except Lombard, Lombard takes in his surrounding as if he recce-ing new hazardous territory.

MACARTHUR

When do you expect our hosts?

ROGERS

We shall be a full house by tonight, Sir.

VERA

Did Mrs Owen leave any instructions for me? I'm the secretary.



ROGERS

Only to ensure that you were comfortable and had everything you wished, Miss Claythorne. Now, if the gentlemen would like to follow me, Mrs Rogers will escort the ladies. The gong is at seven.

Rogers leads the way upstairs.. The rest of the party follow. Vera hangs back a little , gesturing for others to go first, perhaps she doesn't want Lombard behind her. Wargrave hangs back a little.

WARGRAVE

Do you know Mrs Culmington?  
Constance Culmington?

VERA

I'm afraid I don't.

WARGRAVE

Ridiculously vague.

VERA

I'm sorry but I only got the job very recently-

WARGRAVE

Oh, my dear young lady, I meant Mrs Culmington. Hopelessly, habitually, ridiculously vague.

He gives her a kind avuncular smile.

WARGRAVE (CONT'D)

Go ahead, please. I like to go at my own pace.

Vera smiles back, goes up the stairs. Wargrave follows slowly, the tap-tap of his walking stick echoing in the hall.

The tap- tap of the stick is picked up by..

CUT TO:

17

INT. BLORE'S ROOM. DAY

17

The sound of a clock, ticking softly and gently. A beautiful room, full of sparkling light the windows open, curtains moving in the breeze. Very modern, clean lines, very white. An armchair by the window. On the window sill, the clock is set into a marble sculpture of a bear. Everything white, bedspread, walls, the towels in the bathroom.. there are odd touches of colour. There is a framed print over the fireplace. It's a poem, a nursery rhyme but Blore doesn't take any notice of it. he takes a paper from his pocket, thick expensive paper.

The embossed letterhead reads Ulrick Norman Owen. And a typed list of names. Thomas and Ethel Rogers. Anthony Marston. Captain Philip Lombard. Miss Vera Claythorne. Doctor Edward Armstrong. Miss Emily Brent. General John MacArthur. Judge Lawrence Wargrave... Blore takes out a pencil, starts to make notes against each name.. starting with Rogers 'Thug'... Mrs Rogers 'Scared of her own shadow..'

CUT TO:

18 INT. KITCHEN. DAY 18

The curtain drawn again, so the light is suffused with red.. A huge pan of boiling water.. Wincing from the steam, Ethel picks up the lobsters, the claws bound, their frantic antennae and drops them into the water, slams on the lid.. High pitched screaming from the pan runs throughout the following, over the soft insistent metronome of the clocks..

CUT TO:

19 INT. DINING ROOM. DAY 19

White, modern again. Full of sunlight. On one wall, Mark Gertler's Merry Go Round. The dining tabletop is thick clear glass. Rogers lays white place mats, heavy white napery and cutlery... lines of knives catching the light... Arranges glasses. In the middle of the table, an odd collection of little figures. Blunt little people as if from some ancient civilisation, rendered in snowy marble. Ten of them.

CUT TO:

20 INT. MARSTON'S ROOM. DAY 20

The same framed print on the wall. The same clock and bear sculpture. A glass bursting with bubbles, ice and lemon slice. Gin and tonic. Marston isn't interested in his surroundings, doesn't even glance at the rhyme, undresses lazily, dropping his clothes on the floor, takes his drink and a cigarette and naked, goes through into the bathroom. He is at the very height of his youth and beauty and knows it, any reflective surface that he passes, he admires himself in it. Maybe that reflective surface is the glass of the framed rhyme. He gets into the steaming bath, luxuriates, sips his drink. Blows a long contented plume of smoke up at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

21 INT. EMILY'S ROOM. DAY 21

On the wall, again, the same framed print. The same bear clock. Emily is neatly unpacked.

Her bible and a small jewellery box, a hairbrush on the dresser. On a little table by the armchair at the window, a tray with teapot and delicate pretty bone china cup and saucer. Little silver sugar tongs. A knitting bag. It has her initials EB on it. Emily pours tea. Takes out her knitting. Thick needles, grey wool. We will see that the ends of her needles also have her initials on them, She knits fast... the needles stabbing, glinting in the sun....

CUT TO:

22

INT. MACARTHUR'S ROOM. DAY

22

Again, clean, white modern, same furnishings, filled with sparkling light. The same framed print on the wall, MacArthur takes bound leather folders, battered journals, a map from his case sets them on top of dresser. Unrolls the map. A military map showing the Front 1917, German and British positions. Something else.. A card wallet, opened it reveals a portrait photo. A curtain, a fern in a pot. A date written in white in the corner: Paris 1916. MacArthur himself, in uniform. A young man, MID 20'S, so handsome, a beautiful smile ARTHUR RICHMOND, also in uniform, both standing and a beautiful woman LESLEY MACARTHUR late 20's, sat between them. She's hatless. Her face lively, full of daring and mischief. MacArthur's hand rests on her shoulder. She's his. Yet her body inclines slightly to Richmond. As he studies the photo, grief chases across MacArthur's face. He glances at the framed poster for a second, not enough for us to take in any more of the rhyme but in the reflection of the glass, something moves behind him-

A man, filthy khaki uniform and part of his face a torn and bloody hole-

MacArthur turns with a gasp-

Nothing there. Just curtains blowing in the breeze. Whiteness. Peace. He turns back, closes the wallet with the photo, replaces it in the leather folders. Composes himself with an effort.

CUT TO:

23

INT. WARGRAVE'S ROOM. DAY

23

Again, the same style of room, same furnishings, same clock ticking and the same framed print on the wall. There is small case for medications on the dresser. A few phials of pills. A tincture with a dropper. a glass of water. From his breast pocket Wargrave pulls out a pair of pince nez glasses that are attached to the black silk cord clipped to his lapel. He squints at the label on the pills, takes one.. A moment. He takes another.

CUT TO:

24 INT. VERA'S ROOM. DAY

24

Again, same furnishings, the marble bear with the clock set into it on the window sill, nearly exactly the same but one thing different. Against the wall by the door, a delicate chair, the wood gilded perhaps but the kind of chair you'd expect to find in a young ladies room. Vera puts her handbag on it... takes her case to the dresser to unpack. Sponge bag, underwear and a folded crimson ruched swimsuit..

She pauses, her eye caught by the framed print over the fireplace.. Now we see what it is, a poem... Vera smiles, knowing the rhyme..

Ten little soldier boys, went out to dine; One choked his little self and then there were nine..

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

CUT TO:

25 INT. LOMBARD'S ROOM. DAY

25

Everything the same, but no gilded chair. Lombard has a revolver. Gleaming. Blue black. He checks the chamber. Loaded. Shuts it away in a drawer in his bedside table.

The high pitched scream of the boiling lobsters that's been running over is suddenly silent.. Just the sound of the sea, the call of gulls. The soft insistent tick of the clock...

CUT TO:

26 INT. KITCHEN. DAY

26

Laid out, the cooked coral lobsters. Ethel with a wicked sharp knife. She drives the point of it down hard at the back of the lobster's skull. A sickening crunch as it splits.

Silence.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. TOWN/HARBOUR. DAY

27

Armstrong parks his car up. Fixes the roof, takes his case, locks it securely, tying to lock again to be sure. He's not as blase as Marston. Surrounded by holiday makers, he strolls toward the harbour and stops, seeing Marston's car. A fizz of anger to him. Goes closer, studying it. And there's the old tramp, awake now. Opening a bottle, drinking from it.

ARMSTRONG

Hey, you. Did you see the man  
driving this car? Where did he go?

The old man eyes him balefully.

OLD MAN

There's a storm comin'.

ARMSTRONG

No, there isn't. The man driving  
this car, where did he go?

OLD MAN

It'll blot out the sun.

Take Armstrong. No point to this.

ARMSTRONG

Forget it.

OLD MAN

A storm I tell you. It's comin'.  
And you know it.

ARMSTRONG

Some free medical advice, old chap.  
Lay off the sauce.

Armstrong strides away to the harbour but the old man hasn't finished, follows him up the quay like a dark, dishevelled prophet... Holidaying families pull their children away, young men and women giggle at him.. Up the quay, Narracott is waiting. Under next, Armstrong gets into the boat and Narracott unmoors while the Old Man hectors him.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Narracott? Soldier Island? Doctor  
Armstrong.

OLD MAN

The eye of God is on you. He sees  
you. He sees your sin, your curse.  
The red mark is upon your brow.

NARRACOTT

Go home, Dad! (To Armstrong) Don't  
pay him no mind. Brain gone to  
mush.

But as the boat pulls away, Armstrong turns back to look at the Old Man who points directly at him. A final shout-

OLD MAN

Judgement is coming. In fire and  
slaughter. He's sending a storm!  
It's the end of the world!

And with Armstrong, that pointing finger, that dark apocalyptic figure in the innocent holiday sun...under the savoir faire and sophistication, that rattles him, puts a shiver up his spine.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. SOLDIER ISLAND. EARLY EVENING 28

The sun starting to set, longer shadows.. Gulls wheel and watch at the back of the kitchen. Ethel comes out with a bucket of scraps, lobster shells and peelings, her glasses on, squinting against the still bright sun... she throws the contents of the bucket into the sea... gulls dive and argue, their ice-pick sharp beaks..

CUT TO:

29 INT. HALLWAY. EARLY EVENING 29

Vera, dressed still plainly but for dinner, comes down the stairs.. It's all silent. Early evening sunlight streaming in, making the baronial gong glow and reflect warm light. Doors off the hallway, all closed. She chooses one and opens it..

CUT TO:

30 INT. LIBRARY. EARLY EVENING 30

Bookcases floor to ceiling. A fireplace. A thick luxuriant polar bear skin rug, the head with narrow yellow eyes, lifted lip to show teeth, the feet with it's claws. Huge windows looking out over the sea. A window seat. A small brass telescope. Easy chairs, table. A masculine room. And over the fireplace, a copy of Holbein the Younger's The Ambassadors with it's strange elongated mystery shape.. Vera frowns at it.. But she doesn't investigate further.. And leaves, closing the door softly.

CUT TO:

31 INT. HALLWAY. EARLY EVENING 31

Vera crosses over to another door, obviously from it's appearance, (plainer) leading to the kitchens and servants quarters-

CUT TO:

A stone flagged corridor. We can glimpse into the kitchen, clouds of steam, the sound of cooking... Vera walks down the corridor, opening doors... A larder, stacked high with tins, bottle of drink, cartons of cigarettes.. Further doors leading off, all closed but one is open, she goes towards it, almost there-

ETHEL

Miss?

Vera turns, Ethel behind her. She looks nervous but there's such a strong sense that Vera's intruding somehow. She hasn't had time to put her glasses on and she blinks in the light.

ETHEL (CONT'D)

Is there something you're looking for, Miss?

And now we see behind the open door, Rogers is standing motionless, barely breathing, listening..

VERA

I was just exploring.

ETHEL

Because this is the below-stairs, Miss. For Rogers and myself, for staff-

VERA

Well, I am staff-

ETHEL

Miss, we had very strict instructions that you were to be treated as a guest. Guests don't come below stairs. If there's anything you need, ring for Rogers to attend.

A slight shivery moment.

VERA

It rather sounds as though you're asking me to leave.

A moment, Ethel is and Vera doesn't move, not quite yet.

VERA (CONT'D)

How many more are you expecting with the Owen's?

ETHEL

We shall know when they arrive.

VERA

But how will you cope, just the two of you?

ETHEL

Rogers and myself is competent. More than. No-one'll want for anything.

VERA

Well, you can always ask me, you know. For help-

ETHEL

Until Mrs Owen says otherwise, you are a guest, Miss. So, if you please..?

She means to leave.. And finally Vera starts walking to the door that leads to the main body of the house. She pauses.

VERA

What are they like? The Owen's?

ETHEL

We've not met them, Miss. Engaged by letter. But they're generous. We want them to be pleased with us and they have been most exacting and precise with their instructions, Miss. You understand.

A moment. Vera does. She leaves back to the house. Ethel breathes out and down the corridor, the bulk of Rogers steps out of one of the small rooms.

ROGERS

Well done, girl.

Ethel ducks her head shyly. A compliment is rare. She goes back to the kitchen.

And we're with Rogers as he turns to close and lock the door of the room he was in... and briefly glimpse inside. Entirely bare but for one object.. A gramophone, turned so the fluted trumpet. In front of the fluted trumpet, a microphone.

Rogers locks the door, puts the key in his pocket.

CUT TO:



33 EXT. SOLDIER ISLAND. DAY

33

Evening. Shadows longer. Gulls wheel. Wargrave strolls slowly with MacArthur, who adjusts his pace for the older man with his walking stick, the kind of conversation men of a certain age, status and class might have. The world. Politics. The breaking of the nations. They are getting on. Nearer the house, relaxing in a lounge, Blore, he watches MacArthur and Wargrave.

Emily exits the house, joins Blore, who is all 'colonial' good manners, standing up for her.

EMILY

What an idyllic evening, Mr Davis.  
The Sky! How can one not believe  
in an Creator?

And above in the bedrooms, we just glimpse Marston, looking down.

TO:

34 INT. MARSTON'S ROOM. EARLY EVENING

34

An explosion of clothes and toiletries. Marston dressing, watching the strolling guests. Some contempt.

MARSTON

Too many bloody ancients.

He goes to the dresser, unpacks a silver box containing a phial of powder and a tiny spoon. He expertly snorts, shuddering and exultant as the cocaine hits his synapses.

CUT TO:

35 INT. DRAWING ROOM. DAY

35

A vast room with huge French windows, open to the August evening. Sofas, armchairs, all modern, all pale. A table, covered with a white cloth, bottles of drink. An silver ice bucket, the outside misted. A cocktail shaker. Soda syphon. Sherry glasses, tumblers, highballs.. a crystal dish of glistening lemon slices. Cocktail sticks, olives, tiny silverskin onions, cordials.. A carafe of water. Every possible taste catered for. Somewhere in a rack, gramophone records. On one wall.. A large reproduction of Zurbaran's Agnes Dei (a lamb bound for slaughter). On another, a series of Goya's 'black' etchings of war. And on the other, a Schiele print. 'Girl with her legs drawn up', the provocative pleats of her underwear, the skeletal frame, the febrile eyes. On the fourth wall, the framed poster of the nursery rhyme.

Vera, thinking she's alone, glances at it, goes to the drinks table and jumps when she hears the flick of a lighter.

Lombard, deep in an armchair with a whisky. He smiles at her. Vera is as neutral as possible (he's a guest, she's staff).

LOMBARD

(of the poster) There's one in my room too.

VERA

And mine.

LOMBARD

I imagine there's one in every room.

VERA

Well.. Soldier Island. It makes sense. It's amusing.

LOMBARD

I have a strong suspicion our hosts are inclined to whimsy.

VERA

I can't comment on our hosts.

LOMBARD

Good little secretary.

Vera bridles a little, that mocking smile.

VERA

Excuse me, Captain-

She turns to go.

LOMBARD

We've got off on the wrong foot, haven't we? But you do have very pretty legs. It would have been remiss not to admire them. And I don't think you minded that much.

A moment.

VERA

Captain Lombard, you seem to be under the impression that I am a particular type of woman. I assure you that I'm not. I don't like being looked at.

LOMBARD

I get instincts about people. I have an instinct about you. I think you're pretending.

VERA

Pretending to be what?

Lombard gestures lazily at her, meaning 'this'. The air fizzes, Vera's tension-

And it's broken as Armstrong enters-

ARMSTRONG

Mrs Owen, Mr Owen, Edward Armstrong. Delighted to meet-

VERA

I'm not.. We're not- I'm Miss Claythorne.

LOMBARD

Mrs Owen's new secretary. Lombard.

ARMSTRONG

Oh. I assumed... I do beg your pardon. Are they outside or not down yet?

LOMBARD

Not here yet.

VERA

Can I get you a drink Mr Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG

It's Doctor. Actually. No drink, thank you.

He gestures outside, a question of 'who'?

VERA

Mr and Mrs Owen's other guests.

ARMSTRONG

I'll go and introduce myself. Hopefully won't make too much of a hash of it this time.

And he exits. Lombard grins at Vera. Armstrong's mistake.

LOMBARD

He sensed the spark between us.

Vera doesn't smile back. And Marston bounds in, electric and buzzing. He barely notices Vera, other than the dispenser of drinks.

VERA  
A drink, Mr Marston?

MARSTON  
Pink gin.

VERA  
How pink?

MARSTON  
As a virgin's blush.

Vera gets on with it. Marston watches the guests through the window.

MARSTON (CONT'D)  
You a betting man, Lombard?

LOMBARD  
It depends.

MARSTON  
That soldier fellow-

LOMBARD  
General MacArthur-

MARSTON  
At some point this evening, he'll ask us what we did in the war. Those types always do. Well, not me but you. And then he'll ask us both if we aren't ready to do our duty in the next one. Not that there's going to be a next one.

LOMBARD  
There's always a next one.

MARSTON  
So how about it. A bet?

LOMBARD  
The odds are too short.

Marston shrugs, everything rolls off him, everything. He gazes out at the group.

MARSTON  
Look at them. Outlived their usefulness. Clinging on. They believe they still mean something. There's just absolutely no point to them at all. Nobody at all would notice or care if they just..

And he gestures with his hand, his finger tips bunching and then 'letting go' like a tiny explosion. A beat. He flashes a huge smile at Lombard and Vera.

MARSTON (CONT'D)

I'm going to be exceptionally charming to them.

He leaves to the group. A moment of silence.

LOMBARD

Oh, alright, Miss Claythorne. If it'll make you happy, I'm sorry for staring.

VERA

Captain Lombard, I doubt you're ever sorry for anything.

LOMBARD

Smart girl.

Lombard turns to watch the guests, gilded by the sun. Vera watches him under her eyelids.

CUT TO:

36 INT. HALLWAY. EVENING 36

Measured and magisterial, Rogers sounds the gong. The sound reverberates, the copper disc making gold light dance.

CUT TO:

37 INT. KITCHEN. EVENING. 37

A roar of heat from the stove. Steam. Frenzied kitchen activity. Individual souffles rising, Ethel's face sweating and tight with concentration.. Bubbling pots, beef resting on the side in a pool of juices..

CUT TO:

38 INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING 38

Candles, the little figures, the guests seat themselves. Vera taking care to place herself as far away from Lombard as possible. Blore, playing the deferential colonial Davis to Wargrave and MacArthur.. Marston 'charmingly' helps Emily to her seat, then seats himself near Lombard as his natural ally.. Armstrong fills his glass with water while everyone else has wine.

We don't need to be overtly aware of it but Wargrave only picks at his food, eating hardly anything.

Rogers serves individual lobster souffles.

ROGERS

Ladies and gentlemen, lobster soufflé.

EMILY

I hope it's not too rich. I dine so modestly at home.

Rogers serves wine as the guests eat. Armstrong covering his glass, asking for water. After serving wine, Rogers withdraws. Under next, everyone including Emily, tucks in. Marston will be picky (cocaine). Wargrave will also be picky, for reasons explained later.

ARMSTRONG

(To Wargrave) We've met, you know.

WARGRAVE

We have? I'm so sorry, my memory's not what it was. Perhaps you gave evidence before me?

ARMSTRONG

No, I'd remember that. It's from somewhere else.. It'll come to me.

WARGRAVE

I do hope so, Doctor.

EMILY

(of the figures) I'm not sure about these, they look rather..pagan.

MACARTHUR

There's only eight of us.

VERA

It's for the ten little soldier boys. You know, in the poem.

LOMBARD

You can't have missed it, Miss Brent. It's everywhere. Belabouring the theme somewhat.

MARSTON

Bit twee. Bit nouveau.

EMILY

I glanced at it of course. The.. Well, you can't call it a poem. It's doggerel. Poetry should be uplifting.

BLORE  
I agree with you, Miss Brent.

EMILY  
I never imagine South Africans as  
being keen on poetry.

LOMBARD  
Mr Davis has hidden depths.

A beat. Blore smiles as if it's a joke but he slides his eyes at Lombard, tucking in innocently.

VERA  
The souffle is delicious.

EMILY  
Very light.

She's eaten the lot.

CUT TO:

39 INT. KITCHEN. EVENING

39

Ethel strops a carving knife... Carves beef. Blood oozes. Rogers bringing plates and cutlery from the dining room brought back on a trolley..

CUT TO:

40 INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING

40

Roast beef served. Appreciative eating. Rogers fills glasses with red wine. The guests are becoming more expansive, more relaxed though Blore and Lombard remain watchful. Marston eyes are getting that glittering quality of drunkenness. Wargrave and Vera laughing together.

WARGRAVE  
(to Vera) Forty years in criminal law, as a barrister, then a QC then on the bench. I have come face to face with the most depraved examples of mankind and felt no fear.. But I quail in terror at the thought of young ladies brandishing hockey sticks.

VERA  
They're really not that bad, Judge. A little over-excited and noisy sometimes-

WARGRAVE

The prerogative of youth, Miss Claythorne. I'm sure you set a very fine example to them.

The buzz of conversation. Rogers pours wine, appreciative eating.

MACARTHUR

(to Blore) I served alongside many fine men of your country in France. Were you there?

BLORE

My trade is export, General. I was supplying tinned stew for the troops.

MACARTHUR

Well, an army marches on it's stomach.

ARMSTRONG

God, I remember that stew.

MACARTHUR

RAMC, I presume, Doctor.

ARMSTRONG

That's right. Clearing stations in Belgium then England.

MARSTON

(low, To Lombard) here we go, any moment now..

MACARTHUR

You'd have been too young, Mr Marston but Captain Lombard? Did you serve?

MARSTON

(muttered) Bingo.

LOMBARD

At the end. Mopping up. You know. I might even have eaten some of your South African stew, Mr Davis.

Blore slides his eyes at Lombard. MacArthur continues-

MACARTHUR

I wondered if you were here for the same reason I am?

WARGRAVE

What reason is that, General?



MACARTHUR

Mr Owen is an amateur but knowledgable military historian. He's writing about the decisive actions in France during '17-

MARSTON

(under his breath) Oh, for God's sake, it's over, flogging a dead horse-

MACARTHUR

Perhaps Mr Owen is interviewing you as well?

LOMBARD

No, I'm just getting away from it all.

MARSTON

(with a huge smile) It sounds fascinating, I really don't think we can have too many of such histories-

His enthusiasm is taken at face value except for Lombard who slides his eyes at him-

LOMBARD

(low) watch yourself.

MACARTHUR

An interesting man, Mr Owen. An interesting name. Urick Norman.

VERA

How funny, Mrs Owen is Una Nancy-

EMILY

Matching initials-

MARSTON

(under his breath) So twee. So nouveau.

MACARTHUR

I was a little concerned by the Urick, I admit. I worried that in the current climate, it might be a touch.. Teutonic.

EMILY

Oh, General, I'm sure there's nothing to worry about. What could be more English than Norman?

And with that Vera opens her mouth to say something, shuts it again, meets Wargrave's eyes, the flicker of a smile.

CUT TO:

41 INT. HOUSE. EVENING. 41

Kitchen. Eggs cracked, yolk and white separated... whites frothed.. Sugar bubbling... Filigree golden sugar baskets woven.. Fairy tale pudding..

CUT TO:

42 INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING 42

Candles. The little figures in the centre. Pick up various conversations. Emily claps her hands in delight as the magical pudding, Iles Flottantes with sugar basket work is carried in.

EMILY

Oh, it's magical!

WARGRAVE

Mrs Rogers has the gift.

MARSTON

She might look like a ghost but she can definitely cook.

A slight beat. A shudder of outrage and shock from the other guests. Wargrave and MacArthur especially direct a glassy disgusted stare down at oblivious Marston. To change the subject-

EMILY

It seems a shame to be enjoying such wonderful hospitality without our hosts. When can we expect the Owens? Have they not telephoned?

ROGERS

There's no telephone on the island, Madam. Mr Narracott brings messages along with the post and kitchen supplies every morning. I imagine tomorrow he will bring either a telegram from the Owens or they will accompany him.

He bows to leave.

MARSTON

Rogers, give that Narracott chap a couple of bob, ask him to keep an eye on my car. Parked up by the harbour. The Dalmain.

And Armstrong's eyes on Marston.

ROGERS

Of course, Sir. And I shall pass on your compliments to Mrs Rogers.

Was there a slight edge under the bland obsequiousness? But Rogers is gone.

MACARTHUR

That was damn rude, young man. I beg your pardon, ladies.

MARSTON

We were all thinking it.

ARMSTRONG

Your car. The Dalmain Super Sports.

Marston beams.

MARSTON

You saw her. Isn't she a beauty? I honestly can't imagine loving a person as much as I worship and adore the Dalmain.

ARMSTRONG

You ran me off the road.

MARSTON

No, I didn't.

ARMSTRONG

You ran me off the road.

And Armstrong is coldly furious. Marston takes none of this seriously.

MARSTON

When?

ARMSTRONG

I was minding my own business and you overtook me, going god knows how fast and you ran me off the road.

A beat. The atmosphere has changed. Lombard watching Armstrong now, a raised laconic eyebrow..

Blore, vera, Emily, Wargrave, all eyes on Marstons grinning insolence and Armstrong's mounting rage.

MARSTON

I remember someone going at a pitiful speed-

ARMSTRONG

You ran me off the road.

MARSTON

I might have over-taken you but my great-aunt drives with more zip and if you can't control your car then you really shouldn't be behind the wheel-

ARMSTRONG

You insolent pup, you ran me off the road and you have the temerity to tell me it's my fault?

MARSTON

Careful, old boy. Going a bit red in the face there-

WARGRAVE

Gentlemen, please. We are not animals. There are ladies present.

Silence. Marston hasn't stopped smiling, this is so amusing. Armstrong's face twitching with anger. Blore's eyes on him. And then Armstrong seems to realise where he is, that all eyes are on him.

ARMSTRONG

Forgive me. It's been a long week.

Marston holds his hand out for Armstrong to shake.

MARSTON

Come on, put it there, let's be chums.

Armstrong, almost forcing himself, shakes Marston's hand. Normality returns. Almost.

WARGRAVE

(to Emily) And where do you call home, Miss Brent.

EMILY

Teddington, Judge.

WARGRAVE

Oh, what a charming stretch of the river that is. I attended a regatta there in '34. Utterly delightful.

EMILY

It's very pretty, yes.

Armstrong's fizzing rage at Marston not abated. And his eyes on Marston, blithely ploughing through his pudding. And Vera, Blore and Lombard, their eyes on Armstrong.. Quickly Lombard meets Vera's eyes, a flick of raised eyebrows. Vera looks away.

CUT TO:

43 INT. KITCHEN. EVENING. 43

Kitchen. A wicked cheese wire slices through a block of cheddar. Exhausted looking Ethel, the chaos of the kitchen. A kettle boiling. A tray laid with bonechina coffee service. Rogers checks a list, checks the time on his watch.

ROGERS

Nearly there. Good work, Et.

Nearly there.

CUT TO:

44 INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING. 44

The men. Rogers pours port from a decanter. Cigars are clipped, lit. Clouds of smoke blown up at the ceiling. Marston checks his cigarette case.

MARSTON

I'm out of cigarettes, Rogers.

ROGERS

Yes, Sir.

Rogers exits, go with him..

In the hallway, Rogers checks his watch against the art deco clock.. Heads out, through the 'servants door'..

Into the corridors.. Ethel leaving the kitchen with the coffee tray, Rogers holds the door for her, pulls keys from his pocket and heads down the passage.

CUT TO:

45 INT. DRAWING ROOM. EVENING. 45

The doors still open to the evening. Still light. Emily and Vera. Emily has her knitting bag.

VERA

I loathe this convention. Leaving the men to their cigars and their 'stories'.

EMILY

My dear Miss Claythorne, conventions are what hold us together in the face of rising tide of chaos. And I for one have no wish to breathe their cigar smoke or have my ears sullied by their stories, of which I suspect young Mr Marston has more than a few.

VERA

Doctor Armstrong was furious.

EMILY

I thought he controlled himself admirably. I would expect nothing less from a medical man.

Ethel enters. Puts the coffee down.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Excellent dinner, Mrs Rogers. The Owens are lucky to have you and I shall certainly be telling them so.

ETHEL

Thank you, Madam. Much appreciated.

VERA

I'll pour the coffee, you must be very busy in the kitchen.

ETHEL

Miss.

Ethel bobs a curtsey and exits. Under next, Vera pours coffee. And perhaps we hear a faint faint sound, like that of a needle on a record but the breeze is blowing and there is the sound of the sea so it's hidden.

EMILY

How light it is. It would be quite dark at home by now. Do you know this part of the country?

VERA

(she does) Not at all.

EMILY

Whereabouts is your school? (off Vera's look) I heard you tell the Judge you were a teacher.

VERA

You wouldn't have heard of it. It's not particularly well known.

EMILY

Nor particularly good.

VERA

Why d'you say that?

EMILY

If it was, you wouldn't be needing employment in the summer. It's fees aren't high enough, nor is the pay.

And under next, Vera becomes increasingly uncomfortable, brittle. Emily gets out her knitting.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Not that I disapprove of you seeking employment and being busy, far from it. But you are clearly competent and intelligent, why teach in a third rate establishment producing third rate girls with third rate educations that don't fit them for good society and only serve to make them querulous and dis-satisfied as wives and mothers? Barely worth your time and effort, I would have thought-

Vera wanting to shut her up, pouring coffee, handing it to Emily-

VERA

Coffee, Miss Brent.

EMILY

It seems almost wilfully obstinate to sell yourself so short-

And a voice booms in the room:

VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen! Silence please!

Vera and Emily jump, coffee slops in the saucer-

VERA

Who's that?

CUT TO:

46 INT. DINING ROOM. EVENING.

46

The men turning to listen, Rogers in the act of passing a tray with a packet of cigarettes on to Marston, the voice rings deafeningly-

VOICE

You are charged with the following indictments!

MARSTON

Is this a joke?

VOICE

Edward George Armstrong, that you murdered Louisa Mary Clees-

Armstrong leaps from his seat- Rogers has gone white.

ARMSTRONG

What the hell is this? Who is this?

ROGERS

..I don't know, Sir-

VOICE

Emily Caroline Brent, that you murdered Beatrice Taylor-

CUT TO:

47 INT. DRAWING ROOM. EVENING.

47

The indictment ringing out, Emily mopping coffee from her saucer with a napkin and hearing her charge, she and Vera meet shocked eyes, Vera jumps from her seat, heads to the door-

VOICE

William Henry Blore, that you did murder James Stephen Landor-

CUT TO:

48 INT. HALLWAY. EVENING.

48

The voice booming.. Vera, followed more slowly by Emily in the hall, Armstrong, Lombard coming into the hall, in the dining room beyond, shocked MacArthur, Blore, Wargrave, Rogers.. Marston-

VOICE

Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, that you did murder Cyril Ogilvie Hamilton-



Vera's white face-

VERA

Where's it coming from?

Lombard goes to the library doors-

CUT TO:

49 INT. LIBRARY. EVENING.

49

Lombard followed by Vera, Armsrong pushing into the library but there's no-one in there, even though the voice continues to boom-

VOICE

Philip Lombard, that you did murder  
21 men, members of an East African  
tribe-

And Lombard turns out of the library doors to find everyone in the hall, staring at him-

CUT TO:

50 INT. HALLWAY. EVENING.

50

All but Mrs Rogers, white-faced and the voice booming-

VOICE

John Gordon MacArthur, that you did  
murder Arthur Richmond-

MacArthurs white face, he grips the door frame for support-

ARMSTRONG

Where is it coming from? Rogers!

Rogers gestures weakly through the servants door, fumbling with his keys- Lombard, Armstrong and Marston follow-

VOICE

Anthony James Marston, that you did  
murder John and Lucy Coombes-

MARSTON

I never heard of them-

CUT TO:

51 INT. PASSAGES. EVENING.

51

Passages to the kitchen and the larder, the voice booming here-

Lombard, Armstrong, Marston, following Rogers down to the locked room, Wargrave, MacArthur, Vera, Blore, Emily crowding in the passage-

VOICE

Lawrence John Wargrave, that you did murder Edward Seton-

Wargrave's shocked face-

Outside the locked door, Rogers struggles with the keys, Lombard shoves him aside-

LOMBARD

Out of the way-

Lombard kicks at the door, a couple of times and it splinters-

VOICE

Thomas and Ethel Rogers, that you did murder Jennifer Brady-

Rogers' face.. And the sound of crashing china from the kitchen- he pushes up the corridor through the guests-

CUT TO:

52

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING.

52

Ethel is standing stock still in a pile of shattered crockery, broken glass, her face a frozen mask- her eyes blind and staring.. She calls her husband's name over again, a quavering, stammering harsh call.. Rogers enters, urgent, he has to get to her before she says something, his feet crunching and cracking the china, the glass-

ETHEL

Thomas? Thomas?

ROGERS

(low, harsh) Shut your mouth, Et. Shut it.

And he puts a hand over her mouth and almost shakes her, her wide and terrified eyes.

VOICE

Prisoners at the bar, how do you plead?

And then the sound of a needle hissing on a record..

CUT TO:

53 INT. LOCKED ROOM. EVENING. 53

The locked room. The needle hissing on the record. In the doorway, Armstrong and Marston. Lombard lifts the needle off the record and picks it up, looks at the label, looks around the room. The microphone, cords and wires running up and along the walls..

CUT TO:

54 INT. PASSAGES. EVENING 54

Lombard carries the record out into the shocked silence of the passage. Wargrave coming back from the kitchen. Lombard's eyes follow the cunningly hidden cords and wires.. Loudspeakers hidden in corners and cornices. Rogers comes out of the kitchen, carrying distraught Ethel in his arms. The guests step back.

ARMSTRONG

( to Rogers) What's happened to her?

ROGERS

(sharp) She just took a turn.

ARMSTRONG

I'll fetch my bag.

ROGERS

I said, she's alright.

ARMSTRONG

I'll be the judge of that.

Armstrong's superiority wins over Rogers' reluctance. Rogers nods, carries Ethel away.. Armstrong looks around the group of guests, the shocked faces. Even Marston has a frown.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I shouldn't be too long.

He pushes through the door into the main part of the house. The guests look down to where Lombard emerges from the room, carrying the record.

LOMBARD

So, Mr Davis, the only one unnamed. I take it you're Blore.

Wargrave turns to stare at him. Blore looks sulky. And now he's back to his London accent.

LOMBARD (CONT'D)

I knew it. Never been to South Africa in your life.

WARGRAVE

Blore? The Detective Inspector?

BLORE

Thought you'd have recognised me,  
Judge.

WARGRAVE

I have so many giving evidence in  
front of me.. My memory. Not what  
it was.

MARSTON

I need a bloody drink.

Marston pushes out.

MACARTHUR

(suddenly) grotesque, false  
accusations!

EMILY

Indeed, General!

MACARTHUR

I don't know what the devil is  
going on here!

BLORE

We should wait for the doctor and  
Rogers. We should wait until  
everyone is together.

LOMBARD

Well said, Tubs. Let's all listen  
to the policeman.

Blore cuts his eyes at him but opens the door for Emily,  
MacArthur and Wargrave, ushering them through. Vera hangs  
back with Lombard.

VERA

..A record?

LOMBARD

It's called Swan Song.

CUT TO:

55

INT. ROGERS BEDROOM. EVENING.

55

Two narrow single beds. A small plain room. A smaller  
version of the 'poem'. A window open to the night, a curtain  
blowing in the breeze. Crocheted blankets. A night-table  
between the beds. A little cheap alarm clock ticking.

A few belongings, a hair brush, comb, neatly folded pyjamas on Rogers bed. a nightdress on Ethel's. Ethel lies on the bed, as Armstrong examines her, his bag open. He mixes a powder in a glass of water, hands it to her. Rogers keeps his fierce eyes on Ethel. Ethel keeps her eyes on her husband. As Armstrong turns to mix the powder, he sees the look passing between husband and wife, a flick of a raised eyebrow.

ARMSTRONG

Distress. The pulse is very fast.  
Quite natural, under the  
circumstances.

ROGERS

It's a filthy lie.

ARMSTRONG

No doubt. This (the drink) is  
mild, but it will help you sleep.

He passes it to her, again noticing that Ethel looks to her husband that she should drink.. And that Rogers nods sharply that she should. Ethel drinks it down. Her hand shakes, the glass rattles on her teeth. Armstrong picks up his bag.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I suspect, Rogers, there may be a  
lot of questions about our hosts  
that only you can answer.

ROGERS

Yes, Sir.

ARMSTRONG

A few minutes then. To settle your  
wife.

ROGERS

Sir.

Armstrong leaves. The door closes. Rogers starts unbuttoning her dress, rough, pulling it off her. Ethel almost whimpering.

CUT TO:

56

INT. SERVANT'S QUARTERS. EVENING.

56

The closed bedroom door, Armstrong listening on the stairs..

ETHEL

(O/V) I told you, I told you, I  
told you we'd never-

ROGERS  
(O/V) Pull yourself together,  
woman.

And the soft sound of Ethel weeping. Armstrong raises his eyebrows, goes down the stairs..

CUT TO:

57 INT. HALLWAY NIGHT

57

The race of the clock..Lombard looking up into the cornices and corners, the cords and cables, little boxes for loudspeakers, leading into the library, the dining room, the living room. Lombard has the record with him.

The drawing room doors are open, we can hear the voices of Rogers being questioned by the guests, Lombard enters the living room..

VERA  
(O/V) Your wife stopped me from looking, she didn't want me to find it, you both knew-

ROGERS  
(O/V) We were told it was to be a surprise, a party game-

58 INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT

58

Lombard enters as Rogers faces the unsettled, defensive guests. Lombard's eyes travelling around the room to small boxes of loudspeakers hidden in the cornicing, is not as defensive as the others. Guests crowd around the drinks table, helping themselves. Lombard's eyes note Armstrong finally pouring himself a drink, a hefty scotch. Marston has a little frown of confusion.

ROGERS  
It was my instructions-

He takes the list from his pocket. It's typed. He points it out, it's taken and passed around-

ROGERS (CONT'D)  
See? At this time, put the record on for the game, it must be a complete surprise or the game will be quite ruined-

ARMSTRONG  
Some game.

MACARTHUR  
But you were in the room with us-

LOMBARD

There's a delay. On the record.  
Someone went to a lot of trouble  
and expense.

He drops the record into the stack of the other records, gets  
a drink.

ROGERS

If I'd have known what was on that  
record, I would never have been a  
part of it. What is said about me  
and Mrs Rogers? Never.

BLORE

Nothing in it, then?

Rogers draws himself up, great dignity.

ROGERS

Miss Brady was like family to us.  
We did everything for her. She  
weren't well. Frail. Her heart  
did for her.

CUT TO:

59 INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

59

Very clearly a sick room, medicines, a commode, bed pans etc.  
There's money here, you can tell from the bed linen and the  
china, the dressing gown laid at the end of the bed. By the  
door, Ethel stands shaking with her hands over her face,  
peering through her fingers. Rogers is on the bed, a body  
thrashes, he holds a pillow over the face of the woman in the  
bed, an elderly lady, her hands heavy with beautiful rings,  
she struggles, Rogers' lips tight, intent, he clamps his hand  
hard on the pillow.

ROGERS

(V/O) But on account of how she'd  
left us a small legacy, well,  
there's some folk out there will  
say anything to hurt. It damaged  
our livelihood.

CUT TO:

60 INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT

60

Living room. As before.

ROGERS

I'm sorry to say that there is a lot of jealousy in domestic service. Below stairs is very often a nest of vipers.

EMILY

Well, that I do believe. All too well. Thank you, Rogers. We'll ring if we require anything else.

Rogers bows and exits closing the door. Go with him-

CUT TO:

61 INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT 61

Rogers outside the closed doors. We can just hear-

EMILY

(O/V) I've had more than my fair share of lazy and vindictive staff. I believe Rogers.

CUT TO:

62 INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT 62

Rogers with the pillow over the old woman's face. The struggles stop. The clasping desperate hand falls onto the bedsheet. Rogers lifts the pillow away, the thin staring face of a frail old lady. Dead. Rogers wipes some sweat from his face.

ROGERS

That took more doing than I thought it would.

ETHEL

We're damned, Thomas. We're damned. We're going to hell!

Rogers swipes at her knocking her so she falls against the bedside table, a delicate cup and saucer goes flying, smashing in terrible pieces. The sound of Ethel's weeping.

CUT TO:

63 INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT 63

Rogers alone. He straightens his jacket, his shoulders, walks briskly away to the servant's door and the kitchens.

CUT TO:



The mood so on edge, except for calm Emily and watchful Lombard. Marston swirls the drink in his glass, stares moodily into it.

MARSTON

This doesn't make any sense. I get an invitation to a house party, I expect wine, women and song. Not this. And I never even met John and Lucy Coombes.

EMILY

It's malicious nonsense.

A strained moment.

ARMSTRONG

I just want to say, Louisa Clees. She was a surgical patient. It was risky, there were complications. Everyone knew that but the minute something goes wrong, it's blame the surgeon.

EMILY

No-one's blaming you, Doctor.

ARMSTRONG

Well, someone is!

MACARTHUR

Arthur Richmond. One of my very finest young officers, fell in the pursuit of his most gallant duty for King and Country. An exemplary young man. The flower of England, it is repugnant that vicious rumours should be given credence... (LONG BEAT)Repugnant.

WARGRAVE

Edward Seton was guilty. I was party to evidence that was not admissable before the court. He was guilty.

BLORE

Landor was a degenerate. And a drunk. Out of control. I was the arresting officer but what happened after that... got nothing to do with me.

VERA

Cyril. The little boy. I was his governess.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

He wasn't supposed to swim but he sneaked off and I.. I nearly drowned trying to save him. I nearly drowned.

WARGRAVE

Nobody here is accusing you, Miss Claythorne.

LOMBARD

You're all innocent then.

BLORE

Of course. Everything on that record is a lie.

LOMBARD

Well, it was spot on about me.

Silence.

WARGRAVE

I beg your pardon?

LOMBARD

I said, Judge, it was spot on about me. Pin point accurate.

Another silence. Lombard smokes, aware that all eyes are on him.

VERA

21 men?

LOMBARD

21 men. But natives. You know. They don't mind it so much. Death. It's all... returning to the Ancestor, for them. I always thought someone would blab. Amazing how men get an attack of conscience when they're safely home in Merry England.

A shivering moment, all but Marston refilling his drink, staring at Lombard in shock, outrage, disgust.

EMILY

(an explosion) You terrible man! You terrible, terrible man! It's because of you, men like you, that our missionaries face such danger! You are a terrible, terrible, terrible, shameless man!

MACARTHUR

You are a butcher, Lombard!

LOMBARD

Yes but I'm holding my hands up to it. A novelty for me, I'll admit. So, either I'm embellishing a story for shocking effect or I'm the only one telling the truth in a room full of liars.

And an outburst, not liars, only Marston silent, his frown, staring into his drink. Wargrave holds his hands up for quiet-

WARGRAVE

Enough, ladies and gentlemen, enough!

Quiet.

WARGRAVE (CONT'D)

I don't see what good this can do. My feeling is that we should retire to bed and be ready to leave tomorrow with Mr Narracott.

ARMSTRONG

And if the Owen's are with him?

WARGRAVE

We confront them but we leave. It's clear that despite Captain Lombard's devastating confession, we are all the victims of a malign hoax. We should not dignify these accusations with any further debate. Agreed?

General agreement, Lombard watching them all and suddenly-

MARSTON

John and Lucy Coombes. They must have been those two kids.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. COUNTRY. DAY

65

A garden wall. A wintery day. A boy and girl about 9 and 7. They wear a school uniform. Little satchels. Woolly hats and scarves. They hold hands. They grin at us proudly. They are adorable.

CUT TO:

66 INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT

66

As before. Now the focus on Marston.

MARSTON

What sort of parents let kids play out in the dark for God's sake? Completely irresponsible. I lost my license for 6 months. It was a terrific nuisance.

ARMSTRONG

(with acid edge) Oh. Were you driving? What a surprise.

MARSTON

It was jolly bad luck, that's all.

CUT TO:

67 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. NIGHT

67

Absolute pitch darkness. Car headlights picking up trees, shrubs, the bend in the road, travelling fast and suddenly, the two terrified figures of the children. Holding hands. The boy carrying a little lantern, they freeze like rabbits-

CUT TO:

68 INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT

68

As before. All staring at Marston.

MARSTON

I didn't stand a chance. Anyway. That's who John and Lucy Coombes must be.

And he drinks, the whole drink. One swallow. Coughs. The sort of cough you'd do when raw alcohol goes down in one

EMILY

Those poor children.

ARMSTRONG

You're a maniac behind the wheel, Marston! An utter maniac-

MARSTON

I wasn't even going that fast. You can't, not in England. It's not like the Continent. They understand motoring over there. Say what you like about the Krauts but their roads are magnificent. The Dalmain loves them. I can really open her up and let her rip.

And he coughs again. Then again. Staggers, gasping for breath.. Some alarm.

VERA

What's the matter with him?

Marston claws at his throat, his eyes wide and desperate, Blore, Lombard beat him on the back, Marston shoves them away, gasping for breath, froth starts to collect on his lips.. Armstrong grabs him, performs the Heimlich manoeuvre.. Blood starts to bubble out of Marston's mouth-

VERA (CONT'D)

He's bleeding-

Armstrong lets go of Marston, tries to look into his face but Marston twists away from him, heads blindly, staggering, away and Vera in his path, he grabs hold of her shoulders, the whites of his eyes suffusing with red- coughs.. Blood speckles Vera's face, she cried out in horror and then Marston pitches forwards, pinning Vera underneath him and falls too the floor.

Moment.

VERA (CONT'D)

Get him off me, get him off me-

Lombard and Blore pulls Marston off, Vera struggles free gets to her feet, her blouse pulled awry, blood on her face and throat, she wipes at it..

And on Marston's, eyes open, his handsome face twisted and distorted, bloody froth drips off his lips onto the carpet. Armstrong bends over him, puts his fingers to the pulse in Marston's neck. A few moments and then he straightens up. Shakes his head. They stand looking down at Marston's dead body. His staring blood-filled eyes.

CUT TO:

69

INT. MARSTON'S ROOM. NIGHT

69

Marston is placed on the bed by Armstrong, MacArthur, Blore and Lombard. Vera, Emily and Wargrave stand in the doorway. Armstrong closes the staring eyes. A sheet is placed over him. The window open to the night is closed. The curtains drawn. The soft ticking of the clock. On the dresser the little box, the phial and the tiny spoon. Lombard picks it up.

LOMBARD

Armstrong.

Armstrong looks.

ARMSTRONG

Could be.

Lombard puts the box back on the dresser. They leave. The light is switched off. Darkness and the body under the sheet.

CUT TO:

70 INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. NIGHT 70

The guests gather, subdued, shocked. Glancing at each other. Only Lombard and Blore watchful.. And they're watching Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG

There's nothing else to be done.

BLORE

Police matter now. Sudden death.

ARMSTRONG

Perhaps we should remove the.. Stimulant. The family. Out of respect. Scandal.

BLORE

The law will have it's way, Doctor. Same set of rules if you're posh or not.

WARGRAVE

That's all for tomorrow.

EMILY

I shall say extra prayers tonight.

And slowly, they all peel off to their respective bedrooms. Blore casts a look back at Armstrong as they go.

CUT TO:

71 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT 71

Kitchen. In his shirt sleeves, Rogers tidies, washing up, putting food away in a fridge. In the fridge, we see a dish of glistening purple livers and kidneys, veined with fat. Puddled with blood.

CUT TO:

72 INT. ROGERS BEDROOM. NIGHT 72

Rogers' bedroom. Ethel awake, in her nightdress. The sedative hasn't helped. She's curled up foetal in the bed, torn and riven with guilt. The creak of a floorboard and a soft knock on the door. Ethel sits up.

ETHEL  
Yes? Who is it?

CUT TO:

73 INT. OPERATING THEATRE. NIGHT

73

More expressionistic than realistic. A vast dark space. A highly lit surgery table. A woman's body on it. We never see her face, just the mask and the expanse of abdomen. Tubes, drips, trays of glinting instruments. A figure gowned and masked who's face we never really see, operates the aneathetic. A pump rises and falls. A theatre sister, wearing an old fashioned fluted head-dress, also masked and we never see her face either. Into this lit theatre, swaggers Armstrong. He wears a dinner jacket. He's drunk. He throws off the dinner jacket, another figure buttons him into a surgical gown, he strides to the table, staggering against it, bumping the patient, rattling the trays of instruments.

ARMSTRONG

Ooops.

He giggles. Without seeing her face, the theatre sister puts her hand on his shoulder to stop him. Armstrong sneers at her, such contempt.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Take your hand off me, you dried up old bitch. I know what I'm doing.

He shrugs her off.. And a scalpel is in his hand. The sound of the aneathetic pump. He poises the scalpel above the abdomen. Squints at it. And cuts. Blood flows and flows and flows. Armstrong finds himself up to his elbows in the patient's abdomen, trying to stop it. Slipping and slithering on the blood running and dripping off the table. The anaesthetic pump for oxygen falls silent and still. No sound but the drip of blood. And everyone has melted away. There is just Armstrong, the body and the theatre sister, stood with her back to him. Armstrong takes a step away from the eviscerated patient, the gape in the abdomen, his arms gloved with thick blood. Goes over to the theatre sister, shakes her shoulder.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Not a word. You understand?  
Routine. Routine went wrong. One  
word against me and I will make  
your life a living, breathing hell!

He pulls the sister round but instead of a face, just more of the fluted falls of her linen headdress, in a panic, he shoves at the linen, trying to part it to find a face, his red hands go into it, smearing the linen but there's nothing there, he panicks, his breath rasping, pulling aside the linen folds- And suddenly, there is Marston, face framed in linen. Armstrong staggers back, staring in horror.

MARSTON

I can really open her up and let her rip.

Marston beams at him. The sound of dripping blood. and knocking-

CUT TO:

74 INT. HOUSE. DAWN

74

Armstrong's bedroom. A lamp on, Armstrong wakes, sweating, twisted in the bedsheets. A knocking at the door. It takes a moment for him to compose himself.

ARMSTRONG

What is it?

ROGERS

(O/V) Doctor Armstrong? Can you come please?

CUT TO:

75 INT. ROGERS BEDROOM. DAWN

75

Rogers, in shirt and braces. No collar yet, he looks curiously vulnerable. He hovers by the door. Armstrong in his dressing gown, with his stethoscope bends over Ethel. The little clock on the bedside table ticks busily, shows 5.45 am. The curtains are drawn but we can tell there's early light beyond. The sound of the sea. Ethel is very clearly dead. Her eyes blank slits under almost closed eyelids. Her lips blue.

ROGERS

I thought she was just sleeping. When I came up. I thought she was just sleeping and I went to wake her for starting work and..

ARMSTRONG

Yes, alright, Rogers.

He folds his stethoscope away. Draws the sheet up over Ethel's face.



ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

She's been gone quite some hours.

Armstrong makes some gesture as if to console Rogers, a hand on the arm.. And then doesn't. Rogers' stares at the shrouded body in the bed.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I'll tell the others not to expect too much from breakfast. Under the circumstances.

ROGERS

No, Sir. Full breakfast will be provided.

ARMSTRONG

Good man. Best to be busy and not dwell.

Armstrong leaves. Rogers turns away from the body in the bed, picks up his collar and studs from the dresser, fixes them neatly, obsessively.

CUT TO:

76 INT. HALLWAY. DAWN

76

Armstrong exits the servants door, is about to go back up the stairs when he senses a movement... in the dining room, Vera, in dressing gown, her hair loose, her back to him. Armstrong goes to the door.

ARMSTRONG

Miss Claythorne?

He enters the dining room.

CUT TO:

77 INT. DINING ROOM. DAWN

77

Vera turns as Armstrong comes in. Armstrong is uncomfortable having this kind of conversation at dawn with a white faced woman in her night clothes.

VERA

I heard you get up. What's happened?

ARMSTRONG

I don't want to wake the house up.

VERA

For god's sake, I'm not going to scream. Has Mrs Rogers got worse?

ARMSTRONG  
Somewhat. She's dead.

Moment.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)  
In her sleep. Quite peacefully.  
Nothing to be alarmed about.

VERA  
I see.

A beat.

VERA (CONT'D)  
I came in here to wait for you  
because I didn't want to sit in the  
drawing room. Not after... Can you  
look at something for me?

She motions Armstrong to the dining table. The little marble  
figures.

VERA (CONT'D)  
There was ten of them.

ARMSTRONG  
For the nursery rhyme. The poem.  
Yes.

VERA  
There were ten of us. Including Mr  
and Mrs Rogers. But now she's dead  
and so is Tony Marston. So there's  
eight people on this island. Count  
the figures for me please, Doctor  
Armstrong.

Armstrong counts. A little moment as a frown goes across his  
face. Then he shuts it down.

VERA (CONT'D)  
There's only eight isn't there.

ARMSTRONG  
There will be a perfectly rational  
explanation. I trust you're not  
going to unravel, Miss Claythorne.  
The very last thing anyone needs is  
a hysterical woman.

Armstrong turns on his heel and exits, leaving Vera alone.  
She stares down at the figures, eight of them. Her  
reflection stares back at her from the glass table top.

And then there is someone else in the room, a beautiful young  
man, beautifully dressed. A dark sober suit as if he has  
been in court or to a funeral. A mourning band round his arm.

He watches her with undisguised, sickened horror. This is HUGO. He doesn't move a muscle, just stares at her. The moment drags out, Vera stares at him, her heart racing, seems desperate for him to believe her, his eyes, his loathing, scorch her skin, her soul... her heart twists with grief and love lost-

VERA

Oh, don't.. Don't, please..

And then the clock in the hall chimes, she jumps-

And when she looks back, Hugo has gone. She's alone in an empty room with eight marble figures and the poem on the wall.

END OF PART ONE.