

GASLIGHT

A Thriller in Two Acts

---

by

David Jacklin

Edited and adapted from the play by  
Patrick Hamilton

This edition © 2014  
David Jacklin  
394 Keays Road, R. R. 1  
Balderson, ON  
K0G 1A0  
613 267 1884  
barndoorproductionstheatre@gmail.com  
www.barndoorproductions.ca

## CHARACTERS

MR. MANNINGHAM: tall and good-looking, about 45. He is heavily moustached and bearded and perhaps a little too well dressed. His manner is suave and authoritative, with a touch of mystery and bitterness.

MRS. MANNINGHAM: about 34. She has been good-looking, almost a beauty - but now she has a haggard, wan, frightened air, with rings under her eyes, which tell of sleepless nights and worse.

ELIZABETH: a stout, amiable, subservient woman of 50.

NANCY: a precocious, pretty, cheeky girl of 19.

ROUGH: former police detective; middle-aged, greying, short, wiry, active, brusque, friendly, overbearing. He has a low, warm chuckle and completely dominates the scene from the beginning.

## SETTING

London, England. About 1870. An upper-middle class area, near St. Paul's. Not fashionable, but respectable. The action takes place in the parlour of the MANNINGHAM's three-storey home.

Act One begins just at "tea time" on an early fall evening.

Act Two begins just after eleven p.m. the same evening.

Act One runs approximately 1 hour. Act Two approximately 35 minutes.

NOTE: Due to title conflicts with a show running on Broadway when this one opened, it was renamed "Angel Street" and has been so in North American productions since then. A short time with a London street map will show that Angel Street is a one-block street north of St. Paul's Cathedral which, in 1940 and for more than a century before that, was the home of the British General Post Office, an edifice which takes up the entire length of both sides of the street, now condos. The Manninghams did NOT live on Angel Street.

Its original (British) title was "Gaslight" as has been the case with both movies made of it. Under Canadian copyright law as of 2014 (but NOT American copyright law), the script is now in public domain and may be dealt with as convenient. This edition is the result.

This edition of GASLIGHT, by Patrick Hamilton, was given its first public performance on June 13, 2014 at the Full Circle Theatre, Perth, Ontario, by BarnDoor Productions, with the following credits:

GASLIGHT

By Patrick Hamilton

in a new edition prepared for BarnDoor Productions

Directed and designed by David Jacklin

Costume preparation (and set assistance), Janice Jacklin

Stage Manager, Elaine Laxton

Technical operator, Joe Laxton

Front of House: Janice Jacklin, Jeanne Jenner, Nancy Moxon  
and the Friends of the Full Circle Theatre

Featuring (in order of speaking)

James Benda as Jack Manningham

Tegan Mackey as Bella Manningham

Emily Richardson as Nancy

Kathie Reid as Elizabeth

David Bird as Inspector Rough

# GASLIGHT

A Victorian thriller in two acts

## ACT I

SETTING: An upper middle class parlour somewhere in Victorian London. Fireplace down Right, a wall-mounted gas fixture on either side of it. Door at Right above fireplace leading to MANNINGHAM's study. Settee Centre Right, Left of fireplace with an armchair R of it. Table DL with chairs Right and Left of it. Bay window at Left looking out onto a street. Desk in front of window with chairs back and above it. Secretary (cabinet) against wall up Right. Oil lamp on table Centre. Sliding double doors at back Centre leading to hall, to Left the front door, to Right the servants' quarters. A stairway leading to the upper floors is Up Right. Chairs down Right and Left.

(The Curtain rises upon late afternoon. In front of the fire, on the sofa, MR. MANNINGHAM is stretched out and sleeping. MRS. MANNINGHAM is sitting sewing on the chair Left of the Centre table. We hear noises from the street. A clock strikes five. Pause. From the street below, in the distance, can be heard the intermittent jingling of a muffin-man ringing his bell. MRS. MANNINGHAM listens to this sound for a few moments, furtively and indecisively. Then she looks toward the sound down in the street. Then to the bell-cord by the Left Centre door, which she crosses to and pulls. Then back to her sewing, which she gathers up and puts into a box, at the same time taking a purse therefrom. There is a knock at the door Centre, and ELIZABETH, the cook and housekeeper, enters. Signalling that her husband is asleep, MRS. MANNINGHAM goes over and whispers to her at the door, giving her money from the purse. ELIZABETH goes out closing the doors.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Whose eyes have opened but whose position has not changed a fraction of an inch)

What are you doing, Bella?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Nothing, dear—

(MRS. MANNINGHAM crosses quietly and quickly to the secretary with her sewing and starts back to the doors.)

Don't wake yourself.

(There is a pause. She starts to the window.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Eyes closed again.)

What are you doing, Bella? Come here.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Hesitates, goes to him.)

Only for tea, my dear. Muffins— for tea —

MR. MANNINGHAM

Muffins, eh?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, dear— he comes so seldom. I thought I might surprise you.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Why are you apprehensive, Bella? I was not about to reproach you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, dear. I know you weren't.

MR. MANNINGHAM

That fire's in ashes. Ring the bell, will you, Bella?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes —

(Is going over to bell, but stops.)

Is it merely to put coal on, my dear? I can do that.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella, we've had this out before. Ring the bell.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But, dear— Elizabeth is out in the street. I can do it so easily.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Stopping her.)

No— Let the girl come up if Lizzie's out.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But, my dear. . .

MR. MANNINGHAM

Ring the bell.

(MRS. MANNINGHAM gives in and rings the bell.)

Now, come here.

(She does so.)

What do you suppose the servants are for, Bella?

MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(Pause; then gently.)

Go on. Answer me.

(He rises.)

What do you suppose the servants are for?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Scarcely audible.)

To serve, I suppose, Jack —

MR. MANNINGHAM

Precisely. Then why —?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But I think we should consider them a little, that's all.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Consider them? There's your confusion of mind again. I happen to consider Elizabeth to the tune of sixteen pounds per annum. And the girl ten. Twenty-six pounds a year all told. That is consideration of the most acute and lively kind.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, Jack. I expect you are right.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I have no doubt of it, my dear. It's weak-mindedness to think otherwise.

(He looks in the mirror and she crosses to window and looks out.)

What's the weather doing? Still as foggy?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, more than ever. Shall you be going out, Jack dear?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Unless it gets very much worse after tea.

(There is a KNOCK at the door. MRS. MANNINGHAM hesitates.  
There is another KNOCK.)

Come in.

(He crosses and sits on sofa.)

(Enter NANCY. She is a precocious, pretty, cheeky girl of nineteen.  
He turns and looks at MRS. MANNINGHAM.)

NANCY

(Stands looking at both, as MRS. MANNINGHAM hesitates.)

Oh, I beg your pardon. I thought the bell rang.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes, we rang, Nancy. Go on, my dear, tell her why.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh— Yes— We want some coal on the fire, Nancy, please.

(NANCY looks at her impudently, then, with a little smile and toss of her head, goes over to put coal on the fire.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(After a pause.)

And you might as well light the gas, Nancy. This darkness in the afternoon is beyond endurance.

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

NANCY

Yes, sir.

(With another smile, she goes to light the two gas mantles on each side of the fireplace.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Watches her.)

You are looking very impudent and very pretty this afternoon, Nancy. Do you know that?

NANCY

I don't know it at all, sir, I'm sure.

MR. MANNINGHAM

What is it? Another broken heart added to your list?

NANCY

I'm not aware of breaking any hearts, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I'm sure that's not true. And that complexion of yours. That's not true, either. What mysterious lotions have you been employing?

NANCY

I'm quite natural, sir, I promise.

(Lights lamp on Centre table.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

No, but you do it adroitly, I grant you. What are your secrets? Perhaps you could pass them on to Mrs. Manningham—

(A look by NANCY at MRS. MANNINGHAM.)

And help banish her pallor.

NANCY

I'd be most happy to, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Or are women too jealous to pass their secrets to a rival?

NANCY

I don't know, sir. Will that be all you're wanting, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. That's all I want, Nancy, except —

(She stops.)

— my tea.

NANCY

Coming directly, sir.

(Goes out Left Centre and leaves door open.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(After a pause.)

Oh, Jack, how can you treat me like that?

MR. MANNINGHAM

But, my dear, it was your business to tell her to put the coal on.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

It isn't that! It's humiliating me. As though I'd do anything to my face — or ask for her assistance if I did.

MR. MANNINGHAM

But you seem to look on servants as our equals. I treated her as one.

(Pause as he sits down on settee and picks up newspaper.)



MRS. MANNINGHAM

Can't you see how you hurt me? The girl laughs at me, already.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Laughs at you? What an idea. What makes you think that?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I know she does, in secret. In fact, openly, more openly every day.

MR. MANNINGHAM

But, my dear, if she does, surely the fault lies with you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You mean that I'm a laughable person?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You read meanings into everything, Bella dear. I wish you weren't such a... Come here. I've just thought of something rather nice.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Something nice? What have you thought of, Jack?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I shan't tell you unless you come here.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Sitting Right of table.)

What, Jack? What have you thought of?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I read here that Mr. MacNaughton – the celebrated actor – is in London for three weeks.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I read that. What of it?

MR. MANNINGHAM

What of it? What do you suppose?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, Jack dear. Do you mean it? You wouldn't take me to see MacNaughton, would you?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I not only would take you to see MacNaughton, my dear, I am going to take you to see

MacNaughton. If you want to.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Rises.)

Oh, Jack! What heaven!

MR. MANNINGHAM

When would you like? You have only three weeks.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Over MANNINGHAM's shoulder.)

Oh, let me see. Do let me see!

MR. MANNINGHAM

There. You can see him in comedy or tragedy— your choice. Which would you prefer, Bella — comedy or tragedy?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh— it's so hard to say! Either would be equally wonderful.

(She crosses around back of settee to Right end and below.)

Which would you choose, if you were me?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well— it depends on whether you want to laugh or cry.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, I want to laugh! But then, I should like to cry, too. In fact, I should like to do both.

Oh, Jack, what made you decide to take me?

(Sits on stool and leans against MR. MANNINGHAM.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well, you've been very good lately, and I thought it would be well to take you out of yourself.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, Jack, it's true. All I need is to be taken out of myself — to have some little change, some attention from you. Jack dear, I could really be better — you know in what way — if only I could get out of myself a little more.

MR. MANNINGHAM

How do you mean, exactly, better?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Looks away.)

You know – in what way, dear. All that’s happened.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, don’t let’s speak about that.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, dear, I don’t want to – but I have been better – haven’t you noticed it? Because you have been kind to me. The other night when you played cards with me, it was like old days. And then, the day after, when you read your book to me, and we sat by the fire, I slept that night like a child. All those ghastly dreads and terrible, terrible fears vanished, just because you had taken me from brooding on myself in this house all day and night.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he raises her head off his shoulder.)

Or is it merely that your medicine is beginning to benefit you?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Jack dear, I’ve taken my medicine religiously – haven’t I? Much as I detest it! It’s more than medicine that I need. It’s a sweet, sane mind. It’s interest in something. Don’t you see?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well, we are gloomy, aren’t we?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Sitting on sofa.)

I don’t want to be gloomy, dear – that’s the last thing I want to be. I only want you to understand. Say you do.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Turning to her.)

Well, dear. Don’t I seem to?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Close to him.)

Yes, dear. Yes, and you’ve made me so happy.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well, then, which is it to be – the comedy or the tragedy?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(With exulting solemnity.)

Oh, which shall it be? It matters so little! It matters so wonderfully little! I’m going to the

MRS. MANNINGHAM Cont.

play!

(Throws her arms around him and kisses him.)

Do you understand that, my husband! I'm going to the play!

(There is a KNOCK on the Centre door. MRS. MANNINGHAM crosses to the fireplace.)

Come in.

(Enter NANCY, carrying tray. Pause, as she starts to desk Left.)

No, Nancy. I think we'll have it on the table, today.

NANCY

(Still with impudence.)

Oh — just as you wish, Madam.

(Pause, as she puts tray on table Centre, arranges cups and put books, etc., on one side.)

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(At mantelpiece.)

Nancy, if you were being taken to the play, would you choose comedy or tragedy?

NANCY

Oh, I'd go for the comedy all the time.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Would you? Why, Nancy?

NANCY

I like to laugh, Madam, I suppose.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Do you? Well, I must bear it in mind. Mr. Manningham's taking me next week, you see.

NANCY

Oh, yes? I hope you enjoy it. I'll bring the muffins directly.

(Goes out, leaves the doors open, and turns to the Right. As NANCY goes out, MRS. MANNINGHAM puts out her tongue at her. MANNINGHAM sees this.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella, what are you doing?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Let her put that in her pipe and smoke it.

MR. MANNINGHAM

But what has she done?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Ah – you don't know her. She torments me and scoffs at me all day long. You don't see these things. A man wouldn't. She thinks me a poor thing. And now she can suffer from the news that you're taking me to the theatre.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You imagine things.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, I don't. We've been too familiar with her.  
(Arranging chairs, in an emotionally happy state.)  
Come along, my dear. You sit one side, and I the other – like two children in the nursery.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Stands with back to fire.)

You seem wonderfully pleased with yourself, Bella. I must take you to the theatre more often.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Sitting Left of table.)

Oh, Jack – I wish you could.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I don't really know why we shouldn't. I used to like it when I was a boy. In fact, I even had ambition to be an actor myself once.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Lifting tea pot.)

I believe it, dear. Come along to your tea now.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he moves up back of settee.)

You know, Bella, it must be a superb sensation to take a part and lose yourself in someone else. I flatter myself I could have made an actor.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pouring tea.)

Of course. You were cut out for it. Anyone can see that.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Seriously? I always felt a faint tinge of regret. I might have reached the top of the tree for all I know.

“To be or not to be. That is the question.  
Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing, end them.”

(NANCY enters, sets the muffin dish down on table during the recitation and goes out.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Applauding.)

You see? Oh, you’ve made a great mistake.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to Right of table. Lightly.)

I wonder.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Then, if you had been a famous actor, I should have had a free seat to watch you every night. Wouldn’t that have been paradise?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he sits Right of table.)

You would soon tire of it. After a few nights you would be at home again, just as you are now.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Leaning in, connubially.)

Oh, no, I wouldn’t. I should have to keep my eye on you, for all the actresses that would be after you.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Leaning in.)

Would there be actresses after me? An added inducement.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, I know– but you wouldn’t escape me.

MRS. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(Lifting the cover off the muffin dish.)

They look delicious. Aren't you glad I thought of them? Oh, Jack, forgive me chattering on, but I'm so happy.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I can see that.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I'm being taken to the play, you see. Here you are. I used to adore these as a child, didn't you?

(Offers muffin to MR. MANNINGHAM.)

I wonder how long it is since we had them?

(MR. MANNINGHAM looks Up Centre at wall.)

We haven't had them since we've been married anyway. Or have we? Have we?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I don't know, I'm sure.

(Suddenly rising, looking at the wall upstage and speaking in a calm, yet menacing way.)

I don't know – Bella —

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(After a pause, dropping her voice almost to a whisper.)

What is it? What's the matter? What is it now?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Walking over to fireplace with his back to her.)

Bella, I have just observed something amiss. Will you please rectify it while I am not looking, and we will assume that it has not happened.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Amiss? What's amiss? For God's sake, don't turn your back on me. What is amiss?

MR. MANNINGHAM

You know perfectly well. Rectify it at once and I will say no more.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I don't know! You have left your tea. Tell me what it is. Tell me!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Are you trying to make a fool of me, Bella? The wall behind you. If you will put it back, I will say no more.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

The wall behind me? What?

(Turns fearfully.)

Oh – yes – the picture has been taken down again – yes – who has taken it down?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. Who has taken it down? Who, indeed. You alone can answer that, Bella. Who took it down before? Will you please get it from wherever you have hidden it, and put it back on the wall?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But, Jack, I didn't... I don't know where... Someone else...

MR. MANNINGHAM

Someone else? Are you suggesting that I would play such a fantastic and wicked trick?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, dear, no! But...

(Going to him.)

Before God, I didn't do it! Someone else, dear, someone else.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Shaking her off.)

Will you please leave go of me!

(Walking over to bell.)

We will see about "someone else."

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, Jack – don't ring the bell. Don't! Don't call the servants to witness my shame. It's not my shame for I haven't done it – but don't call the servants!

(He has rung the bell. She goes to him.)

Let's talk of this between ourselves! Don't call that girl in. Please!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Shaking her off violently.)

Will you leave go of me! Sit down here!

(She sits in chair above the desk. He goes to fireplace. MRS. MANNINGHAM, in chair, sobs.)

Pull yourself together.

(There is a KNOCK at the door.)

Come in.

(Enter ELIZABETH Left Centre and leave the doors open.)

Ah, Elizabeth. Come in, please.



MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(Pause as ELIZABETH crosses to Left of the chair back of the table.)

Now, Elizabeth, do you notice anything amiss in this room? Look carefully around the walls, and see if you notice anything amiss.

(Pause as she looks around the room and when she sees the space of the missing picture she stands still.)

Well, what do you notice?

ELIZABETH

Nothing, sir – except the picture's been taken down.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You noticed it at once. Was that picture in its place this morning?

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir. I don't understand, sir.

NEITHER DO I, ELIZABETH. JUST ONE MORE QUESTION. WAS IT YOU WHO REMOVED THAT PICTURE, ELIZABETH?

ELIZABETH

No, sir. Of course it weren't, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Of course, not. Have you ever removed that picture?

ELIZABETH

No, sir. Why should I, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Indeed, why should you? And, now, please, Elizabeth, fetch that Bible from my desk.

(She does.)

Will you, as a token of your truthfulness, kiss that Bible?

(ELIZABETH hesitates, then she does so.)

Very well, you may go.

(She starts to desk with the Bible, but MR. MANNINGHAM motions to her to put it on Centre table.)

And please send Nancy in here at once.

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir.

(Opens doors, goes out, close doors, looking at both.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Going to him.)

Oh, Jack, spare me that girl. Don't call her in. I'll say that I did it. I did it, Jack, I did it!  
Don't have that girl in.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Will you have the goodness to contain yourself?

(There is a KNOCK at the Left Centre door. MRS. MANNINGHAM  
sits in chair below fireplace.)

Come in.

NANCY

(Opens doors, enters and leaves doors open. Crossing to settee.)

Yes, sir. Did you want me?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes, I do want you, Nancy. If you will look at the wall behind you, you will see that the  
picture has gone.

NANCY

(Going upstage.)

Why, my word. So it has.

(Turns.)

What a rum go!

(Turns to MR. MANNINGHAM.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Kindly be less insolent. Did you take that picture down?

NANCY

Me? 'Course I didn't!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Very good. Now will you kiss that Bible lying there, please, as a solemn oath that you  
did not – then you may go.

NANCY

Willingly, sir.

(She does so and places Bible on Centre table again with a little smile.)

If I'd done it I'd 'ave—

MR. MANNINGHAM

That is all, Nancy. You may go.

MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(NANCY goes out and closes doors. Goes to Bible to replace it on the desk.)

There!

(As he crosses Down Left and faces MRS. MANNINGHAM.)

I think we may now be said to have demonstrated conclusively—

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Rises; crossing Left to him.)

Give me that Bible! Give it to me! Let me kiss it, too!

(Snatches it from him.)

There!

(Kisses it.)

I swear before God Almighty that I never touched that picture.

(Kisses Bible.)

There! Do you see?

(Kisses it.)

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he puts out his hand for the Bible.)

For God's sake, be careful what you do. Do you want to commit sacrilege above all else?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Someone else has committed sacrilege. I didn't do it!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(He grabs Bible.)

Then, by God, you are mad, you unhappy wretch. You're stark raving mad – like your wretched mother before you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Jack– you promised you would never say that again.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses Right. Pause.)

The time has come to face facts, Bella. If this progresses, you will not be much longer under my protection.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses slowly to him.)

Jack — if I am going mad, like my poor mother– if I am, you have got to treat me gently, Jack – before God – I never lie to you knowingly. If I took down that picture, I did not know it. If I took it down on those other occasions, I did not know it! Jack, if I steal your

MRS. MANNINGHAM Cont.

things – your rings – your keys – your pencils – your handkerchiefs – if I lose the things you give me, like my watch and my beautiful brooch that I could not find, and you find them later at the bottom of my box, then I do not know that I have done it – Jack, if I commit these fantastic, meaningless mischiefs – then I am certainly going mad, and must be treated kindly and gently so that I may get well.

(Behind him.)

Bear with me, Jack, bear with me – don't storm and rage. I'm trying, Jack, I'm trying! Oh, for God's sake, believe me that I'm trying and be kind to me!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella, my dear – have you any idea where that picture is now?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What? No. Or, yes, yes. I suppose it's behind the cupboard.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Will you please go and see?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, yes.

(Goes Right to upper end of secretary.)

Yes, it's here.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he crosses to the desk, places the Bible on it and crosses up Left.)

Then you did know where it was, Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Carrying the picture.)

No! No! I only supposed it was! – because it was found there before! I didn't know – I didn't!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Stop walking about the room with a picture in your hands like a madwoman, Bella. Put it back in its proper place.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pause as she hangs the picture on wall – she come to the back of the chair Right of table.)

Oh, look at our tea. We were having tea with muffins —

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella! I am not going to say anything more at the moment, for my feelings are running too high. I am going out – immediately, and I suggest that you go to your room and lie down in the dark.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, no– not my room. For God’s sake, don’t send me to my room!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Send you to your room, Bella? You may do exactly as you please.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I feel faint, Jack —

(He supports her.)

I feel faint —

MR. MANNINGHAM

Very well —

(Leading her to settee and she sinks down with her head to Left end.)

Now, take things quietly. Where are your salts?

(Crosses to secretary, gets salts and returns to her back of settee.)

Here they are —

(Pause.)

I am going to leave you in peace.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Eyes closed, reclining.)

Must you? Must you always leave me after these dreadful scenes?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I had to go in any case after tea, and I’m merely leaving you a little early, that’s all.

(Going into wardrobe. OFF.)

Oh, by the way, I shall be passing the grocer and I might as well pay that bill of his. Where is it, my dear? I gave it to you, didn’t I?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, dear. It’s on the secretary.

(Half rising.)

I’ll —

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Returns.)

No, don’t move. I can find it.

MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(Begins to rummage.)

I shall be glad to get the thing... Where is it, dear? In one of the drawers?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, it's on top. I put it there this afternoon.

MR. MANNINGHAM

All right. We'll find it. Are you sure it's here – dear?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Half rising.)

Jack, I'm quite sure. Look carefully.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Soothingly.)

All right, dear. It's of no importance. I'll find it. No, it's not here. It must be in one of the drawers.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Rushes to the secretary.)

It is not in one of the drawers! I put it out here on top!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You're not going to tell me this has gone, are you?

MR. MANNINGHAM

My dear. Calm yourself.  
Calm yourself

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Searching frantically.)

I laid it here myself! Where is it?

(Opening and shutting drawers.)

Where is it? Now you're going to say I've hidden this!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Walking away.)

My God! What new trick is this?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

It was there! I put it there!

(Hysterically.)

This is a plot! This is a filthy plot! You're all against me!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Coming to her and shaking her violently.)

Control yourself! Control yourself!

(Pause until she calms down.)

Listen to me, Madam. If you utter another sound, I'll knock you down and take you to your room and lock you in darkness for a week.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Sinks to her knees.)

Oh, God help me! God help me!

MR. MANNINGHAM

God help you, indeed. Now, listen. I am going to leave you until ten o'clock.

(He lifts her up.)

In that time, you will recover that bill, and admit to me that you have purposely concealed it. If not —

(Pause as he places her in the chair down Right and he crosses Left to above desk.)

You are going to see a doctor, Madam, more than one doctor —

(He puts his hat on and throws his coat over his arm.)

And they shall decide what happens to you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, God — be patient with me. If I am mad, be patient with me.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I have been patient long enough. It is now for you to take control, or take the consequence. Think upon that, Bella.

(Goes to Left Centre doors and opens them.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Jack— don't go— Jack— Jack— Will you still take me to the theatre?

MR. MANNINGHAM

No, Madam, emphatically, I will not. Play fair by me, and I'll play fair by you. But, if we are going to be enemies, you and I, you will not prosper.

(Goes out.)

(Short pause and then a DOOR slams OFF. MRS. MANNINGHAM rises, whimpering, aiding herself by the mantel and crosses up to the secretary searching through the drawers, then crosses to Centre, looks at the picture and shudders. Takes up the pitcher of water from the tea tray, crosses to secretary, opens the upper door, gets a glass, then opens

a drawer and takes out a paper of medicine. She takes this medicine and follows it with a drink of water. This is obviously incredibly nasty and almost chokes her. She staggers over to the Centre table and replaces the pitcher of water and then turns down the table lamp. She sinks down on the settee with her head toward the fireplace and sobs.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Peace, peace, peace.

(She breathes heavily as a CLOCK in the house strikes 6:00. Pause. There is a KNOCK at the door. She does not hear it. There is another KNOCK and ELIZABETH enters Left Centre.)

ELIZABETH

Madam— Madam—

(She crosses down to back of settee.)

Leave me alone.

ELIZABETH

It's a gentleman, Madam. He wants to see you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

He wants to see my husband. My husband's out.

ELIZABETH

No, Madam. He wants to see you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, leave me alone. Tell him to go away!

ELIZABETH

Madam, I don't know what's going on but...

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I am going out of my mind, Elizabeth. That's what's going on.

ELIZABETH

(Over back of settee with her arms around MRS. MANNINGHAM.)

Don't talk like that, Madam. You mustn't lie here in the dark, or your mind will go. You must see this gentleman. It's you he wants— not the Master. He's waiting to see you. Come, Madam.



MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, my God, what new torment is this? I'm not in a fit state.

ELIZABETH

(Crosses to Centre Table)

Come, Madam, I'll turn up the light.

(She does so, then picks up box of matches and, crossing to the desk lamp, lights it.)

There. Now you'll be all right.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Elizabeth! I can't have anyone in. I'm not fit to be seen.

ELIZABETH

You look all right, Madam. Now – I'll call him in.

(Goes out the door and can be heard OFF:)

Will you come in, please, sir?

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(The DOOR SLAMS. MRS. MANNINGHAM runs over to the mirror above the mantelpiece and adjusts her hair. Stands with her back to the fireplace, waiting. ELIZABETH returns, holding back the door. INSPECTOR ROUGH enters.)

ROUGH

Thank you. Ah! Good evening.

(As he crosses down to Left of settee.)

How are you, Mrs. Manningham?

(Chuckling, he offers his hand.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Shaking hands.)

How do you do? I'm very much afraid...

ROUGH

You're very much afraid you don't know me from Adam, yes?

(ELIZABETH goes out, closing the doors.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No doubt you've come to see my husband?

ROUGH

(Who is still holding her hand, and looking at her appraisingly.)

Oh, no!

(Chuckling.)

On the contrary. May I take off my things?

(Starts to remove his coat.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Why, yes, I suppose.

ROUGH

You're very young and very attractive, you know. But you're looking very pale.

(Goes Left Centre and begins to remove scarf.)

So! You're the lady who's going off her head!

(Chuckles. To lower end of desk. He puts his hat on the desk and is removing his scarf and overcoat.)

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Terrified.)

What made you say that?

(Goes toward him. Stops at Centre.)

Who are you? Did *he* send you?

ROUGH

Mrs. Manningham, I want you to take a good look at me, and see if I am someone to whom you can give your trust. You can read little in my face, but you can see that.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Withdraws her hand.)

Who are you? Are you a doctor?

ROUGH

Nothing so learned, Ma'am. Just a plain police detective.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Shrinks away.)

Police detective?

ROUGH

Yes. Or was some years ago. At any rate, still detective enough to see that you've been interrupted in your tea. Could I have a cup?

(He stands back of chair Left of table and holds it for her.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Why, yes. It only wants water.

(She begins to busy herself with hot water, cup, pot, etc., throughout the ensuing conversation.)

ROUGH

You never heard of the celebrated Rough, Madam? Constable Rough, who solved the Claudesley Diamond Case; Sergeant Rough, who hunted down the Camberwell dogs; Inspector Rough, who brought Sandham to justice?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Looking up at ROUGH.)

Sandham? The murderer — the Throttler!

ROUGH

Yes, Sandham The Throttler. And you are looking at the man who gave Sandham to the man who throttled him.

(Chuckling. She doesn't.)

The common hangman, Madam. In fact, I was quite a personage in my day – believe it or not.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Adds water to the tea.)

Do sit down.

ROUGH

Thank you.

(Sitting.)

How long have you been married, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pouring tea.)

Five years — and a little.

ROUGH

Where have you lived? Not here, I think.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Passing cup to him.)

No. We went abroad, then in Yorkshire and then, six months ago, my husband bought this house.

ROUGH

(Taking cup.)

Bought it?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I had some money. My husband invested it.

ROUGH

Money, eh? Interesting. Your husband leaves you in the evenings?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. *He* goes to his club and does business.

ROUGH

Oh, yes.

(Stirs tea.)

You have free run of the house while he's out?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. Well, no. Not the top floor. Why do you ask?

ROUGH

Not the top floor.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. No. Will you have some sugar?

ROUGH

Thanks.

(He takes sugar. Lightly, chuckling and looking up as he stirs.)

Before I go further, Madam, I must tell you there's a leakage in this household.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Looking up after his gaze.)

Leakage?

ROUGH

You have a maid called Nancy?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes –

ROUGH

Nancy walks out of an evening with a young man named Booker.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Does she?

ROUGH

(With a chuckle.)

Booker is in my employ. There is hardly anything which goes on in this house which is not described in detail to Booker, and from him, it reaches me.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I knew it! The little beast! She shall be dismissed immediately.

ROUGH

Oh, no! In fact, I fancy you are going to be heavily in debt to her. If it were not for her indiscretions, I shouldn't be here now, should I?

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Why are you here? Don't keep me in the dark.

ROUGH

I'm afraid, Mrs. Manningham, I am still quit far down in the dark myself. May I have another lump of sugar?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Of course.

(Passes bowl to him.)

ROUGH

Thank you.

(Pause.)

We were talking about the top floor.

(Helping himself to several lumps. He looks up contemplatively while he stirs)

There is a bedroom above this, and above that again is the top floor? Is that right?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. But it's shut up. When we first took the house, my husband said we would not need the upstairs quarters — until there were children. So *he* had it sealed up.

ROUGH

You've never been up there, Mrs. Manningham?

(Pause.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Looking up.)

No one goes up there.

ROUGH

Not even the servants?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

ROUGH

Rather funny?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pause.)

Funny?

(Pause.)

I don't know –

(But she does think so.)

ROUGH

I think it is. Now, Mrs. Manningham, when did you first get the notion that you were going out of your mind?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pause. Sets her cup down.)

How did you know?

ROUGH

Never mind how I know. When did it begin?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I always — My mother... died insane... when she was my age. Then, in this house — in the last six months — things happen —

ROUGH

Which are driving you mad with fear?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Gasping.)

Which are driving me mad with fear. I hate this house.

ROUGH

And has the top floor anything to do with it?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. Yes, that's how it all began.

ROUGH

You interest me beyond measure. Tell me about the top floor.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

It all sounds so incredible. When I'm alone at night, I get the idea that – somebody's walking –

(Looking up.)

– up there – at night, I hear noises, from my bedroom, but I'm too afraid to...

ROUGH

Have you told your husband about this?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

*He gets angry. He says I imagine things which don't exist.*

ROUGH

Did it strike you that it might be your husband up there?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

How did you know?

ROUGH

Why not tell me first how you knew, Mrs. Manningham.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(She rises and goes toward fireplace, staring upward.)

It's true, then! It's true. When *he* leaves this house *he* comes back and walks up there above – up and down – up and down. Like a ghost.

ROUGH

(Rises, crosses to her.)

Don't look so frightened. Your husband is no ghost, believe me.

(Pause.)

Tell me what first made you think it was him?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

The light. It went down and it went up –

MRS. MANNINGHAM Cont.

(Starts to cry.)

Oh, thank God I can tell this to someone at last. I don't know who you are, but I can tell you!

(Crosses to ROUGH and embraces him.)

ROUGH

(Uncomfortable in the embrace.)

Ahem! Keep calm.

(Disengaging her.)

You can tell me just as well sitting down, can't you?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes... yes.

(She sits down on Right end of settee.)

ROUGH

The light, you say? Did you see a light from a window?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. The gaslight. You see the mantle there. Now it's burning full. But if someone strikes a light in the kitchen or in the bedroom, then the rest will sink lower.

ROUGH

Yes, yes. That's just insufficient pressure. It's the same in mine.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pause.)

Every night, after *he* goes out, I find myself waiting for something. Then all at once I see that the light has gone down. Always at the same time – about ten minutes after *he* goes out. I go up to my bedroom but I daren't stay there because I hear sounds –

(Looking up again)

– tapping sounds – scraping sounds – dragging sounds – sounds overhead. I want to scream and run out of the house. I sit here, terrified, waiting for *him* to come back, and I always know when *he's* coming, always, for suddenly, the light goes up again and ten minutes afterwards I hear *his* key in the lock.

(A look at Centre doors.)

And *he's* back.

ROUGH

(Lightly, chuckling.)

How very strange, indeed. You know, Mrs. Manningham, you should have been a policeman.



MRS. MANNINGHAM

Are you laughing at me? You think I imagine everything, too?

ROUGH

Oh, no! I was merely praising the keenness of your observation.

(Moves closer to her.)

Tell me, what else has given you reason to doubt your sanity?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

My mind plays tricks on me.

ROUGH

What sort of tricks?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

*He* gives me things to look after, and when *he* asks for them, they are gone. Then *he* finds them lying hidden at the bottom of my work-box. Twice the door of that room –

(Turning to door up Right.)  
– was found locked. The key was at the bottom of my box. Only today, and for the third time, that picture had been taken down and hidden.

(ROUGH looks around at the picture she indicates.)

I try to remember. I break my heart trying to remember, but I can't. Oh, and then there was the dog...

ROUGH

The dog?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

We have a little dog. A few weeks ago, it was found with its paw hurt. *He* believes — oh God — that I had done it. *He* does not let me near the dog now. Don't you see? I begin to believe I imagine everything. Perhaps, I do. Are you here? Is this a dream, too?

ROUGH

Do you know, Mrs. Manningham, it has occurred to me that you'd be all the better for a little medicine.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You're not a doctor, are you?

ROUGH

(Chuckling.)

No, I'm not a doctor, but the doesn't mean that a little medicine would do you any harm.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I have medicine. It does me no good.

ROUGH

Oh, but mine's an exceptional medicine.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What medicine?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(He rises and goes over Left.)

Let's sample it and see.

(At Centre.)

It has been employed by humanity for ages, for the instantaneous removal of fears and doubts.

(Crosses to coat, then turns to her.)

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS  
MRS. MANNINGHAM  
Doubt? How could a medicine affect that?

ROUGH

Ah! That we don't know. But it does. Here we are.

(Produces a bottle of whisky, and crosses to Left of Centre table.)

You see, this medicine comes from Scotland. Now, have you two glasses?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to Left end of settee.)

Are you having some, too?

ROUGH

Above all things. We could use these cups, if you like.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. I will get two –

(She goes to secretary and brings out two glasses and crosses to Right of Centre table.)

ROUGH

Ah! Thank you. The very thing.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What is it? What does it taste like?

ROUGH

Delicious! Something between ambrosia and methylated spirits. Have you never tasted good Scotch whisky, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Whisky! But I can't do that!

ROUGH

(Pouring it out.)

You underestimate yourself. I need you to trust your reason. This will give you faith in your reason like nothing else. There!

(Hands glass to her.)

Did you ever hear of the Cabman's Friend, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Smiling at the phrase.)

The Cabman's Friend?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

ROUGH

Yes. How nice to see you smile. Here's your very good health.

(Drinks.)

Go on.

(She drinks.)

There. Is it so nasty?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. I rather like it. My mother used to give us this as children when we had the fever.

ROUGH

Ah, you're a hardened whisky drinker. But it's better sitting down.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes.

(Placing her glass on the mantel, sitting down on chair below fireplace.

He drinks.)

What were you saying? Who, or what, is the Cabman's Friend?

ROUGH

Ah! The Cabman's Friend.

(Crosses to her.)

She was an old lady who died many years ago.

(Pause, as he puts his whisky on mantelpiece.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What has she to do with me?

ROUGH

A great deal, I'm afraid.

(Crosses to right end of settee.)

Her name was Alice Barlow. Her principal thought in life was the protection of cabmen. That seems odd, but she provided shelters, clothing, pensions... and that was her little contribution to the world's happiness; or rather her little stand against the world's pain. Well, it was not my privilege to know her, but it was my duty, on one occasion, to see her. With her throat cut open, lying dead on the floor of her own house.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Do you mean she was murdered?

ROUGH

She was murdered. The motive was obvious. Her husband had left her the Barlow rubies, and she lived alone, except for a deaf servant in the basement. Well, she paid for that mistake with her life.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But, I don't see...

ROUGH

Apart from the famous rubies, there were only a few trinkets taken, but the whole house had been turned upside down, and in the upper room every single thing was flung about, or torn open. Even the cushions of the chairs were ripped up with his bloody knife, and it was concluded that he must have been a revengeful maniac. I was a nobody then, not in charge of the case, but I had other theories.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What theories?

ROUGH

Well, the old lady may have been eccentric but she was no fool. What if she had got those jewels cunningly hidden away –

(As he mentions them, he lightly taps the wall  
with his fingers, the floor with his toe, the fireplace  
brick with his knuckles.)

– in the walls, floored down, bricked in, maybe? What if the only person who could tell him where they were was lying dead on the floor? Can you picture him, Mrs.

Manningham, ransacking the place, hour after hour, growing more and more desperate, until at last the dawn comes and he has to slink out into the pale street, the blood and

ROUGH Cont.

wreckage of the night behind?

(Turns to her.)

And the deaf servant down in the basement sleeping through it all.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, how horrible! And the man was never found?

ROUGH

No, not the man nor the Barlow rubies.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Then the jewels may still be where the old lady hid them?

ROUGH

Officially, the police concluded that the murderer had got them and fled the country. But it would be funny, wouldn't it, Mrs. Manningham, if, after all these years, they should come to light.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What has this to do with me?

ROUGH

Ah! What has the obscure murder of an old lady fifteen years ago to do with an attractive young woman, who believes she is going out of her mind? Do you conceive it possible, Mrs. Manningham, the murderer might never have given up hope of one day getting at the treasure?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Possibly.

ROUGH

That he may have waited years – gone abroad, got married even, until at last his chance came to resume the search begun on that terrible night?

(Crossing down to her.)

You don't follow, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Follow?

ROUGH

They say that a criminal always returns to the scene of the crime, but in this case, there is something more than morbid compulsion. There is real treasure if only he can search

ROUGH Cont.

again, methodically, without fear, without causing suspicion. And how could he do that?

(All at once, she rises.)

Don't you think — What's the matter, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(She looks at the brackets.)

Quiet! Be quiet! *He* has come back! Look at the light! It is going down!

(Pause as LIGHT sinks.)

Wait!

(Pause.)

There! *He* has come back, you see.

(She looks up at the ceiling.)

*He* is upstairs now.

ROUGH

(Looking up as well.)

Dear me, how very odd that is. How very odd, indeed.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Whispering.)

*He* is in the house, I tell you. You must go. *He* will know you are here. You must go.

ROUGH

(Whispering.)

How dark it is.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Whispering.)

You must go. *He* is in the house. Please go.

ROUGH

(Whispering. Quickly coming to her and taking her arms in his hands.)

Quiet, Mrs. Manningham, quiet! Don't you see my meaning, yet? Don't you understand that this was the house?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Whispering.)

House? What house?

ROUGH

(Whispering.)

Here, these rooms, these walls. Fifteen years ago, Alice Barlow lay dead on the floor in

ROUGH Cont.

this room. There!

(He points to a spot on the floor.)

Fifteen years ago, the man who murdered her ransacked this house – below and above.  
What if he is still searching, Mrs. Manningham?

(Indicating upstairs.)

What if he is up there, still searching?

(Looking up.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Looking up. Whispering.)

But my husband, my husband is up there!

ROUGH

(Whispering.)

Precisely, Mrs. Manningham. Your “husband”!

(Drops her arms. Going for her drink on mantelpiece.)

Normal voice.)

I am afraid you are living with a tolerably dangerous gentleman.

(Takes her glass off mantel and crosses to her.)

Now, drink this quickly, as we have a great deal to do.

(He stands there, holding out glass to her. MRS. MANNINGHAM takes the whisky from ROUGH in a mechanical way, and stares at him.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Normal voice.)

The idea is mad. How can you imagine my husband is –

(Looks up, then to ROUGH.)

– what you imagine him to be?

ROUGH

When we came to this place fifteen years ago, the interviewing of relatives and so forth was left to me.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Well?

ROUGH

Well, amongst all the acquaintances and cousins and nephews and nieces, there happened to be a young man named Sydney Charles Power. Have you ever heard that name?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

ROUGH

Well –

(Crosses to Left of table and during the following,  
speech pours himself out another drink.)

He was a kind of distant cousin, much attached to the old lady, helping her with her good works. For some reason, I always remembered his face. Well, I saw that face again just a few weeks ago. It took me a whole day to recollect where I had seen it before, but at last I remembered it.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Well, what if you did remember him?

ROUGH

What was startling was the lady on his arm and the locality in which I saw him.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

And who was the lady on his arm?

ROUGH

You were the lady on his arm, Mrs. Manningham.

(Looking out window then crossing up Centre.)

And you were walking down this street.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing to Right of table.)

Are you saying my husband — my husband is this Mr. Power?

ROUGH

Well, if my theories are correct...

(He drinks.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You stand there talking riddles. You are so cold! You are as heartless and cold as he is!

ROUGH

(Coming down to Left of table.)

No, Mrs. Manningham, I am not cold.

(Puts his drink on table.)

Your whole future depends on what you do in the next hour. Nothing less. You have got to strike for your freedom and strike now, for the moment may not come again.



MRS. MANNINGHAM

Strike...

ROUGH

(Moving toward her; she slowly backs toward fireplace.)

You are not going out of your mind, Mrs. Manningham. You are being slowly, methodically driven out of your mind. You are living with a murderous maniac who steals back to his own house each night, searching for something he could not find fifteen years ago. He is Sydney Charles Power and he murdered Alice Barlow in this house and he has waited all these years, until he could acquire this house legally, thanks to your money. Every night, for the last few weeks, he has entered the empty house next door from the back, climbed up on to its roof and come into this house by the skylight. I have seen him do it. You've watched the gas-light. You know he does.

(He looks at lights then looks up.)

*He is up there now.*

(She looks up.)

Mad as it seems, it goes hand in hand with his method of getting rid of you, by slowly driving you into a lunatic asylum.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Why?

ROUGH

Now that he's got what he needed, he doesn't need you any longer.

(Crosses left of table.)

Thank God, you're not married to him...

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Not married? He married me. I married him!

ROUGH

No doubt. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, he married another lady years before. A lady who is still alive, and English law takes a dim view of bigamy.

(Looks at ceiling.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

My God, are you speaking the truth? Where is this wife, now?

ROUGH

A world away – in Toe-ron-toe – that's in the Canadas – where I know for a fact he spent two years. Did you know that?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

(Pause.)

I— did— not— know— that.

ROUGH

I have got to have evidence! You have got to help me find it.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Facing ROUGH.)

This is my husband! Do you ask me to betray the man who married me?

ROUGH

The man who betrayed you into thinking he married you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But I married him. You must go. I must — think this out. I must cling to the man I married. Mustn't I?

ROUGH

Yet, you're not the only piece of ivy on the garden wall. Cling to him if you like, just as his fancy women in the low resorts cling to him. This is the sort of wall you have to cling to, Ma'am.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Sits on settee.)

Women?

ROUGH

I can promise you he has a taste in unemployed actresses which he is at no pains to conceal.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(After pause.)

God in heaven! What am I to believe?

ROUGH

(Crossing to Left end of settee.)

Mrs. Manningham, you are no more tied to this man — you are under no more obligation to him — than those wretched women in those — places.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Pause.)

What do you want me to do? What do you want?

ROUGH

(Looking around the room. ROUGH has now completely changed his tone.)

Where does he keep his papers?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Rises.)

Papers? I don't — his bureau — ?

ROUGH

(Rises, crosses at Centre around Left end of settee and looks around room and to Right.)

His bureau? Yes. His bureau!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Points to desk Left.)

But *he* keeps it locked.

ROUGH

Ah! He locks it, does he? Very well. We'll have a look inside.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But how can you, if it's locked?

ROUGH

(Going to overcoat, to fetch ring of keys and implements.)

You know, Mrs. Manningham, one of the greatest regrets of my life is that fate never made me one of two things: one was a gardener, the other a burglar. Both quiet occupations, you know. As for burgling, I think, if I'd started young, I should have been a genius.

(Crosses back to desk.)

Now let's have a look at this.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing to him at desk.)

But you must not touch it.

ROUGH

Come now, you're working with me, aren't you — not against me?

(Looks at desk.)

Yes, yes. Now, I'm going to take off my coat. I'm a man who never feels at work until his coat's off.

ROUGH Cont.

(He takes off his coat, and hangs it on chair down Left,  
revealing a fancy waistcoat.)

Quite a waistcoat, don't you think? You didn't suspect I was such a dandy, did you?  
Now.

(Sits at desk and gets out keys.)

Let's have a look at this.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

*He* will know what you have done.

ROUGH

Not if we are clever. And this one doesn't even ask for cleverness. You see, Mrs.  
Manningham, there are all manner of —

(LIGHT comes up.)

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(She looks at the brackets and crosses to above desk.)

Stop! Didn't you notice?

ROUGH

Notice? I've only —

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Stop talking! Look. The light!

ROUGH

The light?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Quiet!

(Pause, after which the light slowly goes up in  
a tense silence. Whispering.)

There! *He's* coming back.

(Crossing to Left Centre.)

You must go. *He's* coming back and you must go!

ROUGH

(Rises.)

God bless my soul. The unexpected has entered in.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

*He* always does the unexpected. I never know — You must go.

ROUGH

(Without moving. Looking up ruminatively.)

Yes. Well, well—

(Puts the keys in his pocket and begins to put on his coat.)

Will you go and ring that bell for Elizabeth?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Why do you want her?

ROUGH

Or you can go and fetch her if you like.

(MRS. MANNINGHAM crosses up and rings bell.)

Now, let me see.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Go, please do! You must go at once.

(Crossing to above desk.)

Why do you want Elizabeth?

ROUGH

(Picks up overcoat, puts it on, then his scarf and crosses below desk to her.)

All in good time. He's not going to jump through the window, you know. In fact, *he* can't be round at our front door in less than five minutes – unless he's a magician. Now can you see anything I've missed?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. No.

(Turns and sees whisky bottle.)

Yes, the whisky. Here.

ROUGH

I told you you'd make a good policeman. Don't forget the glasses.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Collecting the glasses.)

Oh, do go. Please. Please go.

(ELIZABETH enters Left Centre. MRS. MANNINGHAM puts glasses away in secretary.)

ROUGH

Ah, Elizabeth. Come here, will you?

ELIZABETH

(Crosses to ROUGH.)

Sir?

ROUGH

You and I have got to do a little quite calm but rather quick thinking. Are you anxious to help your mistress, blindly, without questions?

ELIZABETH

Well –

(Looking at MRS. MANNINGHAM, quietly.)

Yes, sir.

ROUGH

Good. Mrs. Manningham and I have reason to believe that in less than five minutes, the master is returning. He mustn't see me. Can you hide me away in the kitchen for a short space of time? You can put me in the oven, if you like.

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir. But you see —

MRS. MANNINGHAM:

(As she crosses to window and looks out)

You must go! Go now!

ROUGH

Calmly, Madam. What were you saying, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Nancy's down there, sir.

ROUGH

Nancy! I thought this was Nancy's evening off.

ELIZABETH

(Agitated.)

Yes, sir. She's waiting for her young man, and I couldn't make her go, could I, sir? If I'd done that, I'd have —

ROUGH

All right – all right. Then she knows I'm here, is that it?

ELIZABETH

Oh, no. I told her it was a man come to the wrong house.

ROUGH

All right. You can't entertain me in the kitchen. Where are you going to hide me, Elizabeth? Quickly.

ELIZABETH

Well, you could go to the bedroom. Mine and Nancy's, I mean.

ROUGH

That sounds altogether entrancing! Shall we go there, now?

ELIZABETH

But supposing Nancy went up there before she goes out?

ROUGH

You think of everything, Elizabeth.

(Going to up Right Centre.)

Where does this lead to?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

ELIZABETH

It's where he dresses, sir. Yes! Go in there, sir. He won't see you there. There's a big wardrobe there, at the back.

ROUGH

Excuse me.

(Goes through door up Right.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing to Centre.)

Oh, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(Crossing to her.)

Don't take on so, Ma'am. It'll be all right.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

He ought to go.

ELIZABETH

No, Ma'am. He knows best.

ROUGH

(Enters.)

Perfect accommodation.

ROUGH Cont.

(He trots to upper end of window for a peep.)

Yes, there he is. Now we really have got to hurry. Off to bed, Mrs. Manningham. Elizabeth, to your room. You can't get downstairs in time. Turn down that lamp.

(ELIZABETH does. He goes to turn down the gas.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

To bed? I'm to go to bed?

ROUGH

(Really excited for the first time.)

Yes, quickly. He's coming. Don't you understand? You have a headache —

(Crosses to fireplace and turns down upper gas bracket.)

— a bad headache.

(Going to the downstage bracket.)

Will you go, in Heaven's name!

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(MRS. MANNINGHAM goes upstairs, ELIZABETH exits Centre and to the Right, leaving doors open as ROUGH turns down the gas in the downstage bracket. There is a light from the hall through the open doors. There is the sound of the front DOOR closing. ROUGH stiffens and starts to quietly trot to the up Right door and as he reaches up Right Centre, feels his head, discovers his hat missing, and, turning quickly, tip-toes to the desk, gets his hat, puts it on and crosses to up Right door and exits, closing it just as MR. MANNINGHAM enters at the doorway, closes the doors, looks up the stairway, then crosses to upstage bracket, turns it up, then the downstage bracket. He puts his hat on the settee, crosses to the bell and rings it. Then leisurely, he starts to the fireplace. As he reaches the settee, ELIZABETH opens the doors and enters.)

ELIZABETH

Did you ring, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes, I did.

(Puts his coat over settee, stands with his back to the fireplace.)

Where is Mrs. Manningham, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Gone to bed, sir. I think she had a bad headache and went to bed.



MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, indeed. And how long has she been in bed?

ELIZABETH

Just a little while, sir – I think, sir —

MR. MANNINGHAM

I see. Then we must be quiet, mustn't we? Walk about like cats. Can you walk about like a cat, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

(Trying to smile.)

Yes, sir. I think so, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Very well, Elizabeth. Walk about like a cat.

(ELIZABETH simply stares at him.)

All right. That's all.

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

(ELIZABETH is about to exit; he calls her back.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Er — Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Why haven't you cleared away the tea things?

ELIZABETH

(Crossing to above table.) I'm sorry, sir. I was just about to, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I think you had better.

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir.

(After a pause, putting a dish on the tray.)

Excuse me, sir, but were you going to have some supper, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, yes. The question is, am I going to have supper here?

ELIZABETH

Oh. Are you having it out, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes, I am.

(MANNINGHAM takes off his coat and puts it on chair  
Left of table, begins to undo his tie.)

I have come back to change my linen.

(He undoes his cravat. There is a pause.)

ELIZABETH

(Looks up and realizes his coat is off.)

Do you want a fresh tie, sir? Shall I get you a fresh tie?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Do you know where my ties are kept?

ELIZABETH

Oh, yes, sir. In your room, there, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

What a lot you know, Elizabeth. And do you know the sort of tie I want tonight?

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir. I think I so, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Then all I can say is you know a great deal more than I do. No, I think you must let me choose my own tie.

(Turns to her.)

That is, if I have your permission, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(Gazing at him.)

Yes, sir — yes, sir —

(MANNINGHAM crosses to door up Right and exits. ELIZABETH puts down the plate she is holding and holds her breath, motionless. Not a sound. Nearly a quarter of a minute goes by. At last, MANNINGHAM comes out in a perfectly leisurely way.

ELIZABETH breathes out. MANNINGHAM is putting his tie on and crosses down to mirror over fireplace, looking at himself in the mirror during the ensuing conversation.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

What did you think about Mrs. Manningham tonight, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

In what way, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, just as regards her general health.

ELIZABETH

She certainly seems very unwell, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I doubt that you can guess to what extent.

(Turns to ELIZABETH.)

I'm afraid I was compelled to drag you and Nancy into our troubles tonight. Perhaps I should not have done that.

ELIZABETH

It all seems very sad, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Somewhat appealingly as he takes a step toward ELIZABETH.)

I'm at my wit's end, Elizabeth. You know that, don't you?

ELIZABETH

I expect you are, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I have tried kindness, patience, cunning – even harshness – to bring her to her senses, but nothing stops these wicked pranks and tricks.

ELIZABETH

It seems very terrible, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You don't know a quarter of it, Elizabeth. You only see what is forced upon your attention – but it goes on all the time.

(He looks at his tie.)

MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

No, not this one, I think.

(Starts to up Right door.)

ELIZABETH

Do you want another tie, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Stops and turns to ELIZABETH.)

Yes.

(He strolls into the other room. ELIZABETH watches the door, holding a small plate. After a pause, he comes out with another tie. ELIZABETH drops the plate onto the table. He crosses to fireplace mirror and puts his tie on.)

I suppose you know about Mrs. Manningham's mother, Elizabeth?

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS  
ELIZABETH  
No, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

She died in the madhouse, Elizabeth, utterly witless in the end.

ELIZABETH

How terrible, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Terrible indeed. The doctors could do nothing. I shall have to bring the doctors to Mrs. Manningham before long.

(Gets his coat.)

It can't be kept a secret much longer.

ELIZABETH

No, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You've seen what goes on here. You can testify to it, can't you?

ELIZABETH

Indeed, sir. Gladly, sir. I only wish to help, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to mirror and adjusts coat.)

You're a very good soul, Elizabeth. I sometimes wonder how you put up with things in this – dark household. You're very loyal.

ELIZABETH

(Looking at him in an extraordinary way.)

Always loyal, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

How touching.

(Crosses back of settee to ELIZABETH.)

You will be repaid later – in more ways than one. You understand?

ELIZABETH

No need, sir. It would be my pleasure, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Gets hat.)

I'm going out. In fact, I'm even going to try to forget my trouble and be happy. Do you think that's wrong?

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

ELIZABETH

Oh, no, sir. Get all the pleasure you can, sir — while you can.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. It's a curious existence, isn't it? Well, good night, Elizabeth.

(Goes off Left Centre and to Left.)

ELIZABETH

Good night, sir.

(MANNINGHAM has left the door open. She crosses up to door and looks out after him.)

Good-bye.

(ROUGH comes forth. He and ELIZABETH stand looking at each other. The DOOR slams.)

ROUGH

He was right when he said you would be repaid, Elizabeth, though not in the way he thinks.

(Takes off his hat, his overcoat and muffler and puts them on chair down Left. Pause.)

Mrs. Manningham...

ELIZABETH

Yes, sir. I'll go get her, sir.

(Starts to stairs but MRS. MANNINGHAM comes downstairs.)

ROUGH

(Taking implements out of coat pocket.)

Ah, there you are.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I saw him go.

(ELIZABETH takes tray and exits Centre to Right.)

ROUGH

Now, we must get to work!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What did he want? What did he come back for?

ROUGH

He only came to change his clothes. Turn up the lamp, will you?

(She does, and comes back.)

Now, let's have another look at this.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What if he comes back? There'll be no gaslight to warn us now.

ROUGH

Well, Mrs. Manningham, we've just got to take that risk.

(Takes his keys from pocket. The front DOOR slams.)

What's that? Go and have a look.

(MRS. MANNINGHAM crosses to the window.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

It's all right. It's only Nancy going out. Her young man has come.

ROUGH

(Chuckling.)

My young man. She uses the front door, does she?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, yes. She behaves like the mistress of the house.

ROUGH

Saucy girl.

(The top of the bureau opens.)

Ah! There we are. Next to a key, there's nothing a lock appreciates like kindness.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Will it close again?

ROUGH

No damage done. Now, let's see.

(Pulls the upstage drawer and puts it on top of desk.)

Not much here.

(Holds up a brooch.)

When she got there the cupboard was bare – and so the poor detective —

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What's that? In your hand!

ROUGH

(Looking at the brooch.)

Do you recognize this?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes! My brooch! My brooch! What else is there? Look! My watch! Oh God, it's my watch!

ROUGH

These are yours, then?

(He is watching her.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. This watch I lost a week ago. My brooch has been missing three months. He said that, in my wickedness, I hid them! And that he would give me no more gifts until I found them. Is there anything else?

(Pause. ROUGH looks in drawer. She crosses to upper end of the desk and looks over his shoulder.)

Is there a bill there?

(He looks up at her.)

A grocery bill?

ROUGH

A grocery bill?

(Searching drawer.)

ROUGH Cont.

No. There doesn't seem to be.

(He has pulled out a letter which he drops on the desk.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Picking up letter.)

This letter!

(She opens it.)

It's from my cousin!

ROUGH

Is that important?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You don't understand.

(Speaking rapidly.)

When I was married, I was cast off by all my relations. They didn't approve of him. When we came to London, I wrote to them twice. There was no answer. Now I see why.

ROUGH

(Cynically.)

You're beginning to understand.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(As she crosses to chair Left of table and sits.)

Listen.

(Feverishly.)

"Dear Cousin — All of us were overjoyed to hear from you again."

(Looks up at ROUGH.)

Overjoyed.

(Returns to reading the letter.)

They are in Devonshire.

(She is showing signs of great emotion.)

He says that they all want to see me — that I must go and stay with them — that they will give me — that they will give me their Devonshire cream to colour my cheeks, and their fresh air to bring the sparkle back to my eyes —

(Breaking down. ROUGH crosses to her)

Dear God, they want me back!

ROUGH

(Coming to her as she cries softly.)

Poor child. If you will be brave now and trust me, you shall have your Devonshire cream



ROUGH Cont.

and fresh air.

(She looks up at him.)

Are you going to trust me?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Thank you, Inspector.

ROUGH

(Crosses up and to back of desk.)

This drawer seems to have a special lock. Yes, this is a tougher proposition.

(He goes to his overcoat and produces a jimmy from coat.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing to Centre to stop him.)

You're not going to force it?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

ROUGH  
(Calmly.)

If I possibly can.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing to desk.)

But you must not. What shall I say when he comes back?

ROUGH

(Ironically)

I have no idea what you will *say*, Mrs. Manningham. But then I have no idea what you will *do*, if we have no evidence to remove you from his loving care.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Torn with doubts.)

Oh God, what can I do?

ROUGH

(Sharply.)

There is only one thing we can do. Move ahead – force this drawer and gamble on finding something.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Tormented as she studies him.)

But, don't you see — All right! Force it! Force it! But be quick.

(She turns away to up Right.)

ROUGH

No hurry. He's quite happy where he is.  
(Applying the jimmy.)  
Methods of this sort make me feel like a dentist.  
(There is a sound of splitting wood.)  
There! All over now and it didn't hurt a bit. Let's have a look.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Is there anything there? Anything?

ROUGH

(Looking at papers.)  
Wait a minute. No – no – what's this?  
(As he picks up a bundle of papers.)  
Mr. Manningham... Mr. Manningham... Mr. Manningham...

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Is there nothing?

ROUGH

We have lost our gamble.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Frightened.)  
Oh, what are we to do? What are we to do?

ROUGH

(Crossing above the desk to her.)  
Some rapid thinking. I've been in many a tighter corner than this. Let's put these things back where they were, shall we? Give me the watch and the brooch.  
(Starts up back of desk.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Handing them to him.)  
Here they are.

ROUGH

Here on the right?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. There.

ROUGH

(Holding up brooch.)

A nice piece. When did he give you this?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Soon after we were married. But it was only second hand.

ROUGH

I'm afraid you got everything second hand from this gentleman. Well — I must lock this up again — if I can.

(He puts brooch in drawer and drawer back in desk.)

Now.

(Closes the second drawer. About to lock first drawer.)

Second hand? How did you know that brooch was second hand, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

There is an inscription to someone else inside.

ROUGH

(As he takes out brooch.)

Oh, really? Where?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

It is a sort of trick. Pull the pin at the back — to the right.

(He follows directions.)

And then to the left. It opens out. I discovered it myself.

ROUGH

(Crossing to Centre as he opens it.)

Oh, yes. Yes. Ah! Here we are. Yes.

(As he sits Left of table and takes out a jeweller's loupe.)

How very odd. There are empty spaces here.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to Left Centre.)

There were some beads in them, but they came loose when I opened it, so I took them out.

ROUGH

Oh.

(Pause.)

Have you got them by any chance?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I think so.

(Pause. He shows interest.)

Yes. I put them in a vase.

ROUGH

May I see them, please?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes.

(Goes to mantelpiece. Crosses below settee. He rises and goes up back of table.)

They should still be here.

ROUGH

There were nine altogether.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

Yes, that's right.

(Takes down vase from upper end of mantel.)

Here they are. Some of them, at any rate.

ROUGH

(Crossing to her.)

Let me see! Ah! Thank you.

(Gets the rubies and quietly crosses to back of table and puts rubies in the brooch.)

Try and find them all, will you?

(She goes back to mantel.)

Did you happen to read the inscription, ma'am?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, why?

ROUGH

(Reading.)

“Beloved A. B. from C. B. Eighteen fifty-one.”

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What of it?

ROUGH

Really, I should have thought that as simple as A-B-C-B. There should be four more – beads.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crossing back to him.)

Yes. Here they are.

ROUGH

Thank you.

(Takes them.)

That's the lot.

(He is putting them in brooch on the table.)

Now, tell me this – have you ever been embraced by an elderly detective in his shirt sleeves?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What do you mean?

ROUGH

For that is your immediate fate at the moment.

(Comes to her.)

My dear Mrs. Manningham —

(Kisses her cheek.)

My dear, dear Mrs. Manningham!

(Takes her hands.)

Don't you understand?

(Leaves her and picks up brooch.)

There. There you are! The Barlow rubies – twelve thousand pounds before your very eyes!

(Gives her brooch.)

Take a good look at them before they go to the Queen.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

But . . . but they... they were in the brooch all the time!

ROUGH

I knew I had seen this somewhere before – in portraits of the old lady when I was on the case. She wore it on her breast. A. B.? Alice Barlow! C. B.? Her husband! Don't you see? This is where the old lady hid her treasure – in a common trinket she wore every day.

(Laughing.)

Am I not a wonderful man?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

And he stole it that night, not knowing what he had.

ROUGH

And gave you what he thought was a valueless trinket. Well, I have him, now.  
(He shows signs of going.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to front of table.)

Are you going?

ROUGH

Oh, yes. I must go.  
(Collect his things.)  
And quickly at that.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Are you going to leave me? Where are you going?

ROUGH

To move Heaven and Earth, Mrs. Manningham, because tonight we found the lever I need. What time will he be back?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

He's not usually in till eleven.

ROUGH

That will give me time. Here, we will put it back where we found it.  
(Takes brooch and crosses above desk to upstage drawer.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Follows to upper end of desk.)

But what are you going to do?

ROUGH

It's not what I am going to do. It's what the Government is going to do in the person of Sir Edmund Henderson – the police commissioner, no less.

(Puts brooch in drawer – closes and locks drawer.)

Ned knows I am here tonight. But he refused to believe I would find what I have found.

(Tries to force broken drawer into place.)

We've done for that drawer, I'm afraid. Well, we must risk it. Now, Mrs. Manningham, do you mind going to bed?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. I will go to bed.  
(She starts upstairs.)

ROUGH

Good. Go there and stay there. Your headache is worse. Remember, be ill. Be anything. But stay there, you understand? I'll let myself out.

(Crosses up to Left Centre door.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Suddenly comes downstairs and crosses to him.)

Don't leave me. Please. I haven't the courage.

ROUGH

Here's your courage.

(He gives her the whisky, taking it from his pocket.)

But don't get tipsy and don't leave it about.

(Crosses up to doors.)

Good-bye.

(He is about to exit.)

Inspector!

ROUGH

(Turns to her.)

Yes?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Summoning courage.)

I will have courage.

(Starts up the stairs.)

ROUGH

Good-bye.

(Shuts the doors. She stops on the stairs and stands, vacantly. ROUGH suddenly opens the doors.)

Mrs. Manningham!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes.

(ROUGH motions for her to go upstairs. She does; he watches her.)

ROUGH

Good-bye.

(When she is out of sight around the curve on the stairs, he exits and closes the doors.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS



GASLIGHT

A Victorian thriller in two acts

Act II

SETTING: The time is eleven the same night. The room is in darkness, but the Left Centre door is open and a dim light in the passage outside can be seen.

(There is a sound of the front DOOR shutting. Footsteps can be heard, and MANNINGHAM appears outside. He stops to turn out the light in the passage. He enters the room and goes to the lamp on the Centre table and turns it up. Then he lights the two brackets and crosses to table up Right and puts his hat on it. He goes in a slow and deliberate way over to the bell-cord and pulls it. He is humming to himself as he goes over to the fireplace. NANCY puts her head round the Left Centre door. She has only just come in and is dressed for out-of-doors.)

PERUSAL COPY ONLY

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS  
NANCY  
Did you ring, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

It seems that the entire household has gone to bed without leaving me my milk and without leaving me my biscuits.

NANCY

Oh, I'm sorry, sir. They're only just outside. I'll bring them in!

(Turn to door then stops and turns to MR. MANNINGHAM.)

Mrs. Manningham usually gets them, don't she, sir? Cook's in bed and I've only just come in.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Quite. Then perhaps you would like to deputize for Mrs. Manningham and bring them into the room.

NANCY

Certainly, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

And after that, Nancy –

(She stops in doorway.)

– will you go upstairs and tell Mrs. Manningham that I wish to see her down here?

NANCY

Yes, sir. Certainly, sir.

(She exits Left Centre and turns to Right. MR. MANNINGHAM walks into room Up Right. NANCY returns. She has milk in a jug, a glass and biscuits on a tray, and puts them on the table. She goes upstairs. He enters from room up Right crosses slowly to above table then over to desk. NANCY comes downstairs and stops at the foot of the stairs.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well, Nancy?

NANCY

She says she's got an 'eadache, sir, and she's trying to sleep.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh. She still has a headache, has she?

NANCY

Yes, sir. Is there anything else you want, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Did you ever know a time when Mrs. Manningham did not have a headache, Nancy?

NANCY

No, sir. 'ardly ever, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Turns to NANCY.)

Do you usually perform your domestic tasks in such costume, Nancy?

NANCY

I told you, sir. I've only just come in, and I 'eard the bell by chance.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes, that's just the point.

NANCY

'ow d'ja mean, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Will you be so good as to come closer, Nancy, where I can see you?

(NANCY comes down stage a step. They look at each

MR. MANNINGHAM Cont.

other in a rather strange way.)

Have you any idea of the time of day, or rather night, Nancy?

NANCY

H't's a little after eleven, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Are you aware that you came in half a minute, or even less, before myself?

NANCY

I fough' I saw you, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, you fought you saw me. Well, I certainly saw you.

NANCY

(Looking at him.)  
Did you, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Have you ever reflected, Nancy, that you are given a great deal of latitude in this house?

NANCY

I dunno what la'titude means, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Latitude, Nancy, means liberty – liberty to the extent of two nights off a week.

NANCY

(Pause.)

Yes, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Well, that's all very well. It is not so well, however, when you return as late as the master of the house. We must keep up some pretences, you know.

NANCY

Yes, sir. Pre'ences. We must.

(She makes to go.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Nancy.

NANCY

(Stops.)

Yes, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(In a more human tone.)

Where the devil have you been tonight, anyway?

NANCY

(Pause. Turns to him.)

Wiv some friends, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You know, Nancy, when you say friends, I have an extraordinary idea that you mean gentlemen friends.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY

NANCY

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(Looking at him.)

Well, sir, I migh' – possibly.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You know, gentlemen friends have been known to take decided liberties with young ladies like yourself. Are you alive to such a possibility?

NANCY

Oh, no, sir. Not wiv me. I c'n look a'ter me-self.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Are you always so anxious to look after yourself?

NANCY

No, sir, no' always – p'r'aps.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You know, Nancy, pretty as your bonnet is, it is not anything near so pretty as your hair beneath it. Won't you take it off and let me see it?

NANCY

(As she removes hat and crosses to Right of chair Right of table.)

Very good, sir. It comes off easy 'nough. Dere. Is dere anyfink more you wan', sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes – possibly. Come here, will you, Nancy?

NANCY

(Pause.)

Yes, sir.

(Drops hat on chair Right of table. Coming to him.)

What d’ja want, sir?

(Changing tone as he puts his arms on her shoulders.)

What d’ja want? Eh? What d’ja want?

(MANNINGHAM kisses NANCY in a violent and prolonged manner. There is a pause in which she looks at him, and then she kisses him as violently.)

Dere! Can she do tha’ for ya? Can she do tha’?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MR. MANNINGHAM

Who can you be talking about, Nancy?

NANCY

You know ’oo Oi mean, orl roight.

MR. MANNINGHAM

I believe you are jealous of your mistress.

NANCY

She? She’s a poor fing. Dere’s no need ’a be jealous of ’er. You want ’a kiss me agine, don’t cha? Don’t cha want ’a kiss me?

(MR. MANNINGHAM kisses NANCY.)

’ere! ’at’s be’er’n a sick headache – innit? – a sick headache an’ a pile fice oll die.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Why yes, Nancy, I believe it is. I think, however, don’t you, that it would be better if you and I met one evening in different surroundings.

NANCY

Yeah. Where? I’ll meet cha when ya like. You’re mine now – ain’t cha? – ’cos you wont me. You wont me – don’t cha?

MR. MANNINGHAM

And what of you, Nancy? Do you want me?

NANCY

Oh, yeah! I alwise wan'ed you, ever since I first clapped eyes on you. I wan'ed you more'n all of 'em.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh? There are plenty of others?

NANCY

Oh, yeah. Dere's plenty of uvvers.

MR. MANNINGHAM

So I rather imagined. And only nineteen. You know, Nancy, you are a very remarkable girl in many respects.

NANCY

Where can we meet? Where d'ja want us to meet?

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Slowly crossing to front of settee and facing fireplace.)

Really, Nancy, you have taken me a little by surprise. I'll let you know tomorrow.

NANCY

(Crossing to front of table.)

'ow'll you let me know, when she's abou'?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Quietly, half turning to NANCY.)

Oh, I'll find a way, Nancy. I think, perhaps, Mrs. Manningham may not be here tomorrow.

NANCY

Oh? Not that Oi care 'bou' 'er.

(Crossing to him.)

Oi'd loik 'a kiss you under 'er very nose. That's wha' Oi'd loik 'a do.

MR. MANNINGHAM

All right, Nancy. Now you had better go. I have some work to do.

NANCY

Go?

(Smiling slyly.)

Oi don't wan' 'a go.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Turns away from her.)

There, run along. I have some work to do.

NANCY

Work? What cha gonna work at? What cha gonna do?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Turns to NANCY.)

Oh, I'm going to write some letters. Then I – Go along, Nancy, that's a good girl.

NANCY

Oh, very well, sir. You shall be master – for a li'tle more.

(Her arms around his neck. Kisses him.)

G'noigh' –

(she curtsies mockingly)

– yer lordship.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(Starts to door Left Centre and picks up her hat on the way.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Good night.

NANCY

(At door stops and turns to him.)

When shall you let me know tamarrer?

MR. MANNINGHAM

When I find time, Nancy, when I find time. Good night.

NANCY

G'noigh'!

(Goes out into the hall Left Centre – close doors. MANNINGHAM crosses above settee to back of desk and sits down. He rises and crosses to the secretary, gets some papers, crosses back to the desk and sits down again. He takes up the pen and begins to write. He stops and take out his key ring which is on the other end of his watch chain and unlocks the upstage drawer, then turns to unlock the downstage drawer. He stops as he discovers it has been forced and quickly rises. He turns to the upstage drawer, opens it and rummages through it. He then looks toward the stairs, crosses below the desk and stops at up Left Centre, turns and goes to the bell rope, pulls it and goes back of desk and takes a quick look at both drawers then closes them.)

NANCY

(Re-enters.)

Yeah?

(Leans against the door.)

Chinge yer moind?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Nancy, will you please go upstairs and take a message for me to Mrs. Manningham?

NANCY

Wha' d'ja want me to siy?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Will you please tell her that she is to come down her this instant, whether she is suffering from a sick headache or any other form of ailment?

NANCY

Jes' loik tha', sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Just like that, Nancy.

NANCY

Wiv de gri'est 'a pleasure, sir.

(Goes upstairs. MANNINGHAM looks at the drawer again carefully. He walks over to the fireplace and stands with his back to it, waiting.)

NANCY

(Returns. On the bottom step.)

She won't come. She don't mean 'a come.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Steps forward.)

What do you mean, Nancy – she won't come?

NANCY

She said she can't come. She's not well (Ed. "well" with a "w" at the end) enough. She's just shamming, uf ya ask mi-ee.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Really? Then she forces me to be undignified.

(Walking over to the stairs.)

All right, Nancy. Leave it to me.



NANCY

The door's locked. She's go' it locked. Oi troyed it.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Oh, really? The door is locked, is it? Very well –

(He starts up the stairs past her to the fifth step.)

NANCY

She won't let cha in. Oi can tell by 'er voice. She's go' it locked and she won't op'n it. Are you gon'ta ba'ter it in?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Turns, comes down to NANCY.)

No. Perhaps you are right, Nancy.

(Crosses above desk to chair. Sits and starts to write.)

Let us try more elegant means of attaining our ends. Perhaps you will take a note to this wretched imbecile and slip it under her door.

NANCY

Yeah, Oi'll do that.

(Coming to desk.)

What cha going to wroit?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Never mind what I am going to write. I'll tell you what you can do, though, Nancy.

NANCY

Yeah? Wha'?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Go down to the basement and bring the little dog here, will you?

NANCY

(Starts out and then stops.)

The doag?

MR. MANNINGHAM

The dog, yes.

NANCY

Wha's de gime? Wha's de idea wiv de doag?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Never mind. Just go and get it, will you?

NANCY

(Starts to Left Centre door.)

Orl roigh'.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Or, on second thought, perhaps we don't need the dog.

(She stops and turns to him.)

We will just let it be supposed we have the dog. That will be even more elegant still. Here you are, Nancy.

(She crosses to desk.)

Please go and put this under the door.

NANCY

(Pause.)

Wha's de idea? Wha' have you wri'ten in dis?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Nothing very much. Just a little smoke for getting rats out of holes. There. Run along.

NANCY

You're a rum beggar, ain't cha?

(At stairs.)

Cawn' Oi look?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Go on, Nancy.

(NANCY goes up. Left alone, MR. MANNINGHAM shuts and locks the top of his desk. Then he comes down and carefully places an armchair facing the fireplace – as though he is staging some ceremony. He looks around the room. Then he takes up his place in front of the fire, and waits. NANCY comes downstairs.)

NANCY

It's done de trick orl roigh'. She's comin'.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Ah. So I thought. Very well, Nancy. Now I shall be obliged if you will go to bed at once.

NANCY

Go on. Wha's de game? Wha's de row abou'?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Nancy, will you please go to bed?

NANCY

(Coming forward to him.)

Orl roigh', Oi'm goin'.

(Crosses to him, her arms around him. Kisses him.)

Good noigh', old de-ah. Give 'er wha'-for, won't cha?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Good night, Nancy.

NANCY

Ta-'a.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(MRS. MANNINGHAM appears and stands on the stairs. MRS. MANNINGHAM says nothing. NANCY goes out Left Centre and leaves door ajar. After a long pause, MANNINGHAM goes to the door, and looks to see that NANCY is not there, closes it. He comes back and, standing with his back to the fireplace, looks at her.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

Come and sit down in this chair, please, Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Unmoving.)

Where is the dog? What have you done to the dog?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Dog? What dog?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

You said you had the dog. Have you hurt it? Let me have it. Where is it? Have you hurt it – again?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Again? This is strange talk, Bella – from you, after what you did to the dog a few weeks ago. Come and sit down here.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I do not want to speak to you. I am not well. I thought you had the dog and were going to – hurt it. That is why I came down.

MR. MANNINGHAM

The dog, my dear Bella, was merely a ruse to compel you to pay me a visit quietly. Come and sit down where I told you.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Starts upstairs.)

No. I want to go.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Raging and pounding the chair.)

COME AND SIT DOWN WHERE I TOLD YOU!!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Coming downstage to back of table.)

Yes. Yes. What do you want?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Calmly.)

Quite a good deal, Bella. Sit down and make yourself comfortable. We have plenty of time.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Going to chair Left of table Centre, which he did NOT indicate and which is as far away as possible and sits.)

Say what you have to say.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Now, you are not sitting in the chair I indicated, Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What have you to say?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I have to say that you are not sitting in the chair I indicated. Are you afraid of me that you desire to be so far away?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No, I am not afraid of you.

MR. MANNINGHAM

No? Then you have a good deal of courage, my dear.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Laughing slightly hysterically.)

Half a bottle of it.

MR. MANNINGHAM

What's that? Will you sit down where I told you?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Rises slowly and crosses below table.)

Yes.

(Pause.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As she crosses.)

Do you know what you remind me of, Bella, as you walk across the room?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(At Left end of settee – stops.)

No. What do I remind you of?

MR. MANNINGHAM

A somnambulist, Bella. Have you ever seen such a person?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(A step toward him.)

No, I have never seen one.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Haven't you? Not that funny, glazed, dazed look of the wandering mind – the body that acts without the soul to guide it? I have often thought you had that look, but it's never been so strong as tonight.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to Right chair.)

My mind is not wandering.

MR. MANNINGHAM

No? When I came in, Bella, I was told that you had gone to bed.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I had gone to bed.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Then may I ask why you are still fully dressed?

(She does not answer.)

Did you hear what I said?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes. I heard what you said.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Then will you tell me why, since you had gone to bed, you are still fully dressed?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I don't know.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY  
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MR. MANNINGHAM

You don't know? Do you know anything about anything you do?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I don't know.

(Pause.)

I forgot to undress.

MR. MANNINGHAM

You forgot to undress. A curious oversight, if I may say so, Bella.

(Leaning over her.)

You know, you give me the appearance of having had a rather exciting time since I last saw you. Almost as though you have been up to something. Have you been up to anything?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Do you remember what I said would happen to you if you did not find that grocery bill by the time I returned tonight?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

MR. MANNINGHAM

No?

(Is pouring milk into glass.)

No?

(She refuses to answer.)

Am I married to a dumb woman, Bella, in addition to all else? The array of your physical and mental deficiencies is growing almost overwhelming. I advise you to answer me.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

What do you want me to say?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I asked you if you remember something.

(Going back to fireplace with glass of milk.)

Go on, Bella – what was it I asked you if you remember?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I don't understand your words. You talk round and round. My head is going round and round.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(At fireplace.)

It is not necessary for you to tell me, Bella. I am just wondering if your head might interrupt its gyratory motion for a fraction of a second and concentrate upon the present conversation.

(Sips milk.)

Now, please, what was it I, a moment ago, asked you if you remembered?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Laboured.)

You asked me if I remembered what you said would happen to me if I did not find that bill.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Admirable, Bella! Admirable! We shall make a great logician of you yet – a Socrates! A John Stuart Mill! You shall go down in history as the shining mind of your day. That is, if your present history does not altogether submerge you – take you away from your fellow creatures. And there is a danger of that, you know, in more ways than one.

(Milk on mantel.)

Well? What did I say I would do if you did not find that bill?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Choked.)

You said you would lock me up.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Yes. And do you believe me to be a man of my word?

(Pause in which she does not answer. Crossing  
back of settee to Centre.)

You see, in a life of considerable and varied experience, I have learned a few principles of action. There are two ways of getting at what you want. One is along the intellectual plane, the other along the physical. If one fails, one uses the other. Hitherto, I have worked with you, with what forbearance and patience you may judge, along the intellectual plane.

(Crosses down and over to her.)

The time has come now, I believe, to work along the other. You will understand that I am a man of some power —

(She suddenly looks at him.)

Why do you look at me, Bella? I said I am a man of some power. I will leave your imagination to work on what I mean. However, we are really digressing.

(Starts to Left crossing back of table.)

Did you find the bill I told you to find?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Did you look for it?

(He moves toward desk.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Where did you look for it?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Oh, around the room —

MR. MANNINGHAM

Around the room. Where around the room?

(Pause. At desk. Suddenly raging, he bangs on the  
desk with clenched fists.)

IN MY DESK, FOR INSTANCE!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

No. Not in your desk.



MR. MANNINGHAM

(Calmer, but building in intensity.)

Why not in my desk?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Your desk is locked.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Do you imagine you can lie to me?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I am not lying.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to Centre of desk.)

Come here, Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Coming to him.)

What do you want?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Pause.)

Now, listen to me. Your dark, confused, rambling mind has led you into playing some pretty tricks tonight – has it not?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

My mind is tired.

(She starts to stairs.)

I want to go to bed.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Your mind is indeed tired. Your mind is so tired that it can no longer work at all. You do not think. You dream.

(He slowly starts toward her.)

Dream all day long. Dream everything. Dream maliciously and incessantly. Don't you know that by now?

(She starts to give way.)

You sleep-walking imbecile. What have you been dreaming tonight? Where has your mind wandered that you have split —

(He rages and pounds on the desk.)

— MY DESK OPEN!

(Calmer.)

What strange diseased dream have you had tonight – eh?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Dream? Are you saying I have dreamed – dreamed all that happened?

MR. MANNINGHAM

All that happened when, Bella? Tonight? Of course you dreamed all that happened – or rather all that didn't happen.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Dream – tonight. Are you saying I have dreamed?

(Pause.)

Oh, God! Have I dreamed? Have I dreamed again?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Have I not told you — ?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Storming.)

I haven't dreamed. I haven't. Don't tell me I have dreamed. In the name of God, don't tell me that!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Speaking at the same time and forcing her down into small chair Left.)

Sit down and be quiet. Sit down!

(More quietly and curiously.)

What was this dream of yours, Bella? You interest me.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I dreamt of a man —

(Hysterical.)

I dreamt of a man!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Now very curious.)

You dreamt of a man, Bella? What man?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

A man. A man that came to see me. Let me rest! Let me rest!

MR. MANNINGHAM

Pull yourself together. What man are you talking about?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I dreamt a man came in here.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(As he grasps her neck and slowly raises her.)

I know you dreamed it, you gibbering wretch! I want to know more about this man of whom you dreamed. Do you hear! Do you hear me?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I dreamed— I dreamed—

(ROUGH enters at the stairway. She sees him and screams.  
MANNINGHAM turns and looks, releasing her, and she sinks back into the chair.)

ROUGH

(As he crosses to chair Right of table.)

Was I any part of this curious dream of yours, Mrs. Manningham? Perhaps my presence here will help you to recall it.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(After pause. Crossing to Left Centre.)

May I ask who the devil you are, and how you got in?

ROUGH

(Crosses back of chair.)

Well, who I am seems a little doubtful. Apparently, I am a mere figment of Mrs. Manningham's imagination. As for how I got in, I came in, or rather I came back – or better still, I “effected an entrance” a few minutes before you, and I have hidden away ever since.

MR. MANNINGHAM

And would you be kind enough to tell me what you are doing here?

ROUGH

(Hands on chair back.)

Waiting for some friends, Mr. Manningham, waiting for some friends. Don't you think you had better go up to bed, Mrs. Manningham? You look very tired.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Don't you think you had better explain your business, sir?

ROUGH

Well, as a mere figment, a mere ghost existing only in your wife's mind, I can hardly be said to have any business. Tell me, Mr. Manningham, can you see me?

(Spreading his hands as he makes a complete turn.)

No doubt your wife can, but it must be difficult for you. Perhaps if she goes to her room I will vanish, and you won't be bothered by me any more.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella. Go to your room.

(She rises, staring at BOTH in turn in apprehension and wonderment, goes to the stairs.)

I shall find out the meaning of this, and deal with you in due course.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I—

MR. MANNINGHAM

Go to your room. I will call you down later. I have not finished with you yet, Madam.

(MRS. MANNINGHAM looks at BOTH again and goes upstairs.)

ROUGH

(Pause. To chair down Right.)

You know, I believe you're wrong there, Manningham. I believe you have.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Have what?

ROUGH

Finished with your wife.

(He sits down easily in armchair.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Crosses to front of table.)

Now, sir, will you have the goodness to tell me your name and your business, if any?

ROUGH

I have no name, Manningham, in my present capacity. I am, as I have pointed out, a mere spirit. A spirit of something you have evaded all your life. Will you have a cigar with a spirit? We may have to wait some time.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Are you going to tell me your business, sir, or am I going to fetch a policeman and have you turned out?

ROUGH

(Rises. Puts cigar back in pocket.)

Ah! An admirable idea. Yes, fetch a policeman, Manningham, and have me turned out.

(Pause.)

Why do you wait?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Alternatively, sir, I can turn you out, myself.

ROUGH

(Standing and facing him.)

Yes. But why not fetch a policeman?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(After pause.)

It seems to me, sir, that you have something up your sleeve. Will you go on with what you were saying?

ROUGH

Yes, certainly. Where was I? Yes.

(Pause. LIGHTS start down.)

Excuse me, Manningham, but do you get the same impression as myself?

MR. MANNINGHAM

What impression?

ROUGH

An impression that the light is going down in this room?

MR. MANNINGHAM

I had not noticed it.

ROUGH

Yes, surely. There!

(Crosses to Left Centre, then down to Left of table.

The LIGHT goes slowly down. As ROUGH moves,

MANNINGHAM keeps his eyes on him.)

Eerie, isn't it? Now we are almost in the dark. Why do you think that has happened? You don't suppose a light has been put on somewhere else? You suppose there are other spirits – fellow spirits of mine – spirits surrounding this house now – spirits of justice, even, which have caught up with you at last, Mr. Manningham?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(A step upstage and his hand on the back of chair Right of table.)

Are you off your head, sir?

ROUGH

No, sir. Just an old man seeing ghosts. It must be the atmosphere of this house.

(Backing away to Left Centre as he looks about.)

I can see them everywhere. It's the oddest thing. Do you know one ghost I can see, Mr. Manningham? You could hardly believe it.

MR. MANNINGHAM

What ghost do you see, pray?

ROUGH

Why, it's the ghost of an old woman, sir – an old woman who once lived in this house, who once lived in this very room. Yes, in this very room. What things I imagine!

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MR. MANNINGHAM

What are you saying?

ROUGH

Remarkably, dear sir, I see it. An old woman getting ready to go to bed, here in this very room – an old woman getting ready to go up to bed at the end of the day. Why! There she is. She sits just there.

(Points to chair Right of table. MANNINGHAM removes his hand from the chair.)

And now it seems I see another ghost as well.

(Pause. He is looking at MANNINGHAM.)

I see the ghost of a young man, Mr. Manningham – a handsome, well-groomed young man. Why, God bless my soul, he might be you, Mr. Manningham. He might be you!

(Pause.)

The old woman sees him. Don't you see it all? She screams – screams for help – screams before her throat is cut – cut open with a knife.

(Crosses downstage.)

She lies dead on the floor, the floor of this room, of this house. There!

(Pointing to floor in front of table. Pause.)

Now, I don't see that ghost any more.

MR. MANNINGHAM

What's the game, eh? What's your game?

ROUGH

(Confronting MANNINGHAM.)

But I still see the ghost of the man. I see him, all through the night, as he ransacks the house, hour after hour, room after room, ripping everything up, turning everything out, madly seeking the thing he cannot find. Then years pass and where is he?

(Goes to table Centre.)

Why, sir, is he not back in the same house, the house he ransacked, the house he searched – and does he not now stand before the ghost of the woman he killed, in the room in which he killed her? A methodical man, a patient man, but perhaps he waited too long. For the spirit of justice has waited, too, to exact her due. And the spirit of justice found, in one hour, what you sought for fifteen years and could not find. See here. Look what she found.

(Goes below desk around to drawer.)

A letter which never reached your wife, then a brooch which you gave your wife, but which she did not appreciate. How wicked of her! But then she didn't know its value. How was she to know that it held the Barlow rubies! There!

(Opening it out. He waits for MANNINGHAM

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

to come and look.)

See. Twelve thousand pounds' worth before your eyes!

(Snaps the brooch shut.)

There you are, sir. You killed one woman for those and tried to drive another out of her mind. And all the time, they lay in your own desk, and all they have brought you is a rope around your neck, Mr. Sydney Charles Power!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Pause.)

You seem, sir, to have some very remarkable information. Do you imagine you are going to leave this room with such information in your possession?

(Going up to Centre doors as though to lock them.)

ROUGH

(Away to down Left.)

Do you imagine, sir, that you are going to leave this room without a suitable escort?

MR. MANNINGHAM

What you mean by that?

ROUGH

I have men in the house. They signalled their arrival from above, in your own way, Mr. Manningham, when the lights went down.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Pause. He looks at ROUGH.)

Here you – what the devil's this?

(He rushes to the door, sees policemen OFF.)

Ah, gentlemen – come in. Come in. Make yourselves at home.

(He slams the doors shut. Turns to face ROUGH.)

ROUGH

(Taking paper from his pocket.)

Sydney Charles Power, I have a warrant for your arrest for the murder of Alice Barlow. I should warn you that anything you may say now may be taken down in writing and used as evidence at a later date. Will you accompany me to the station in a peaceful manner? You will oblige me, and serve your own interests best, Power, by coming quietly.

(MANNINGHAM produces a knife from his pocket. He rushes ROUGH, who pushes MANNINGHAM's knife arm aside, side-steps and, as MANNINGHAM goes past, cracks him across the back of the head with a black-jack. MANNINGHAM falls. ROUGH pulls him into a chair, pockets the fallen knife, jerks down the bell-cord and secures MANNINGHAM. MRS. MANNINGHAM comes down to the bottom of the stairway in time to see this.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(After ROUGH ties him, rousing and struggling against his bonds.)

Leave go of me, will you? Here. Let me go! Here's a fine way of going on. Here's a fine way!

(MANNINGHAM renews struggle.)

ROUGH

Do be quiet, sir, there's a –

(He slaps MANNINGHAM's cheek lightly.)

– good –

(Slap.)

– chap –

(Slap. He crosses to the Centre doors and opens them, speaking OFF.)

Come and take him away.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Inspector Rough.

(ROUGH turns and sees her, holding up his hand to the invisible policemen.)



ROUGH

Now, my dear. Don't you think you'd better —

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Don't treat me like *he* did! Don't!

ROUGH

What do you want?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I want to speak to my husband.

ROUGH

Now, surely, there's nothing to be —

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I want to speak to my husband.

ROUGH

Very well, my dear, what do you want to say?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I want to speak to him alone.

ROUGH

Alone?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Yes, alone. Won't you please let me speak to him alone? I beg of you to allow me. I will not keep him long.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Why not, Inspector? I'm not going anywhere, am I?

ROUGH

(Pause.)

Very well. You may speak to him alone. This is anything but in order — but I will wait outside.

(MRS. MANNINGHAM crosses to desk. ROUGH examines fastenings on MANNINGHAM and crosses up to door Centre.)

You must not be long, Mrs. Manningham.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I do not want you to listen.

ROUGH

No. I will not listen.

(ROUGH hesitates, then exits Left Centre.)

(MRS. MANNINGHAM looking at her husband. At last, she goes over to Centre door, locks it and then comes to him.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Jack! Jack! What has he done to you? What has he done?

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Struggling with his bonds, half whispering.)

You're clever, Bella. Terribly clever, my darling. Now, cut this! I can get out the dressing-room window and jump for it. Can you fetch something?

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Hesitating. Crossing to him.)

Yes. Yes, I can get something. What can I get?

MR. MANNINGHAM

There's a razor in my dressing-room. Quick! Can you get it, Bella?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Feverishly.)

Razor? Yes. I'll get it for you.

MR. MANNINGHAM

Hurry! Yes! In my dresser. Hurry! Quick and get it.

(She goes into room up Right, talking and mumbling and comes back with a razor case. At the desk, she takes the razor from its case and a scrap of paper falls to the floor. She stoops to pick it up, almost unconsciously tidy. She glances at it and a happy smile illuminates her face.)

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(Joyously.)

Jack! Here's the grocery bill!

(She comes to him, the grocery bill in one hand, the razor in the other. She is half weeping, half laughing.)

You see, dear. I didn't lose it. I told you I didn't!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Uncomfortably.)

Cut me loose, Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(She stares at him for a moment, then at the grocery bill, then back at him.)

Jack, how did this get in there? You said that I –

(Her voice trails off, a wild look comes into her eyes.)

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Trying to placate her with charm.)

I must have been mistaken about the bill. Now – Quickly, dear, use the razor! Quick!

(She stares at him for a moment, then moves a step closer. His look falls upon the razor. He glances up at her and a momentary hint of terror comes into his face. He draws back in the chair.)

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

MRS. MANNINGHAM

Razor? What razor?

(She holds it in front of his face.)

You're not suggesting that this is a razor I hold in my hand? Have you gone mad, my husband?

MR. MANNINGHAM

Bella, what are you up to?

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(With deadly rage that is close to insanity.)

Or is it I who am mad?

(She holds the razor up and turns it.)

Yes. That's it. It's I. Of course, it was a razor.

(Suddenly looking away from the razor.)

But where has it gone? Dear God! I have lost it, haven't I? I am always losing things, and I can never find them. I don't know where I put them.

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Desperately.)

Bella.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

I must look for it, mustn't I? Yes. If I don't find it, you will lock me in my room. You will lock me in the mad-house for my mischief.

(Her voice is compressed with bitterness and hatred.)

Where could it be now?

(Turns and looks around to Right.)

Could it be behind the picture? Yes, it must be there!

(She goes to the picture swiftly and takes it down.)

No, it's not there! How strange! I must put the picture back. I have taken it down, and I must put it back. There.

(She hurls it away.)

Where now shall I look?

(She is raging like a hunted animal. Turns and sees the desk.)

Where shall I look? The desk. Perhaps I put it in the desk.

(Goes to desk.)

No. It is not there. How strange! But here is a letter. Here is a watch. And the grocery bill! See? I've found them at last.

(Going to him.)

You see! But they don't help you, do they? And I am trying to help you, aren't I? – to help you escape – but how can a mad woman help her husband to escape? What a pity.

(Getting louder and louder and advancing upon him.)

If I were not mad, whatever you have done, I could have pitied and protected you! But, because I am mad, I have hated you!

(She holds the razor to his throat.)

And, because I am mad, I am rejoicing in my heart – without a shred of pity – without a shred of regret – and I shall watch you die with glory in my heart!

(She suddenly lifts the razor high as if to cut his throat)

AAAHH!

MR. MANNINGHAM

(Desperately.)

Bella!

MRS. MANNINGHAM

(She stops herself, throws the razor away and shouts:)

Inspector! Inspector!

(Up to door – pounds on door, then flings it open.)

Come and take this man away! Come and take this man away!

(ROUGH comes in swiftly. MRS. MANNINGHAM is completely hysterical and goes down to lower end of desk.)

COME AND TAKE THIS MAN AWAY!

(MRS. MANNINGHAM stands apart, trembling with homicidal rage. ROUGH takes her by the shoulders sternly. She struggles to get away. He slaps her across the face. She is momentarily stunned. NANCY and ELIZABETH enter. NANCY, at the door, sees MANNINGHAM

tied, looks frightened and runs OFF. ELIZABETH quickly takes in the situation, crosses to MRS. MANNINGHAM and leads her from ROUGH over to the fireplace where she stands with her back to the room. ROUGH stands at Left Centre watching them for a second and — )

ROUGH

(His eye on MRS. MANNINGHAM, whose wild  
fury has resolved into weeping.)

Now, my dear, you've had a bad time I came in from nowhere and gave you the most horrible evening of your life. Didn't I? The most horrible evening of anybody's life, I should imagine.

MRS. MANNINGHAM

The most horrible? The most horrible?

(Her head comes up and she turns to face the room)

Oh, no! The most wonderful! Far and away, the most wonderful!

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

CURTAIN