

The Brother's Wife

a stage play in three acts

by Paul Howard Surridge

Cast (in order of appearance)

The cast comprises 4 men and 4 women

Jocelyn Taylor

Penelope Taylor

Ginny Galgut

Inspector Keith Collman

Rod Taylor

Derek Cooper

Susie Severn

Policewoman Bridget Edy

The play is presented in three acts and requires a single set to accommodate the drawing room of Jocelyn and Penelope Taylor's country house in Surrey. The time is the present.

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Running Time Approx: 145 Minutes

ACT I Scene 1

Present day: When the curtain opens its early afternoon at JOCELYN and PENELOPE TAYLOR's country house in Surrey. The couple are in the drawing room and talking generally. They are a fashionable, well to do couple. They are in their late 40's early 50's. They run an import/export publishing business. The drawing room is elegantly furnished with quality antique items appropriately placed and a sizeable bookcase USL full to bursting with an assortment of titles. Classical music quietly plays from an

audio system. A bay window with views to the garden is seen USC curtains open. A coffee table is placed in front of a comfortable four-seat sofa situated C. When the curtain rises PEN is sitting on the sofa, JOSS is sitting on a recliner RC. The table has a few books and magazines placed upon it next to a needlework box and a large pair of scissors. A small vase and flowers are on display. A brief case is next to the coffee table. A coffee maker and clean cups and saucers are situated next to the 'phone on the sideboard RC. A table lamp is off. There are already two cups poured which are on the coffee table: The entrance is RC leading to the front door and bedrooms. All other rooms are located LC.

Lights up

JOSS: *(reading a newspaper – The Times- and occasionally drinking coffee)* I wandered into Peter's antique shop this morning. Place was deserted as usual..., I saw this wonderful chest and just couldn't take my eyes off it.

PEN: *(reading a magazine. She looks at him.)* I bet you couldn't darling; you've had a thing about chests ever since I've known you!

JOSS: *(absorbed in his newspaper)* Sorry?

PEN: *(putting her magazine down)* Oh, come on Joss, you heard me; don't be so serious.

JOSS: *(peering over the top of his paper)* Sorry darling? Oh, very funny! I can always rely on you to lower the tone. *(Putting his paper down)* I couldn't believe my ears over the dinner table last week when the Russells were here when you asked Tom the size of his shoes; and when he replied "size 7" you said, "My mother always believed you could tell the size of a man's you know what, by the size of the shoes he wore". Tom's face dropped..., Margaret just roared, more coffee? *(PEN nods. JOSS Gets up and refills coffee cups.)*

PEN: I don't know what possessed me to blurt that out! I doubt Tom will ever speak to me again. He was frosty for the rest of the evening.

JOSS: *(looks for a book USL)* You must learn to be more diplomatic my darling *(Stands behind sofa and kisses her on top of head.)* Talking of diplomatic, it's been months since we last saw Rod and Mary, you know. I'm sure I was right.

PEN: About what?

JOSS: Don't you remember me saying after our last get together that we wouldn't be seeing them for a while..., you remember Rod and I disagreed about something and we ended up arguing.

PEN: You always end up arguing with Rod, isn't that what brother's do?

JOSS: Well, yes, I suppose that's true, but it was you who said he'd be on the phone within days as though nothing had happened..., I haven't seen him since, have you?

PEN: Actually, I have seen him.

JOSS: Really?

PEN: I didn't say anything before because I just knew you would harp on about what a bad judge of character I am; but I saw Rod last week and I know he saw me. The thing is; it seemed as though he wanted to avoid me. Before I had time to cross the road and catch up with him he'd gone.

JOSS: (*moves to sit next to her on sofa.*) Last week. Where?

PEN: He was just outside the newsagents in the High Street.

JOSS: Why on earth would he be in the High Street? Neither Rod nor Mary would need to come in this direction unless they were visiting us. Did he look as though he was on an official visit?

PEN: Actually he looked pretty rough.

JOSS: So you had no intention of telling me then?

PEN: I forgot to be honest. I must admit it quite upset me at the time. I thought 'why should he snub me' it wasn't me he fell out with, it was you. Why snub me?

JOSS: Very odd. I can't quite think why he would be in the High Street unless he was coming here. I've no regrets about what I said. He lives in 'cloud cuckoo land' and I told him so.

PEN: What do you mean?

JOSS: Well, he has to realise that starting a business from scratch demands a lot of thought. It demands clarity and a robust financial plan; that's aside of a good product idea in the first place. You just can't rush impulsively into a business on a whim and expect to succeed.

PEN: He's thinking of starting a business?

JOSS: But what's so ridiculous is that he's already heavily in debt.

PEN: Heavily in debt?

JOSS: That's confidential.

PEN: If he's in debt, shouldn't you be taking a more sympathetic view, perhaps offer some advice?

JOSS: I tried. That's why we argued. You know as well as I do he always thinks he knows best. He just won't listen, at least not to me. As a child I can remember numerous occasions when he fell out with our parents and friends because he wasn't prepared to listen. He's hot headed. Just resents other people expressing their views, unless of course they're in tandem with his. It's so frustrating; you just can't help losing your temper with him.

PEN: If they are in debt how could they pay it off? It's not as though he has a well paid job; or indeed any regular income at the moment.

JOSS: Look. I know what you're like! You must not breathe a word to Mary OK?

PEN: I won't I promise.

JOSS: He said he'd remortgaged the house. Raised £150,000 and without Mary knowing. Admitted he'd forged her signature with the bank. He wanted the money to invest in a business based in Mexico of all places.

PEN: Mexico?

JOSS: Yacht chartering or something equally ridiculous. It appears a dozen or so investors agreed to raise enough cash to buy a small fleet of 2 berth sailing yachts. The plan was to charter them to wealthy Americans. I have to admit it did sound romantic, but ludicrous, and I told him so. The economics, the risks, and the people involved, as he described them, just didn't stake up. So we argued.

PEN: My god! What would Mary have said, or done more appropriately if she'd found out..., presumably she doesn't know?

JOSS: No. Absolutely not! Apparently, a so called 'adviser' who put the deal together made 'an error' in calculating the amount it would cost to set up the deal; and after collecting their initial investment told them that they would need to raise a further quarter of a million each if they wanted to realise their investment. Apparently he made it clear, and in no uncertain terms, that they wouldn't get their original stake back if they pulled out.

PEN: That's outrageous! Surely no one can get their calculations that wrong? But to deny them their money back if they pulled out, for an error not of their making, must be illegal surely?

JOSS: Of course it is! The whole thing was a scam. The 'adviser' was a con man by all accounts and backed up by some pretty unsavoury people. Rod's argument was that having paid over the initial £150,000 should he just accept the loss and hope Mary wouldn't find out, or risk the extra cash and trust the deal came good. Of course, I said he was a bloody fool and he should go straight to the Police; and that was the basis of the argument.

PEN: I really am; well, I'm speechless. He's the last person on earth I'd imagine to do such a stupid thing and behind Mary's back. He's never been prepared to take risks in the past, not like you.

JOSS: A good judge of character you are not, my darling! And for the record, I don't take risks..., I make calculated business decisions!

PEN: I wonder what's happened since they were last here.

JOSS: God knows. What puzzled me at the time we were having the argument, and I couldn't get to the bottom of it, was how he raised the extra quarter of a million? It's easy enough to re-mortgage a house if you've sufficient equity and an income to repay borrowings, but raising a quarter of a million without adequate security is another matter. It all sounded very precarious to me.

PEN: You mean he paid them! He raised the extra money and paid them?

JOSS: Yes. But the question is, where and how did he raise it? They've always bleated on about not having any money. If he re-mortgaged the £150,000 the burden of the monthly payments alone would be significant and I can't see in their situation how they could meet that obligation. It just doesn't make sense.

PEN: I'm worried..., and intrigued. Why don't you ring and see how they are?

JOSS: I know I should, but I don't want to be seen to be interfering. After all, if he deliberately avoided you in the High Street perhaps that should tell us something. Maybe they are still annoyed with us?

PEN: Well I'm not 100% sure he ignored me; there's a chance he genuinely didn't see me. From all you've said, I think we should put aside our sensitivities and call them. You are his brother, after all.

JOSS: I know, I know..., OK, I'll ring them. (*JOSS goes to the phone placed on a sideboard and dials.*) "Hello...sorry, I don't recognise the voice. Is Rod there? I'm Rod's brother, Joss. Have I got the wrong number? Yes, yes. I'm 'phoning from Camberley. Sorry, but what's all this about? May I ask who I'm speaking to? Inspector! You're a policeman. (*PEN gets up anxiously and stands next to JOSS.*) What's happened? Is Rod there? I understand. Yes of course, I'll come immediately. It will take me about twenty minutes. Yes of course, my home number is 01 276 445780. Right, I'll be with you shortly.

PEN: Policeman? Joss what's happened?

JOSS: (*paces the room*) Bizarre! I can't fathom it out. He wasn't prepared to say much but clearly there's a problem. How ironical that we were talking about them, Rod and Mary, I mean. I make a call and a Policeman answers the phone.

PEN: Are you worried?

JOSS: (*snapping slightly*) Of course I'm worried, just can't quite get my head around it. Apparently Rod wasn't there. At least that's what he intimated.

PEN: Are you going to their house?

JOSS: (*impatiently*) No. They want me to go to the Woking Police Station for some odd reason. Why would the Police be at their house if it wasn't something serious? Where's Mary if Rod's not there? Perhaps they've gone out and there's been a break in or something. Come with me.

PEN: Do you think Rod and Mary are OK?

JOSS: (*insistently*) Darling, I don't know, do I? There wasn't exactly a meaningful exchange of dialogue. He just asked me if I would go to the Woking Police Station as soon as possible and take some identification.

PEN: Why would they want you to take identification?

JOSS: (*recognising she is anxious*) No idea. Come with me. I have to hurry.

PEN: I can't, Ginny's popping in for coffee in a few minutes, but promise me you'll call the moment you know what's happened?

JOSS: Of course. I'll call as soon as I can.

(JOSS kisses her and exits RC. Off-stage he is heard opening the door and acknowledges Ginny as she arrives. Ginny is in her early/mid 50's, an overdressed woman that would never be seen in public without wearing make-up. They are constantly in and out of each other's homes.)

JOSS: *(in an obviously distracted way)* Hi Ginny, you OK? Sorry to hear about Peanuts.

GINNY: Feeling a little better, thanks Joss, see you. *(GINNY enters the sitting room and they both sit on the sofa)* Joss seems in a hurry.

PEN: Coffee? *(GINNY indicates no.)* You wouldn't guess in a million years where he's off to!

GINNY: *(in a playful way)* Well, let's see now..., he wasn't carrying a suitcase, but maybe he's already put it into the Range Rover. It's not somewhere obvious; otherwise you wouldn't have asked me. I give up!

PEN: Woking Police Station!

GINNY: Police Station? What's he done?

PEN: No, he's done nothing! It's all rather mysterious and quite worrying though. Joss 'phoned his brother, Rod, you know, you met him at one of our dinner parties. Well, instead of getting through to him, a Police Inspector answered the 'phone. According to Joss he was quite evasive about why he was in their house, anyway, he asked Joss to go to Woking Police Station as soon as he could.

GINNY: Goodness me. What's happened do you think? Didn't he have a chance to speak to Rod or his wife..., sorry, what's her name?

PEN: Mary..., no. I'm really quite worried about them, but not sure what I should be worrying about.

GINNY: I'm sure it will all come out in the wash.

PEN: But it all sounds very strange... *(In a reflective way)* I sometimes feel immune to reality, don't you? I suppose Joss and George see life in a more rounded way with all their overseas business trips. I feel as though life just passes me by. I live day to day in my own space. The news I see on TV and hear on the radio could be fiction... Do you know I can't remember the last time I went on a business trip with Joss. I used to go, but somehow it doesn't interest me anymore. Mind you he did ask if I wanted to accompany him to the Police Station! *(They both laugh momentarily.)*

GINNY: I do know what you mean. I have often reflected on my life over the years and wondered what I've achieved.

PEN: Can I confide in you?

GINNY: What a strange thing to ask. We spend half our lives together confiding in one another!

PEN: No, seriously. Joss would be upset if I spilt the beans about serious family issues – even to you.

GINNY: Of course you can trust me, but if you feel compromised of course I'd understand! ...but you know me, if you don't tell me now, I'll nag and nag until you do!

(They laugh.)

PEN: This only came out this morning when Joss and I were talking. It's all very bizarre. A few months ago Rod and Mary came over for Sunday lunch. We don't often invite them but felt we ought to. They are not the easiest of people to entertain. Well, you'll know you sat next to Rod at the last dinner party? *(GINNY nods.)*

GINNY: I remember.

PEN: It was pleasant enough, but they are not the kind of people you get close to, especially Mary. To be honest, he's a bit dull, and she's even duller, but very much in charge of the relationship. I know that sounds awful, but we really have so little in common. I always have the feeling they resent what we have, despite the fact that Joss has worked very hard over the years.

GINNY: He certainly has.

PEN: Anyway, during the afternoon after we'd had lunch, Joss and Rod disappeared into the study to talk. Mary and I just chatted, but we were aware the boys' conversation was getting more intense. Nothing serious, but you could tell they didn't agree about something. They always end up arguing, but we've become used to that. As I was straining to hear them, I could tell Mary wanted to distract me. I get the impression she enjoys Rod having a go at Joss. She's always telling him to be more assertive. Anyway, just as they were going at each other hammer and tongs, Mary asked to see the garden and I got dragged away. I thought no more about it until this morning.

GINNY: Sounds very exciting! I can't wait to hear more.

PEN: Well, we haven't heard from them or seen them since the lunch, except I did see Rod in the High Street recently and he seemed to ignore me. I told Joss, and that's when he told me. *(Realising she is about to spill the beans, but changes her mind. She gets up and without asking pours some coffee for the two of them.)*

GINNY: And...

PEN: Well, we decided to call them to see how they were and when Joss 'phoned he ended up speaking to a Policeman who asked him to go to the Police Station.

GINNY: Is that it?

PEN: Yes, that's it. I'm waiting for Joss to update me.

GINNY: My father used to say, "There's nowt as queer as folk". To this day I have no idea why he said that, it's not as though he normally expressed opinions about much or came from the North of England, but he said it, nonetheless. So, Joss has gone to the Police Station, there must be more to tell?

PEN: More like summoned! It's a complete mystery. I guess we'll find out soon. Enough about our drama, you seem a little more cheerful today.

GINNY: You have to put a brave face on! Another one of my father's sayings! I know it's silly and he was only a dog, but Peanuts was a part of the family. If I had a choice I would have put George down, not the dog! I do miss him, terribly. *(Momentarily her humour fades to sadness.)*

PEN: Will you get another one?

GINNY: Husband? *(They laugh and there is a slight pause.)* I wish it were that simple. I'm really in a stew Pen. Can I confide in you? *(Her emotions swing back to sadness. Her eyes well up)* How long have we known each other?

PEN: It must be eleven years, soon after we moved in. Why?

GINNY: *(obviously upset; PEN goes to comfort her and sits beside her.)* It's George! I don't know where to start really. We've seemed happy enough, haven't we?

PEN: I've always thought so. You've had your moments, but don't we all. Ginny, what's the matter?

GINNY: (*holding back the tears, but visibly upset. Tries to compose her*) I found out some time ago that George was having an affair with another woman! As you can imagine, I went crazy, and we didn't speak for some time and when we did it was in words of one syllable. I thought we'd got over it. George was so apologetic. He put it down to mid-life crisis and assured me it was in the past. Why do men always use the excuse of 'mid-life crisis'? Do they think we are stupid? Anyway, he said and did so many lovely things to make amends and make me feel special; it took me back to the early days when we first met. I was terribly hurt, but I was determined to get over it; especially if he continued to be so nice. He promised it wouldn't happen again and I forgave him. For a while it was lovely. In an odd way I was glad he'd had a fling because it rejuvenated our relationship, or so I thought! Then the inevitable happened. Stupid, gullible me! I overheard George on the telephone one evening talking in an intimate way to a woman. I heard him making arrangements for a dinner date on the following Tuesday. Not wanting to believe what I'd heard, and certainly not wanting to show it, I waited to see if he would make an excuse to be working late, and surprise, surprise, he did. He 'phoned from the office that following morning "Darling," he said. "I've got a late meeting on Tuesday evening in town with our American agents. Rather than come home late and disturb you, I'll take a hotel room for the night". Pen, my heart sank! I tried to act normally so he wouldn't notice, but was determined to discover who she was. On the Tuesday, he left in the morning with an overnight bag and not a flicker of guilt. That afternoon, I drove to his office and parked nearby. I waited what seemed like hours. Eventually he came out and got in his car and I followed him to the hotel. She was there in the car park waiting. My heart was pounding, I could hardly see for crying. (*She breaks down in tears.*)

PEN: Oh, Ginny, I am so sorry.

GINNY: He was like a school boy fawning all over her. He held her hand, something he never does with me, and then they walked to a local restaurant. I just waited opposite, not caring if he spotted me. They sat in the window seat and were consumed by each other. I just couldn't stop looking at them, tears running down my face. It was awful, and she was only a young girl. She couldn't have been more than 24.

PEN: (*comforting her*) You poor dear! I'm so sorry. How long ago was this?

GINNY: (*struggling to speak*) Three weeks ago!

PEN: Have you confronted him about it? (*The ' phone rings. PEN answers it. To GINNY*) It's Joss. (*GINNY continues to sob in the background*) Joss, what did they want? (*Pauses for some time her facial expressions show shock and amazement at what she is being told.*) It can't be true, can it? How? Doesn't anyone know where he is? When did all this happen? Are they? Joss, I just can't take this in. Are you coming home? Good, good, of course I will. Bye.

GINNY: (*having composed herself and eager to discover what's happened*) Are you OK Pen?

PEN: (*returns and sits next to GINNY*) It was me asking you the very same question two seconds ago! (*Somewhat dumbstruck*) It was Joss. He's at the Police Station. It appears that Rod's wife, Mary has been murdered, Rod's gone missing, and they are looking for him as their prime suspect.

GINNY: Oh, lord, and I thought I had problems.

PEN: It's horrifying. I just can't believe what's happened. I'm sorry, Ginny.

GINNY: Sorry! What for? Did Joss say anything else?

PEN: No. He's on his way back now. I guess there's no point speculating further until he returns. (*Not wishing to diminish GINNY's news*) So what happened with George?

GINNY: Oh, you don't want me to burden you with my problems at a time like this.

PEN: No, really, I'd rather take my mind off it until Joss returns, and anyway your problem needs airing. Did you confront him?

GINNY: Well, in a way I did, but not directly. It took a few days to get over the immediate hurt. I avoided him whenever I could. He just carried on as though nothing had happened. I was constantly on broken glass. If he'd sneezed I would have broken down. Anyway, a few days later I'd started to relax and became more focused. I was determined to put him under pressure, without him knowing that I knew. I decided I would try and elicit a reaction to a few leading questions in the hope he would confess.

PEN: (*listening but distracted*) Did he?

GINNY: Not a bit of it. I asked him if he regretted giving up his relationship and he said “Of course not, darling, it was the biggest mistake of my life and now I know how much I love you”. I could have cut his throat! I said “Are you happier in our relationship”? Of course he replied; it’s the best it’s been for years. I could have stabbed him with the kitchen knife! I felt sick, I can tell you. (*Breaking down in tears again*) How could he be so callous? How could he plead with me to take him back and then weeks, just weeks later be at it again?

PEN: I would never have believed George capable of such a thing..., I don’t mean capable...

GINNY: I know what you mean!

PEN: So, what did you do next? Presumably you told him that you’d seen him?

GINNY: No. Not yet. I’ve just been sulking, wondering if my life has come to an end. I just don’t know what to do. Whatever I do, it’s over. He keeps saying to me in a concerned, innocent tone “What’s the matter, Ginny, darling, aren’t you feeling well?” I just say, “No. I’m fine, just a little under the weather,” when I really want to castrate him!

PEN: I think I prefer the idea of cutting his throat!

GINNY: If it had been you, would you have confronted Joss?

PEN: Yes! No hesitation! You can’t carry on as though nothing has happened. Surely every time he leaves the house you must wonder where he’s going, more, who he’s going to. Ginny, you must confront him. You must tell him you’ve seen him and bring it to a head.

GINNY: I know I should, but deep down, I don’t want to lose him. I don’t want to lose what we’ve built up over the years. I don’t want to grow old on my own. I can’t do it Pen.

PEN: You must stop feeling sorry for yourself and deal with it, head on. I really believe that. Surely it’s better to lose him, no matter how tough it may be, than be miserable and resentful for the rest of your marriage? If I were you, I would face up to the worst that could happen and face him. Don’t let him get away with it. You are still young and attractive and could find another partner, I’m sure of that.

GINNY: Only you could be such a good friend. I know deep down you are right. It’s just having the courage to do it.

PEN: Promise me you will?

GINNY: I promise. I'll prepare myself for the battle ahead! *(They embrace. JOSS is heard opening the front door they both get up.)*

PEN: That's Joss!

GINNY: Look, I'd better go. Thanks for all your help.

PEN: Speak to me later, won't you? *(JOSS enters and meets GINNY making her exit, pre-occupied, they hardly notice each other. JOSS looks worried.)* Joss, Mary can't be dead, can she?

JOSS: *(in a sombre tone and again pacing the room. PEN stands at side of sofa)* I'm afraid she was discovered dead in the bedroom! The Police had been alerted to the house by neighbours. They'd found her only minutes before I phoned. Apparently the neighbours said to the Police that Rod hadn't been seen in days. Witnesses insisted they argued all the time and sometimes violently. *(Showing signs of stress)* It always amazes me how bloody interfering neighbours can be.

PEN: Of course neighbours know what's going on, especially when they live on top of each other. *(She puts her arms around him.)*

JOSS: *(paces the room)* I'm so concerned about Rod. I cannot believe he would do such a thing..., murder his wife I mean, but if he didn't, who did? Where on earth can he be?

PEN: They'll find him. I'm sure there's an explanation.

JOSS: *(somewhat irritated by the obvious)* Explanation. Of course there's an explanation! There's an explanation for everything in life. I'm sorry; I shouldn't take it out on you.

PEN: Don't worry, I understand. It's come as a huge shock. They never used to argue, did they? Having said that how would we know! Perhaps Mary found out about the business venture and the debts he'd run up, and that's why they argued.

JOSS: *(sits on corner of sofa LC)* From what the Police said, they argued all the time.

PEN: So, what exactly did he say?

JOSS: It was incredible, really. The inspector in charge seemed more interested in my passport and where I'd been recently than telling me what

happened! It appears that Mary was found in the bedroom and they believe she was strangled, but they are awaiting forensic tests to confirm.

PEN: (*visibly upset*) Strangled? My god who would want to strangle her? I can't believe this is happening to us, to our family.

JOSS: (*gets up and comforts her*) I know its madness.

PEN: But why?

JOSS: I really don't know. At the station I was asked when we last saw them. I said some time ago. Then, without thinking, I volunteered the information about the two of us arguing. I even told them they had money problems and poured out Rod's planned involvement with the yacht chartering business. In the car on the way back I was so cross with myself. Why did I have to give them such detailed information that could possibly incriminate Rod, after all I wasn't being pressured to do so?

PEN: Why are you so worried about telling them? (*She suddenly realises that the money difficulties and the business venture could falsely implicate ROD to the murder*) You don't really think they suspect Rod do you?

JOSS: (*showing signs of strain*) I don't know. I guess so.

PEN: My god!

JOSS: Look I simply don't know, but he must be their prime suspect. I can't think straight. Why would Rod want to murder...? Oh, it's too ridiculous. Why are we talking like this? We are just speculating. We don't know what happened. I'm more concerned right now about Rod's whereabouts and his mental state.

PEN: Do you know any of Rod's friends or contacts we could approach? Someone must know where he is?

JOSS: Isn't that the job of the Police?

PEN: (*agitated herself*) Joss, this is your brother we're talking about! Don't you think we should at least make an effort to find him before the Police do? It would be better if he heard about Mary from us rather than an official.

JOSS: Yes, yes, of course, you are right, but I just don't know where to start. I don't know any of his friends; I told the police that. Why would I know his friends? We never see each other socially unless we invite them here.

PEN: What about his golf club? Perhaps someone there may have seen him.

JOSS: That's a start, I suppose. I think I've still got the number from the time he begged me to play with him, what a shambles that was. (*Looking in his address book next to the 'phone*) He invited me to play, so that he could give me a good thrashing. No matter how hard I tried to lose I won almost every hole. I had to feel sorry for him. Ah, here it is. (*JOSS goes to the 'phone and dials.*) Hello, who am I speaking to? Ah, right. Perhaps you could help me? I'm Joss Taylor, Rod Taylor's brother and I understand he's a member of your club. Do you know him? Sorry, I don't understand? Is that so? ...you lost money too!? So I found out. Look do you know where he is? ...when did you last see him? Is he still a member of the club? So, you've no idea where I could find him? Thanks for your help. Oh, before you go, is there anyone else who might be able to help me? OK. Thanks anyway.

(*JOSS puts the ' phone down and turns to PEN.*)

PEN: So, what did they say?

JOSS: I'm totally confused.

PEN: About what?

JOSS: It just gets more and more intriguing. First we learn that Rod and Mary had a fiery relationship and now, that he owes money to all and sundry at the golf club and beyond. Apparently, he got into a fight with another member and was barred from the club a couple of weeks ago. According to the barman, the last time he saw Rod he bragged about going to South America or Mexico and never returning.

PEN: Well, at least that part makes some sense, even we knew about the business venture.

JOSS: I suppose so..., but we're no further forward are we? ...before I left the Police Station; having poured out everything bad about my brother; possibly enough to incriminate him in a murder...

PEN: Don't be so hard on yourself!

JOSS: Well, before I left the station I gave them the address and 'phone number of Mary's mother. Do you think we should call her, before the Police make contact, and explain what's happened?

PEN: Not really. You said yourself we know so little, except of course that Mary is dead! How could we possibly break that news to her? I think that's best dealt with by the professionals.

JOSS: (*pacing the room*) Of course, you are right, as always. Look, I don't know about you, but I'm absolutely shattered, my head's in a spin; would you like a drink?

PEN: Yes I would. A large gin and tonic!

JOSS: Me too! (*JOSS goes to drinks cabinet near sideboard and makes drinks. The 'phone rings.*)

PEN: (*answers the 'phone, looking worried*) Hello, Penelope Taylor... Yes, of course I'll get him for you... (*In a whisper*) It's Inspector Collman! (*Passes phone to JOSS.*)

JOSS: No, not at all, we were just... You have? When? Where was he? Have you told him about Mary? Yes, of course you can bring him here. We're in all day. OK. See you shortly. (*JOSS puts receiver down slowly and*

turns to PEN.)

PEN: They've found him, haven't they?

JOSS: Yes. The neighbours 'phoned them after someone had seen him drunk in a local pub. They're bringing him here for the time being. Apparently, they want to question us before they do.

PEN: About what?

JOSS: I don't know darling. Look. I'd better phone Susie at home and tell her I won't be in the office tomorrow. I need her to do some important jobs for me. I have a feeling this will take time to sort out and Rod will need as much support as we can muster.

(*They both leave the drawing room. JOSS turns out the lights then closes the door behind him.*)

Curtain

|

ACT I Scene 2

It's early evening. As the curtain opens, JOSS and PEN are seen entering the drawing room chatting. JOSS turns on the main switch and table lamp. They both pick up reading material. JOSS sits on the recliner and PEN on the sofa.

PEN: I wonder when they'll arrive.

JOSS: Anytime soon. I just wonder what state Rod will be in.

PEN: I still can't comprehend what's happened. You hear of muggings and murders on the news but never expect it to affect you directly.

JOSS: I was thinking the same thing.

(Doorbell rings.)

PEN: Oh dear. I feel quite uneasy.

JOSS: *(Gets up. Kisses PEN on the cheek and goes to open the door)* don't worry darling we'll get through this.

(JOSS is heard off-stage greeting INSPECTOR COLLMAN. The two enter led by JOSS. PEN gets up from the sofa. INSPECTOR COLLMAN is a middle-aged man. He's an experienced and cunning detective that generally gets his man!)

INSP C: Hello Mrs Taylor.

PEN: Hello Inspector. Where's Rod?

JOSS: First things first darling. Do take a seat Inspector. *(INSP C sits on sofa.)*

INSP C: If I may I'd like to have an informal chat with the two of you before I bring Mr Taylor in from the car. He's in a distraught state as you can imagine.

PEN: Of course, poor thing.

INSP C: Yes. He's the worse for wear, I'm afraid. We picked him up at the Horse & Jockey where he'd been drinking all day. We were only able to conduct a preliminary interview with him and established some of his whereabouts over the past few days.

JOSS: *(Tentatively)* So he knows about Mary?

INSP C: We've told him... yes. We took him to the mortuary to identify the body; then we spoke to him about what he knew.

The Brother's Wife

PEN: How did he take it? He must have been destroyed.

INSP C: I'm afraid I can't comment, Madame. I can say he was very helpful.

JOSS: Very helpful. What does that actually mean Inspector?

INSP C: I can't comment, Sir.

JOSS: What do you mean? You say he was very helpful, but then can't comment. Surely you can tell me what he said; he's my brother.

PEN: Joss, just leave it. Clearly the Inspector is not in a position to comment on an interview with a suspect.

JOSS: (*getting a little steamy under the collar he paces the room*) Suspect! For god's sake whose side are you on. You sound like a Policewoman.

PEN: I know you are upset, just let the Inspector do his job. I'm sure everything will come out in the wash; you'll see.

JOSS: With respect, Pen, I'm not interested in the Inspector's washing; I want to know what..., if my brother has anything to answer for. It sounds as though he's being branded as Mary's murderer, and I know my brother, and he wouldn't harm a fly.

INSP C: I think Mrs Taylor is right, Sir. Let us get on with our investigation and if your brother is innocent then we'll soon find out.

JOSS: I understand... I'm sorry. But you see... I'm confused; it just doesn't sound like my brother. When you told me earlier that according to neighbours my brother and Mary argued violently, I was shocked. (*Turning to Pen*) It's not like them is it, darling? Rod doesn't normally drink either, well at least not to excess. He drinks at home occasionally, but not in pubs. It just doesn't sound like him at all.

INSP C: Believe me Sir; people do the oddest things when they're under pressure. We see it all the time. (*Slightly sarcastically*) It's amazing how we *think* we know people, even those closest to us! You just wouldn't believe the crimes that are committed on this suburban patch by absolute angels, pillars of the community, according to their nearest and dearest.

JOSS: (*missing the sarcasm*) I'm sure you're right, I'm sure. Can we see him now?

The Brother's Wife

INSP C: All in good time, Sir. I thought we could talk a little more about your brother: the kind of person he is; what motivates him; his lifestyle; people he knew.

PEN: There's not much to tell you, Inspector. We didn't see them very often. Joss and Rod were not that close, you see.

INSP C: Why was that?

JOSS: No particular reason. I'm sure lots of brothers are not in each other's pockets all the time. We got on but: well, at a distance.

INSP C: Did you argue?

PEN: They did occasionally, when Rod and Mary came to the house, but nothing serious. You see Rod always envied Joss. Well not envied but...

INSP C: But what?

PEN: Well, I suppose he did envy us; our lifestyle; the fact that Joss has his own successful business. They envied the holidays we took, the clothes we bought, the cars we drove, the houses we've lived in...

JOSS: OK Pen. I don't think the Inspector wants to hear our life story.

INSP C: Quite the contrary, Sir. Anything you can tell me that would enable us to build a picture of your brother and the concerns he had, would be most helpful.

JOSS: (*realising they may be saying too much and feeling irritated by the line of interrogation*) I bet it would. I'm sorry, Inspector, we have nothing else to say, do we Pen, but again I would like to see my brother if it's at all possible?

INSP C: I understand, Sir..., but there is just one thing that puzzles me. When we spoke last you told me about your brother's business venture: the yacht chartering business...

JOSS: What about it? I didn't say he *had* a yacht chartering business, he was just thinking about it, talking to others; that's all.

INSP C: I see. Thinking about it?

JOSS: Just thinking...

PEN: That's what caused the argument we told you about.

JOSS: (*scours at PEN*) Yes, we had a disagreement the last time we met. It was a storm in a teacup, no more. Other than that, I know nothing about my brother's business affairs; nothing.

INSP C: Tell me what kind of person he is?

JOSS: What kind of person? Not very adventurous, but he's popular, likeable. Inspector, they were ..., are, at least they were just ordinary people living ordinary lives. They seemed reasonably content with their lot..., in general that is. They didn't go out much, not a hectic social life as far as we're aware. Just ordinary people!

INSP C: Ordinary, not very adventurous people, with an everyday standard of living don't get involved in yacht chartering businesses, do they?

JOSS: It was for precisely that reason that we argued..., had a difference of opinion last time we met. Look, I said, I thought the whole idea was ridiculous, ill judged, wouldn't work... and he got upset. That's it.

INSP C: I see. And you felt you were a better judge of the situation?

PEN: Of course Joss is. Joss runs his own business. Rod has never run a business. Never had any interest! He's just not the type.

JOSS: (*Somewhat condescendingly*) Inspector, I've run my own business, and successfully, for over 25 years. I know most of the pitfalls. I understand what works and what doesn't. I just knew this was a crackpot idea with dubious people and he should steer clear of it.

INSP C: Dubious people?

JOSS: (*realising he was digging himself in deeper*) Dubious? Look, I don't know. It was just what he said. I based my judgements on what he said. Idle gossip, perhaps I was wrong. I don't know.

INSP C: So, you didn't approve?

JOSS: It just didn't seem plausible.

INSP C: Remind me, what kind of business are you in, Sir?

JOSS: Book publishing mainly. We Import and Export them.

INSP C: I see, so that's why your passport has been stamped a lot. You travel on business a good deal.

JOSS: Yes, a good deal. I told you that Inspector.

INSP C: Which countries do you travel to?

JOSS: The USA, Far East, South America.

The Brother's Wife

PEN: You've also been to China, Canada, Russia, and most parts of Europe too. I used to accompany my husband years ago but I haven't... *(JOSS looks at her incredulously)* well, I haven't done so recently, at all.

INSP C: And..., Mexico?

PEN: Yes, he was there only last year! *(JOSS doesn't turn his head but looks straight ahead with an astonished look on his face.)*

JOSS: Forgive me, Inspector, but where is all this leading to?

INSP C: Leading to?

JOSS: Why are you wasting your time, interrogating me about my knowledge or otherwise of Mexico, when Mary's murderer is out there somewhere at large and quite likely to commit another frenzied attack at anytime.

PEN: Joss, the Inspector is just trying to find out...

JOSS: *(quickly interrupts her)* Thank you, darling... I think I can handle this.

INSP C: All in good time, Sir. I'm sure you'll appreciate that we have to assemble as many facts as we can; after all, it's not every day that we deal with such a brutal murder on this patch.

JOSS: No, I understand. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

INSP C: That's alright.

JOSS: All I can tell you is that my brother is not the murderer. He's just not the type. He would have no reason to kill Mary. Why would he?

INSP C: Well, thank you both for being so patient, so helpful. I'll arrange for your brother to come in. I'd imagine you'd like some time alone with him?

PEN: Thank you Inspector?

(INSP C gets up and exits closing the door behind him.)

JOSS: For god's sake why did you go on and on about my business affairs.

PEN: I didn't say anything wrong did I?

JOSS: It was just that...well, you seemed to be inviting the Inspector to delve deeper and deeper into our affairs that's all.

PEN: I didn't mean to, but we have nothing to hide do we?

The Brother's Wife

JOSS: Of course not.

(INSPECTOR C is heard entering the house with ROD.)

PEN: Oh dear. I dread seeing him in a state.

JOSS: Put on a brave face. God knows he's going to need all the support he can get.

(INSP C and ROD enter the drawing room. ROD rushes up to PEN and she puts her arms around him. ROD is somewhat distraught.)

INSP C: I'll leave Mr Taylor alone with you, but I'm sure you'll understand that I'll have to leave a police officer outside. Mr Taylor must not leave the house until I return.

JOSS: Of course.

ROD: *(in a loud but pathetic way)* Thank god, I'm out of that place. It's a nightmare. I can't believe what's happening to me. Did they tell you about Mary..., she's been murdered! *(He breaks down but continues to talk)* They think I did it, I know they do.

PEN: *(PEN sits ROD down next to her on the sofa)* Don't be silly, of course they don't!

ROD: They do, I know they do. I don't know what's been happening to me. The only thing I can remember is a Policeman waking me up. I had a terrible hangover and didn't know where I was. There were two of them you see...

JOSS: *(JOSS remain standing)* Two of them? What do you mean?

ROD: Policemen. Policemen! They woke me up and told me Mary was dead. I thought I was dreaming, and then they told me I had to go to the mortuary to identify her body. It was awful. *(In a terrible state gets up then sits down in constant motion)* She was just lying there. Her face was grey, powdery grey. It was awful.

JOSS: What happened then?

ROD: They took me to a cell. I was feeling sick. I just couldn't understand what they were saying to me. They kept asking questions over and over again.

JOSS: What did they say, can you remember?

ROD: No. Not really, but I know they think I killed Mary.

The Brother's Wife

JOSS: You must get a grip. You must remember what you said to them. Did they offer you a lawyer?

ROD: I don't know.

JOSS: Rod, listen to me. It's natural that you would be their prime suspect...

ROD: But it wasn't me. You don't think I did it, do you...

JOSS: (*in an insistent tone*) Listen to me: Rod, I know you are distraught, but you must get a grip. We must get you a lawyer. The fact that you said you didn't do it doesn't mean that they won't suspect you. That's why you must not say anything unless you have a lawyer present. Do you understand?

ROD: Why would I need a lawyer if I'm not guilty..., you think I did it..., you think I killed Mary, don't you! How could you, my brother, think I would do such a thing!

PEN: We don't. Rod, we honestly don't, but Joss is right, you do need to see someone when they take you back to the station.

ROD: I don't want to go back!

JOSS: Just calm down. Being in a frenzied state won't help. Can you remember if they charged you with anything?

ROD: (*calming down*) No! They just said they needed to detain me for further questioning, that's all I know. I have such a terrible headache. I just feel sick. I just want to sleep, to wake up and realise this was just a nightmare. (*Breaks down and sobs.*)

JOSS: We're all shocked by the events of the past day or so and of course we'll help you as much as we can..., but you must tell me, were you and Mary always arguing? Did you really have such a violent marriage? What do you know about the events of the past few days?

ROD: (*calming down and attempting to answer the line of questioning*) It wasn't really that bad! We didn't always get on, but she went absolutely crazy when she found out that I'd extended the mortgage without telling her. She threatened to tell the bank that I'd forged her signature; she even said she would call in the Police. It was awful. I didn't know what to say, other than I was sorry. She went into a rage like I had never seen before and grabbed at everything she could throw at me.

PEN: My god.

The Brother's Wife

ROD: Blood running down the side of my face and Mary screaming at me, I thought I couldn't stop there. I had to tell her everything to clear the air. I said "Mary, I know you're upset..."

JOSS: That much was obvious!

ROD: "I know you're upset, and I know you won't believe what I have to tell you, but I have also borrowed a further quarter million to fund my share of a yacht chartering business". You remember, Joss..., I told you about it when we came over. We ended up arguing.

JOSS: Yes, I remember only too well. What did she say after that?

ROD: After I'd tried to explain everything to her, she went hysterical, absolutely berserk! She punched and kicked me, throwing everything at me that she could lay her hands on.

JOSS: What happened then?

ROD: Well, she didn't stop there. She smashed everything in the sitting room that was breakable and ran upstairs to the bedroom. I just stood there wondering what to do next. It was about ten or fifteen minutes later that she came down. She had calmed down a bit and demanded that I explain everything in minute detail.

PEN: Then what?

ROD: Well, she, (*Humbled, remembering that she's dead and becoming upset again*) Mary, that is, listened without saying a word, but just stared at me with hatred in her eyes. I explained that I'd had a visit from that bloody con man demanding I get the money in cash to honour my side of the deal or I'd wave goodbye to my original investment. He gave me seven days to pay up; I had no choice, I had to raise the money. I tried everywhere, anyone I knew who might help. I went to the golf club and approached people there. Between them I raised the money in the week by promising them the earth, lying to them. I knew I couldn't deliver but it didn't matter at the time. I was desperate!

JOSS: Why didn't you come to me? Why didn't you tell me, for god's sake, I'm your brother!

ROD: You wouldn't have loaned it to me! You'd already told me I was an idiot and you were right! (*Breaks down.*)

JOSS: No, I wouldn't have loaned you the money its true, but I would have given you the advice you needed to call in the Police.

The Brother's Wife

ROD: (*angrily*) Advice! Advice! That's all you ever give me. You never saw me with my own ideas, respected the way I wanted to do things. You just wanted to lecture me, to give me your views, your superior views! Everything I have ever wanted to do, everything I have ever thought, was wrong in your eyes.

PEN: (*attempting to calm him down. In a comforting tone*) That's not true Rod, Joss has always tried to help you. He has always worried about you...

ROD: Worried that I was an idiot and would let him down. My stupid brother! That's why we were never invited around, except on our own, because you didn't want your friends to see what an idiot I really am...

PEN: You came to dinner one day when my friend Ginny was there. So, that's not true...

ROD: And she thought I was an idiot. I could tell by the snotty way she spoke to me..., condescending old bag! Her husband was no better. He kept patting me on the shoulder as though I was a pet dog. I could tell they thought I was stupid..., not in their class..., what do they know!?

JOSS: (*raising his voice*) Enough..., enough of this! Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Let's get back to what happened; that's what really matters right now.

PEN: That's a bit harsh, darling.

JOSS: (*ignoring PEN's comment*) So, you raised the money?

ROD: I raised it. Yes, I raised it with lies and deceit. Bullshit heaped upon bullshit and they all ate it. Their greed was sickening. Why they believed the lies I gave them I'll never know, but they did. They all rushed off and cashed in their savings, extended their mortgages. I don't know why, but they did and seven days later...

JOSS: Seven days later?

ROD: Seven days later he came back for the money, but I didn't have it. They hadn't all managed to get it on time. He went crazy and threatened that he'd set some pretty unpleasant blokes on me. I told him I'd raised it, but I hadn't got the money yet. I told him to come back the following day...

JOSS: So, what did you do?

The Brother's Wife

ROD: I contacted everyone and managed to collect all the money from them that afternoon. It was a miracle. A bloody miracle! I went to the pub with a suit case full of money. A quarter of a million to be precise! I got drunk.

JOSS: I can't believe that strangers gave you money, a sizeable amount of money, without something in writing..., a contract, just something tangible.

ROD: They weren't strangers. I knew them all. You see, I'm not such an idiot., I'm an accomplished con man..., perhaps I've missed my vocation!

PEN: And, did the thug return the following day for the money?

ROD: Oh, he did. He did, alright. There were five of them. It was like a scene from an American gangster movie. Two of them came to the door and the others waited in a Mercedes.

JOSS: Then...

ROD: I gave them the suitcase and asked if they wanted to count it. He said he trusted me and I would hear from them the following day.

PEN: And did you?

ROD: What do you think?

JOSS: (*in a disbelieving, condescending way*) Surely you must have realised that the whole thing was a con. You must have known that you would never see 'hide nor hair' of them again...? What puzzles me is that after parting with the first tranche of cash you'd go on to raise the balance without suspecting anything. Did you honestly expect Mary to go along with this half baked idea? She just wasn't the type to speculate, even I knew that and I wasn't married to her. She always needed to know where she stood..., on everything.

ROD: A con, never see hide or hair, half baked idea..., I told you I'm an idiot! Why can't you just accept that!

JOSS: I just don't know what to say...

ROD: (*suddenly the reality of the situation really begins to hit home*) Look I know I'm an idiot and Mary is dead but I didn't kill her, I didn't. Pen, you know that, don't you?

PEN: We know that.

JOSS: Did they kill Mary?

The Brother's Wife

ROD: Who? Do you mean Orza and his gang?

JOSS: Is that his name?

ROD: Ben Orza.

JOSS: Why would they kill her? What would their motive be? After all, you'd given them the cash.

ROD: I don't know. I just don't know.

JOSS: You must do.

ROD: After I handed over the suitcase they vanished into thin air. You see, for some time we had a meeting arranged at a 5* London Hotel with all the other investors – not those I conned from the golf club you understand..., the other legitimate investors they told me about. Of course, stupid me; despite what had happened I went along to the hotel praying that everyone would be there and that their heavy tactics were just how they did business, but of course, none of it was true. I waited for hours but no one turned up. I asked if a room had been booked under the name of 'Ocean Charters' or 'Ben Orza', but it hadn't.

JOSS: You are right; you are a bloody idiot!

ROD: (*realising he is, but defending himself aggressively*) It's all very well for you in your country mansion and with a flat in town, to lecture me..., but why shouldn't I have some of life's luxuries? Why can't I do something right for a change and prove everyone wrong. Prove I'm not one of life's losers. I'm sick to death of having to be compared to you...

PEN: Don't get upset, Rod...

JOSS: Well..., this was not your defining moment, was it? It's not your desire to change your life for the better that I'm critical of, it's the clumsy, half baked way you go about things.

PEN: Joss, have some compassion. Mary's dead, and his life is in ruins...

JOSS: Do you think I don't know that! (*Tempering his mood*) Look, I'm sorry. You have so much on your plate at the moment the last thing you need is me rubbing salt into the wound. We've got to get you a lawyer, but before we do, you must tell me what you have told the Police? Let's start again.

ROD: I told them all about the money, about the con man and his gang, the business venture. I told them that Mary and I argued and that I'd

The Brother's Wife

stormed out. They asked me where I'd been staying and I said I'd visited friends for a few days; that's why I hadn't been home.

JOSS: Who did you stay with? Would they provide an alibi?

ROD: Hardly! I didn't stay with anyone. I just went out and got absolutely plastered. I have no idea where I slept, if indeed I did. I don't know where I went or what I did. That's why I look like this. I don't think they believed me.

PEN: That's hardly a surprise surely?

ROD: I couldn't think of a friend's name to give them. Even if I had they would have checked and found I was lying.

JOSS: (*exasperated again*) And you don't understand why you need a lawyer!

PEN: Joss, please don't get angry. It won't help anything.

ROD: But, Joss, I haven't done anything. I haven't done anything. (*Breaks down.*)

JOSS: I'll get my lawyer to represent you. I'll also find out how long they intend to detain you..., Rod, listen to me. Whatever happens, you must *not* say anything else to the Police unless a lawyer is present. Do you understand?

ROD: (*somewhat reluctantly*) Yes! Yes..., thanks Joss. Please, please sort this out for me (*Breaks down.*)

(*PEN exits to open the door.*)

JOSS: (*goes over to ROD as we hear the door bell ring*) Look, we'll come and see you at the station tomorrow and I'll arrange for my lawyer friend Derek Cooper to represent you.

(*INSP C enters the room followed by PEN.*)

INSP C: I'm sorry, but I'll have to return Mr Taylor to the station.

PEN: (*hugs ROD*) Try and be strong, we'll help you, you know we will. (*ROD gets up forlornly and exits with INSP C. PEN and JOSS follow and close the door behind them.*)

Lights fade

Curtain & Interval

ACT II Scene 1

The curtain opens in a black out back at JOSS and PEN's drawing room. JOSS switches main lights and table lamp on. They both enter together. PEN sits down as JOSS pours drinks then joins her on the sofa. It's late evening.

PEN: I'm so worried.

JOSS: I haven't seen him look that dreadful since his hippy student days when 'soap and water' were two words definitely not in his vocab. In that state of mind he'd confess to anything.

PEN: You were so hard on him Joss. You don't think he did it, do you?

JOSS: You keep asking me the same question. I don't know. I don't think so, but...

PEN: But, what?

JOSS: Look at the facts. He told the Police a pack of lies about where he'd been for the past couple of days, and they must have known it was all fabrication. He'd 'stayed with friends', but couldn't remember who they were. Absolutely stupid! He said he'd argued with Mary over the money and she'd gone into a rage. The neighbours reported that they were always arguing and violently. What do you expect them to think?

PEN: He was confused. Anyone in his position discovering his wife had been murdered would have been stunned; unable to comprehend what was going on. In such circumstances people say very odd things; things they don't necessarily mean. Surely you can see that?

JOSS: It has just occurred to me..., the violence the neighbours referred to wasn't Rod being violent to Mary. I would wager it was the reverse. I think Mary had a wild temper and she would attack Rod. Suddenly it all makes sense...

PEN: In what way does it make sense?

JOSS: She was very much in control of the relationship, wasn't she? He always had to seek her approval to say or do anything. Think back to the times they came here. He was always hesitant about what he said and invariably asked for her opinion, or her approval.

PEN: Just like our relationship then!

JOSS: I don't seek your approval for anything...

The Brother's Wife

PEN: *(with a smug look on her face)* Quite!

JOSS: *(smiles briefly; acknowledging that he had walked into her trap)* seriously..., you can see what I mean? ...now if it was like that, could he have snapped and...

PEN: And what?

JOSS: I don't know. I don't want to speculate. Well, at least he'll have a lawyer now; Derek Cooper is a bloody good one too! I suppose I'll have to pick up the tab as always.

PEN: Will they hold him until they've completed their enquiries?

JOSS: Derek is trying to get him bailed, but I think it's unlikely they will agree. Come what may they will have to charge him, or let him go, soon. They can't hold him indefinitely. It was odd that they brought him here.

PEN: We must give him all the moral support we can.

JOSS: He's going to need a lot more than moral support!

PEN: I know it's insensitive, but do you mind if I invite Ginny over?

JOSS: Ginny!? Why? ...you can't gossip to her about all this...

PEN: I wasn't planning to. She's got her a few of her own problems...

JOSS: What problems?

PEN: So, you want me to gossip about her problems?

JOSS: *(realising once again that he'd fallen into her trap)* Of course not. Not interested..., Pen. I like Ginny, but don't you think we have enough on our plate. Can't you see her another time?

PEN: I know you're wound up, darling, but I've got to take my mind off this, and seeing Ginny is just the therapy I need.

JOSS: *(slightly cross)* Very well. I'll be in the study. Please, please do not tell Ginny about Rod..., at least not until things have settled. I can't imagine you keeping it a secret forever!

PEN: She's very discreet.

JOSS: Ginny, discreet!?

PEN: See you later, Darling. *(JOSS exits and PEN 'phones Ginny)* Ginny, It's me, are you OK? Look, come across if you want I need someone to talk to... OK see you in a minute.

The Brother's Wife

(PEN tidies up the room. JOSS returns to pick up some papers, pours another drink and exits without a word.)

(The doorbell rings.)

(PEN exits to open the door and returns with GINNY. They both sit down on sofa.)

PEN: So, tell me, what did you say to George?

GINNY: Tell me your news and I'll tell you mine!

(GINNY chuckles. PEN remains expressionless.)

PEN: It's no laughing matter, really. I feel awful.

GINNY: I'm not laughing, not really. It just seems one minute life is normal, predictable, boring, then suddenly we both have a crisis to share!

PEN: Crisis is the right word.

GINNY: *(goes very quiet and tearful)* George stormed out and left me.

PEN: Oh, no.

GINNY: You were right, though. I had to bring it to a head. I was just denying the fact and needed someone: a good friend like you to make me see sense! It's hard to believe, even now. George and I have been together for over 30 years. I always trusted him. Why wouldn't I? I say trusted, the fact is the idea of George having an affair just never crossed my mind. I suppose in a way that's what trust is! I would never have thought about broaching the subject of loyalty and fidelity in our conversations. I just assumed we were a pair, an item, for better or worse as they say... More fool me!

PEN: What did you say to him? How did you approach the subject?

GINNY: He was in his study, working. As I opened the door he turned, smiled and said, "Hello darling what can I do for you". I took a deep breath and said "George; and to save you the embarrassment of denying the fact, I have to tell you that some weeks ago, on a Tuesday evening, I followed you to Guildford where I saw you meet a woman with whom you are obviously having an affair. Would you like to tell me about it?" I stood there shaking. I just stared at him. He looked at me for some time without emotion...

PEN: And...

The Brother's Wife

GINNY: He didn't flinch. He just said, "Ginny, I'm sorry. I won't lie to you. I'm still seeing Susan and we're talking about living together. I've been plucking up the courage to tell you". I was frozen to the spot. I just couldn't take it in. One minute I'm in control, having had the guts to confront him; the next minute my worst nightmare..., he confirms what I didn't want to hear: he's leaving me. The least he could have done was beg for my forgiveness...

PEN: Just like that!

GINNY: Just like that. I burst into tears and he tried to comfort me, but I pushed him back into his chair. He just sat there for a moment or two and still without any real emotion, he said, "I'd better pack a bag and go". Within 10 minutes or so, 30 years of marriage just walked out the door!

(GINNY bursts into floods of tears and wailing bringing JOSS back into the room.)

JOSS: What the hell...!

PEN: It's OK, Ginny's upset.

JOSS: I can see that! *(Trying to whisper over the wailing)* What's it about?

PEN: I'll tell you later.

GINNY: *(letting out her anger)* No. No, tell him now, if he doesn't already know.

JOSS: Tell me what?

PEN: George left Ginny.

JOSS: Left her where? What on earth...?

PEN: Not where..., he has left *her*. Left home!

GINNY: He has left me! Ended our marriage! Gone off with another woman or should I say, a girl.

JOSS: George has gone off with...

PEN: Yes.

GINNY: And you knew nothing about it, Joss?

JOSS: Nothing.

GINNY: But you wouldn't have told me even if you had known, would you? Men always stick together.

The Brother's Wife

PEN: I know you're upset, but that's unfair, Ginny.

JOSS: I can assure you I knew absolutely nothing about it. My god, its one surprise after another!

GINNY: He's been having an affair with a girl and now I've confronted him he's gone. I'm sorry, Joss, I didn't mean to be unkind. You've been a good friend to both of us...

JOSS: I'm stunned. I had a beer with him last week, as you know, and there was no mention of anything, anything like this. But, then, why would he tell me? He'd know I'd disapprove.

GINNY: That's sweet, Joss. I really am sorry...

JOSS: No need to apologise. You're upset and it's natural that you'd think I knew, after all George and I have been..., are good friends; and you'd think it would be the kind of thing that one would want to share - get off the chest so to speak...

GINNY: I'm just so confused.

JOSS: If I can help in any way, Ginny, just ask...

GINNY: I will. You are such a sweet man, Joss.

PEN: He is!

JOSS: (*mildly embarrassed*) Its one drama after another.

GINNY: You mean, your brother!

JOSS: (*looks at PEN disapprovingly*) Well, yes. What has Pen told you...?

PEN: Nothing, Darling.

GINNY: Oh, no, nothing, Joss.

JOSS: (*said in a friendly manner*) Don't worry! I know what you two are like; I couldn't conceive that our challenges would remain secret for long. I think we ought to bring Ginny up to speed, don't you? (*Looks at PEN.*) I'm quite hungry...

PEN: Shall I make some sandwiches for us all. You could manage a sandwich, couldn't you, Ginny?

GINNY: Actually I haven't eaten much recently. I could, if you don't mind. Can I help, Pen? (*PEN and GINNY exit to kitchen.*)

JOSS: I'll make some drinks.

The Brother's Wife

(JOSS goes to make the drinks when the phone rings.)

Hello, Joss Taylor... Yes, hello Derek. Thanks again for picking up the case at short notice. Have you seen my brother? I see. Do you expect them to charge him? What's supposed to happen next? Bail! That's absolutely marvellous! I wondered if they would bail him after all the nonsense he told them..., right, I see..., no, I understand that he's still the prime suspect.... What, here?

(Having heard the 'phone ring, PEN enters the room to listen.)

Well, yes, of course we can accommodate him... Conditions!? ...Yes, I see. Can you? This evening, OK, I'll let Pen know..., of course. OK. Cherio.

PEN: They've let Rod out on bail and he's staying here?

JOSS: Yes. Derek is bringing him round. You don't mind do you?

PEN: Of course not. It's the least we can do.

JOSS: The good news is that the court is not demanding a cash surety, but they are insisting that he remains here under supervision 24 hours a day. Are you sure that's OK with you?

PEN: Of course. Even if it wasn't, what option do we have? I'd better make up the guest room. *(PEN exits and is heard speaking off-stage to GINNY.)* Ginny, can you finish the sandwiches and take them through; I'll be just two ticks.

(JOSS finishes pouring the drinks as GINNY enters with the sandwiches.)

JOSS: I don't know how much you know, but my brother has been granted bail.

GINNY: Really, I don't know anything, Joss. Pen just mentioned that you went to the Police station after you called your brother's home a few days ago and spoke to a Policeman.

JOSS: Yes. A good deal has happened since. Anyway, my solicitor is bringing him around soon.

GINNY: I'd better get out of your way.

JOSS: No, you are fine. Finish your sandwiches and the drink I've made you. *(Hands her the drink.)*

GINNY: So what's happened, Joss..., if I'm not prying?

The Brother's Wife

JOSS: It's a long story, but my brother's wife Mary..., you know, you have met them...?

GINNY: Yes, I remember.

JOSS: Well, she's been murdered, and because of the circumstances leading up to her death, my brother is their main suspect.

GINNY: That's awful. I am so sorry, Joss... Makes my problems seem trivial.

JOSS: Not at all. I still can't believe George would do such a thing.

GINNY: How is your brother coping?

JOSS: Not so good. We'll find out the latest when he arrives. We've agreed to house him 24 hours a day until they release him or take him back into custody.

GINNY: Golly!

(PEN enters the sitting room.)

PEN: *(To Ginny)* Has Joss told you?

GINNY: Tragic. Just awful!

PEN: Let's eat the sandwiches before they arrive; I can get Rod something later if he wants to eat.

GINNY: *(rushing her sandwich)* I'd better go.

PEN: No, don't rush, they...

(The doorbell rings.)

JOSS: *(goes to the front door and he's heard off-stage)* Gosh, that was quick. Hello Derek..., Inspector..., where's Rod?

(The three of them – DEREK COOPER - a distinguished middle-aged man and JOSS's lawyer, INSPECTOR COLLMAN and JOSS enter the room.)

INSP C: Mrs Taylor..., Madame... *(Seeing GINNY in the room.)*

DEREK: Hello, Penny.

PEN: Hello, Derek. Isn't Rod with you?

INSP C: He's in the car with a Constable. Before we can release him to your charge you need to sign some papers.

JOSS: Of course. Sorry. This is a friend and neighbour of ours, Ginny Galgut.

The Brother's Wife

GINNY: Look, I think I ought to be going...

INSP C: Whilst you're here, Mrs Galgut, perhaps you could be an independent witness for Mr and Mrs Taylor's signatures. (*Turning to JOSS*) Is that alright sir?

JOSS: Of course, assuming you are Ginny?

GINNY: Of course.

INSP C: Mr. Taylor, I have to say formally, in the presence of your brother's lawyer, that your brother's bail conditions insist that he resides with you 24 hours a day and must not leave the premises for any reason without our consent until we have completed our investigations. At that time he will either be released or be taken back into custody. Should the bail conditions be breached in any way he will automatically be taken back into custody, and as a result you will be liable to the courts and could face a custodial sentence. Do you understand Mr Taylor?

JOSS: I think so... Are you happy that I sign, Derek?

DEREK: (*points out the points in the document*) The body of the document conforms to Home Office standard bail conditions, but before signing you should be satisfied that the restrictive covenants that apply to your brother are clearly understood. I have made the conditions of bail clear to your brother.

JOSS: (*reads the appropriate passages himself*) Fine. (*He signs the document and GINNY signs as a witness as does DEREK.*)

GINNY: Right. I'm off. See you later, Pen.

JOSS: Thanks, Ginny.

PEN: I'll see you out. (*They exit together.*)

INSP C: I shall accompany your brother from the car. (*He exits behind them.*)

DEREK: Joss, I think you should know that your brother is understandably still in shock. He's been displaying a certain amount of erratic behaviour. I'm confident he'll begin to relax now he's here, but I would recommend that you arrange for a doctor to visit him in the next day or so.

JOSS: O.K., I will..., so, what do you think Derek? Do the Police think he did it? Do *you* think he did it?

The Brother's Wife

DEREK: Joss, we're friends, but despite that I can't speculate...

JOSS: No, I understand, it was unfair of me to ask...

DEREK: No, not at all. All I can say is that the Police really don't have any other suspects at the present time, so Rod will remain top of their list. I've questioned him and off the record I doubt very much if he was responsible for the murder. But that's off the record.

JOSS: Well, thanks for that.

(INSP C and ROD enter the sitting room with PEN following on behind.)

ROD: *(looking fragile. Controlling his emotions in front of the INSPECTOR)* Hello, Joss, Pen.

INSP C: Good night, Mrs Taylor. Mr Taylor. We'll be in touch. *(He nods at ROD and DEREK and exits.)*

DEREK: *(addressing ROD)* I'm sure you'll feel more at home here than at the Police station.

ROD: *(in a melancholy, dreamy way)* Yes, I shall..., Yes.

DEREK: I'll call you tomorrow. Forgive me, but I must remind you again of the bail conditions. You must not leave this house under any circumstances. If there should be an emergency you must call the Police station and inform them. You have their number. Call me if you need me.

JOSS: Thanks Derek. Thanks for all you've done.

DEREK: I haven't done much, yet. Let's see how things unfold from here.

ROD: Yes..., thanks! Thanks.

(DEREK exits and ROD slumps on the sofa. PEN sits next to him.)

PEN: How are you feeling Rod? Are you OK?

ROD: *(becoming emotional in her arms)* They still believe I did it! They think I killed her.

PEN: Look, you're here now, you can relax. Try not to think about it. I'm sure it will be sorted out. I'm just going to prepare your room. I'll be back in a minute. *(Exits.)*

JOSS: Do want to rest Rod? Or would you rather talk?

ROD: I can't sleep, I can't relax; I can't do anything. Look..., I'm sorry...

JOSS: I understand. You will need time to adjust. There's no rush.

The Brother's Wife

ROD: (*has a dig at JOSS*) Do you know this is the first time I've heard you be genuinely 'nice' to me. You sounded almost sincere.

JOSS: I'm trying to help you. Whatever you may think of me, I'm trying to help you, and making snide comments like that won't exactly enamour you to me, or indeed Pen, if she heard you.

ROD: But, tell me, Joss, why have you never wanted anything to do with me? When we were growing up you ignored or bullied me...

JOSS: Kids, brothers do that. They don't get on. Do you think our family, you and I were unique? It's a part of growing up.

ROD: I know, I know, but we are grown up and nothing has changed.

JOSS: What do you mean?

ROD: You treat me the same way now as you did then.

JOSS: That's ridiculous.

ROD: You do. Perhaps you don't realise it, but you do. After you left home and went to University I never saw you and when you did return during the holidays you just ignored me, worst still you went on and on about me being a loser.

JOSS: We were young, brothers do that.

ROD: As I said, we're not kids anymore, but you still treat me that way. You don't call me a loser to my face, but your attitude and facial expressions when you are around me haven't changed one bit.

JOSS: (*feeling uncomfortable, knowing there is more than a grain of truth in what he's saying*) Look, I'm sorry if you feel that way, but relationships are two sided.

ROD: So what did I do to upset you? Why are you still uncomfortable around me?

JOSS: Look, I can't see the point of talking about childhood feuds. I think you'd agree that we have more important things to focus our minds on. Let's get you through this ordeal as swiftly as we can and despite Mary's death, as tragic as that is, you may be able to start life afresh, perhaps move away...

ROD: You'd like that, me moving away...

JOSS: Rod, look, can we have a truce? Pen and I have given you a refuge to help. I've got you a lawyer, a damn good lawyer, at my cost, and we are

The Brother's Wife

doing all we can to support you; the least you can do is show some civility, be a little grateful...

ROD: But, can't you see what I mean? Just listen to what you have just said...,"given me a refuge"; "got me a lawyer, at your cost"; "be a little grateful"...

JOSS: (*getting cross*) O.K., Have it your bloody way! Just don't expect me to bail you out..., that's bloody funny..., bail you out! That's precisely what I have done, bail you out!

ROD: (*realising he's gone too far*) Joss! Joss! I'm sorry. Look, I know I'm an idiot, I'm sorry of course I'm grateful...

JOSS: So you should be. You have a choice. You can either: keep your head down and show some gratitude for what we are doing for you, or you can go back to a bloody cell and wait there to discover your fate.

ROD: O.K., O.K., I will. I'll try and pull myself together.

JOSS: (*calming down*) Right. Now do you want to tell me what happened after we left you in the cell?

ROD: It's really vague now. They just said they were detaining me on suspicion ..., on suspicion of murdering Mary... I still have difficulty linking those two words. I think they were planning to hold me for as long as they could as they gathered evidence.

JOSS: What did Derek say to you?

ROD: He was really good. He took control the moment he arrived. He insisted they gave us tea and time alone...

JOSS: He's the best, a good friend.

ROD: He listened to what I knew..., you know, everything I told you. He seemed to believe me; at least I think he did.

JOSS: I'm sure he did. So you told him about the lies you told the Police about where you stayed, the money, the business, etc?

ROD: Yes! All that! Everything I told you. Then the Inspector wanted to conduct an official interview on tape, which we did.

JOSS: And did you lie about where you were that night or did you tell them you just couldn't remember?

ROD: Derek told me to tell them the truth, which I did. Then the interview ended and when Derek and I were alone again talking he said he would

The Brother's Wife

apply for bail, but didn't expect it to be granted. Apparently, they rarely offer bail on murder cases..., but they did and here I am.

(PEN returns.)

PEN: Can I get you anything, Rod?

ROD: No. I'm fine thanks: and thanks, Pen, for..., well for putting me up...

PEN: Don't be silly, it's the least we could do, after all, you're family.

JOSS: *(Feeling a little uncomfortable after the earlier discussion with Rod)* Look, Darling, I'm feeling a little hungry. I'm going to make a sandwich or something. Are you sure you won't have anything, Rod?

ROD: Well..., maybe a sandwich and some tea?

JOSS: Pen?

PEN: No, not for me.

(JOSS exits.)

ROD: *(in a relaxed sincere tone)* I really didn't do it, Pen. I want you to know that. I didn't kill Mary.

PEN: We know that. You don't have to keep telling us. We know you didn't. But, what puzzles me is, who did? I don't want to put you through it all again after all you've been through enough...

ROD: I don't mind telling you anything you want to know, but the question everyone wants answering, including me, is who killed Mary?

PEN: The whole ordeal is..., well, unreal. You hear about these things happening to other people, but not in your own family. *(Trying to find a tactful way of broaching the subject)* One thing that I find extremely hard to believe, as much as the thought of you killing Mary, is the fact that you had a violent marriage, at least that's what we're told by the Police. That's not true, is it?

ROD: *(feeling uncomfortable)* No..., not exactly. I mean we argued; I'm sure you and Joss argue...

PEN: We do, but not often. It's all over in no time and we don't dwell upon our differences; we just get on with what we are doing.

ROD: Well, it wasn't quite like that with us, I have to admit. We did argue and more often than not about ridiculous things that we couldn't do anything about...

The Brother's Wife

PEN: Like what?

ROD: I don't know. Silly things... Why I wasn't a successful businessman like Joss. Why we didn't have regular exotic holidays...

PEN: So, presumably it was Mary who wanted these things?

ROD: Of course! I'm not bothered about money, about where we live, whether we have holidays or not. Not bothered about nice cars and those sorts of things; just not interested.

PEN: But, that's odd..., not that I disbelieve you, but I recall whenever you came to the house you and Joss invariably argued, and it was usually centred around the fact that you didn't have the lifestyle that we have..., sorry I don't mean...

ROD: No, that's OK. But, don't you see it wasn't me doing the talking, it was me doing the talking for Mary. If I'm honest, she resented what you have. She saw me as a failure and often said she wished she had met Joss first; then she could be living the life of luxury.

PEN: Golly! Not exactly the life of luxury...

ROD: It is, by our standards.

PEN: I just never knew... I just never knew that Mary harboured those thoughts and feelings. She must have detested me?

ROD: She was a complicated woman. Even if she had married Joss she wouldn't have been happy, she's not the type.

PEN: Forgive me for asking, but why did you stay with her if you were both so different?

ROD: (*emotionally*) because I loved her! I did everything I could to make her happy. I joined the golf club to make her happy, to give her something to talk about to her friends. I hate golf; was never any good at it, but to please Mary I went twice a week. Of course, I started to drink in the bar and sometimes got home late and she would then go mad... I used to argue with Joss because she primed me to do so. Of course, the biggest mistake was to get involved with Ben Orza in the yacht chartering business. I did that as a last ditch attempt to make some real money, in the hope that Mary would be proud of me and we could live the lifestyle that she wanted. Of course, I'm useless at business and look where all that led to!

PEN: I had no idea, no idea at all.

The Brother's Wife

ROD: It wasn't her fault. As you know she came from a fairly privileged background. Her parents weren't rich by any means, but like you and Joss, they didn't want for anything. Then she met me and the rest is history. Of course, in those days I was quite rebellious and she liked that. As the years past she resented the fact that I wasn't able to make enough money to live comfortably, we struggled most of the time. Her parents loathed me from day one and wanted nothing to do with us. When her parents died a few years ago they left everything to Mary's brother. She got nothing and she blamed me for that. She tried desperately over the years to get back in their good books, even if it was only to get her rightful inheritance one day, but they just shunned her because of me.

PEN: If I'm honest, Joss and I wondered why you didn't talk about Mary's parents and made no mention of Mary benefiting from their estate?

ROD: Well, there you are. Now you can see why she hated me; why she blamed me for everything that happened, or more appropriately, didn't happen to her.

PEN: But if she felt that way, why did she stay with you? Why didn't you divorce?

ROD: I wouldn't let her. I loved her. I told her I would kill her if she left me. *(Realising the significance of his statement)* Of course I didn't mean it, I didn't mean it. Ironically, I always knew I wouldn't be able to survive without her.

(JOSS returns with a tray of sandwiches and tea.)

JOSS: *(makes room for and places tray on coffee table. There is a brief silence.)* You've both gone quiet...

PEN: No..., we were just talking about Mary, that's all.

JOSS: I see. I think we should leave any more talk about the situation until tomorrow.

ROD: *(not having eaten a sandwich or drunk his tea)* Sorry, but I'm all in. I think I'll go up, if that's O.K?

PEN: Of course. You know which room you are in.

ROD: Thanks, Pen. Goodnight.

JOSS/PENN: Goodnight.

(ROD exits.)

The Brother's Wife

PEN: Do you think he'll be OK?

JOSS: He'll be fine. A good night's sleep will do him good.

PEN: He told me some interesting things about Mary!

JOSS: Like what? (*JOSS sits on recliner and eats sandwiches and drinks tea.*)

PEN: She detested us..., well me at least.

JOSS: Detested? That's a strong word.

PEN: It's true. She and Rod argued a lot because she was envious of our lifestyle...

JOSS: Rod is envious of our lifestyle!

PEN: No. That's the point. Rod has never been bothered about such things it was Mary who put him up to the rows with you and the impression he gave about being jealous. Apparently, and you'll love this..., she wished that she'd met you before we met so that she could be living the lifestyle we have...

JOSS: Met me?

PEN: Yes, it would seem she carried a flame for you for all those years and blamed Rod for the standard of living they had.

JOSS: How bizarre. No wonder why he always wanted to pick a fight with me.

PEN: It's all very sad. He said he would have done anything for Mary. He even said that he wouldn't let her leave him and threatened to kill her if she did.

JOSS: Kill her? My god!

PEN: That's what he said, but I know; I just know, he didn't.

JOSS: The more I hear the more absurd this whole business is.

PEN: I know this sounds morbid, but with Rod being here who will deal with Mary's funeral arrangements?

JOSS: The thought hadn't crossed my mind. I suppose after the post-mortem there will be an inevitable delay in arranging a funeral. I would imagine they have a process in such circumstances. I can't imagine Mary's mother having the savvy at her age to deal with it. I'll make enquiries tomorrow.

The Brother's Wife

PEN: That's another thing. We call her mother, 'mother', but as we know she's really Mary's elderly aunt. Her real mother virtually cast Mary out when she got involved with Rod and when she died a few months after her father died she left everything to Mary's brother. They got absolutely nothing from the estate.

JOSS: That's interesting. I often wondered if they inherited anything; if they had they certainly didn't talk about it.

(The doorbell rings.)

PEN: I wonder who that can be, at this time?

JOSS: Oh, it's probably Susie. I asked her to pop around with some papers for me.

PEN: *(goes to the door and is heard greeting SUSIE)* Hello, Susie. I haven't seen you for a while. Are you keeping well?

SUSIE: *(JOSS's personal assistant. She is in her mid/late 20's, very attractive with a vivacious personality. She is dressed very smartly and looks gorgeous.)* Yes, thanks, it's been ages, I know. *(Enters the room.)*

PEN: Can I make you some tea?

SUSIE: Yes, thanks, I'd love some.

JOSS: I'll have some more, too.

SUSIE: *(responding almost without thinking)* Joss, you always take coffee at this time!

PEN: Yes. Silly me! Never known you to have tea at this time, Darling! Of course, you see more of my husband than I do these days...

SUSIE: Sorry. I just meant...

PEN: Don't be silly. I was just kidding. I know what a fusspot he is. I bet he has you jumping at his beck and call. He's a demanding, if not impossible, man at times; believe me I know!

SUSIE: He's certainly that..., but don't tell him I said so! *(SUSIE and PEN chuckle but JOSS looks uncomfortable.)* Good evening, Mr Taylor!

JOSS: Hi, Susie! Thanks for coming.

(PEN exits and closes the door.)

SUSIE: *(lowering her voice)* Did you just hear what I said to her? I sounded like your mistress!

The Brother's Wife

JOSS: *(also lowering his voice)* So long as you just sounded! *(He moves closer to her, she puts the file down, they embrace and kiss. They are lovers.)* Thanks for coming. I know its insensitive asking you to come to the house but there are a number of important things I want you to do over the next few days. I may be out for the rest of the week.

SUSIE: *(her manner is sexy and provocative)* And I thought you were just desperate to see me!

JOSS: *(responds in an affectionate way, but is nervous about PEN being in the kitchen. He also wants to talk business.)* Of course that too! You just wouldn't believe what's been happening over the past couple of days *(SUSIE attempts to kiss him again, but JOSS pushes her back gently)* I wasn't able to tell you before, but my brother Rod has been arrested for murdering his wife. He's been bailed on the basis that he remains here with us without leaving the house.

SUSIE: My god! Your brother has murdered his wife!?

JOSS: No. No. He hasn't murdered her, but the Police think he has.

SUSIE: No wonder you sounded distant on the phone. *(In a mocking and disparaging tone)* I just assumed that 'you two' had been arguing again!

JOSS: *(feels uncomfortable about this remark having lied about his relationship with PEN)* No. Not at all, the whole thing is ridiculous. Mary's certainly dead, but I'm convinced Rod didn't do it. The Police are working on the premise that he's their prime suspect until, and if, further evidence comes forward.

PEN: *(enters the room carrying the drinks, which she puts on the table)* There we are. What were you saying Joss?

JOSS: *(Slightly hesitantly not quite knowing what she is referring to)* I..., I was just telling Susie, albeit briefly, about the drama of the past few days.

SUSIE: You must be quite upset, Penny.

PEN: Horrified, would be more appropriate! It's not every day that someone you know, someone in the family is found dead, let alone murdered! It's been such a shock, and now we have the responsibility of looking after Rod. Do you take milk, Susie? *(Pours the tea.)*

SUSIE: Yes, please, but no sugar thanks; I'm watching my weight!

The Brother's Wife

PEN: Ridiculous! Watching your weight! You have a gorgeous figure, doesn't she, Joss?

JOSS: (*really uncomfortable*) ...yes, of course she has.

PEN: Men are hopeless at noticing such things. Take my advice, don't waste your time worrying about taking sugar in your tea; if you're going to put weight on you would have done so by now.

SUSIE: I like to look nice.

PEN: I'm sure you do. How's the man in your life?

(*Both SUSIE and JOSS look at each other incredulously, not knowing what to say.*)

SUSIE: He's terrific. I just love him to bits.

PEN: That's wonderful. You must bring him round sometime. I'd love to meet him. I bet he's handsome?

SUSIE: (*glancing at JOSS*) I think so!

PEN: So, how are things at the office?

SUSIE: Oh, fine.

(*The phone rings. PEN takes the call.*)

PEN: Hello, Penelope Taylor. ...oh, hello, Ginny, how are you? Look, let me transfer this to the study so we can talk. (*She covers the mouthpiece.*) Joss, I'll take it in the study and let you two get on. Can you put the receiver down for me? Won't be a minute, Ginny! (*JOSS takes the phone, PEN exits, closes the door and he waits until PEN picks up then replaces the handset.*)

JOSS: God, I find it so difficult to lie! The stress is immense even when the conversation is so obviously innocent.

SUSIE: I couldn't believe what I was hearing; it was farcical. When she said "How is the man in your life" I didn't know whether to say, "Ask him yourself, he's standing next to you", or just laugh! She clearly doesn't suspect anything! (*Changing tone*) Clearly you haven't told her about us?

JOSS: It's not that...

SUSIE: Easy? ...look, Joss, I know you said you would need to find the right time to tell her, but this has been going on for five months now. When are you...?

The Brother's Wife

JOSS: (*irritated*) For god's sake, this is neither the time nor the place to be having this conversation.

SUSIE: Why? All three of us are here...

JOSS: And my brother who is on bail after allegedly killing his wife is upstairs. Perfect timing I'd say!

SUSIE: (*trying to win him round she puts her arms around him*) Well not ideal I admit, but you can see why I am so frustrated. So, when will you tell her?

JOSS: I don't know..., I just don't know. It's not that simple. I can hardly turn round and say, "Pen it's all over, I'm going to live with Susie"!

SUSIE: (*sarcastically*) I realise that. I'm not an idiot! But, it doesn't take... what? Five months to find the right time, the right words, does it?

JOSS: (*getting agitated*) You have no idea do you? No idea at all! Do you think I've spent the past 20 years or so building a business and a comfortable lifestyle to throw it all away in a clumsy announcement to my wife that I'm having an affair with my secretary?

SUSIE: (*continuing the sarcasm*) I thought I was your *personal assistant!* I'm sorry, Joss, but I gave up a long-term relationship at your insistence because you couldn't bear the thought of me seeing someone else. You told me over and over how much you loved me and wanted to spend the rest of your life with me. All I have to show in exchange for changing my life to suit you is a few snatched grapes in the office, when it suits you, the occasional dinner followed by sex at my flat and the very, very rare weekend together when you pluck up the courage to make an excuse to your precious Penelope.

JOSS: I had no idea this was festering! I credited you with more intelligence, more sensitivity!

SUSIE: Don't patronise me Joss, just don't patronise me!

JOSS: (*Realising that he is on dangerous ground and cannot afford a scene*) I'm sorry darling, really sorry! (*They embrace.*) I've been insensitive, but can we discuss this later?

SUSIE: Yes, I can see you find it uncomfortable knowing that Penny could return any moment. You've really revealed your true colours Joss...

JOSS: Look. It's not how it seems...

The Brother's Wife

SUSIE: Oh, believe me, it is!

JOSS: You have to understand that leaving Pen after all these years would be the most difficult thing I could ever be expected to do.

SUSIE: That's plain to see, and dare I say, precisely my point. You went to great lengths to encourage me to give up my relationship with Peter. I loved him and he was devastated when I ended it. You said then that you would leave Penny and not at some point in the far distant future. But, all along you just wanted me to yourself and had no intention of leaving her.

JOSS: That's not true. I do love you and I do want to be with you, but can't you understand what you are asking me to do.?

SUSIE: No more than you said you would do. No more than I did for you.

PEN: (*enters.*) I'm sorry. Ginny has got 'man problems' and is distraught. I know it's late, but I said I would go across to her house for a while. Is that OK Joss?

JOSS: Of course, that's fine.

PEN: Can I get either of you anything? Have you been busy?

SUSIE: Yes, we've been trying to sort out a few problems that have been lingering around for some months.

PEN: Well, I'm sure you'll sort them out. I see you as a pretty determined young lady, Susie. Someone who gets what she wants. (*Exits.*)

SUSIE: You see, even your wife thinks I should get what I want... and I want you! (*She grabs him and they embrace passionately. He takes her over to the sofa and starts to undress her, increasingly the passion gains momentum.*)

Lights fade

Curtain

ACT II Scene 2

As the curtain opens the lights are dimmed. JOSS and SUSIE look shattered and are in the latter stages of getting dressed. Susie's anxieties have been temporarily relieved.

SUSIE: I love you so much Joss. Times like this that I can't bear the thought of us not being together. It's so awful that we have to get dressed and not spend the night together.

JOSS: We will, one day, things will be different; trust me. There's nothing more that I want. You must let me deal with this in my way, in a sensitive way. I just can't walk out on Pen without compromising our future. *(Gets up and switches dimmer up.)*

SUSIE: What do you mean?

JOSS: *(returns to join her)* If I just walked out I'd lose everything..., well not everything, but a lot more than I need to.

SUSIE: I'm not bothered about money and assets. I just want to be with you.

JOSS: That's very romantic, but not very practical. Look; just trust me.

SUSIE: I do trust you, but I can't wait forever..., how long do you think it will take?

JOSS: Look, darling this is the kind of pressure I'm referring to. I can't say how long...

SUSIE: *(sensing she has pushed her point far enough)* Sorry, Joss. I'm so insensitive; you must be so worried about your brother, and all I can do is go on and on about us! What will happen to him?

JOSS: *(relieved the pressure is off)* I really don't know. Stupidly, he told a pack of lies to the Police which made him the prime suspect. Instead of being truthful, he got embroiled in a web of deceit that will backfire on him, it always does! *(Astounded at his own insensitivity)* I can hardly believe what I've just said! Look at me! I'm lecturing about my brother's morals and as soon as my wife leaves the house I'm having sex with another woman...

SUSIE: *(once again realising his true colours)* That is so coarse! 'Sex with another woman'? I thought we loved each other? This is precisely what I mean, Joss. Your words and deeds are of a man riddled with contradiction and guilt who has no intention of leaving his wife; but wants

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an affair with a younger woman on the side to boost his middle aged ego... Well it's not for me, Joss! You either...!

JOSS: *(realising whatever he says he's in trouble; he goes on the offensive)* For god's sake, not again! Can't you see the pressure I'm under? Isn't it reasonable that I should question my own morals at a time when my sister-in-law's been murdered, my brother is the accused; my wife is being ultra supportive whilst you and I are content to fornicate on the family sofa...

(They hear the front door. PEN has returned. They hurry to finish dressing.)

JOSS: Quick, that's Pen!

SUSIE: Impeccable timing! So, we have to act as though nothing has happened do we?

(JOSS hurriedly checks in the mirror that he looks half decent and begins to puff up the sofa cushions. SUSIE just stands cool, calm and collected as PEN enters.)

PEN: *(shows signs of surprise that SUSIE is still there)* Oh..., you're still here Susie?

SUSIE: Afraid so, we got entangled.

PEN: *(not seeing the significance of SUSIE's provocative statement)* Ginny is really low, Joss. It's difficult to know what to say or do to support her. I found it hard to concentrate. All I could think about was Rod and poor Mary *(Realising that she may be letting something out of the bag)* Sorry, have I said something...?

JOSS: No. I've told Susie about Rod and Mary.

PEN: So, have you finished your work?

JOSS: Just about. *(Turning to Susie)* Thanks for coming over. I'll call you tomorrow to wrap up those last few points we were discussing.

SUSIE: Yes, I think we should resolve them as soon as possible or there may well be repercussions. *(She stares at him.)*

JOSS: Err..., yes, quite. Thanks again for coming.

SUSIE: It's been a pleasure, Joss. I'd be happy to come any time you want me to! *(She winks at him)* Bye, Penny.

PEN: Bye Susie. See you and your boyfriend soon, I hope!

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(JOSS and SUSIE exit. Off stage they say goodbye and the door closes. JOSS returns.)

PEN: She's a nice girl. Seems very keen?

JOSS: *(misunderstanding her sentiment)* I don't think so!

PEN: Is that because she doesn't always agree with you? She a strong character; just what you need!

JOSS: *(now realising what she meant)* No. No, I agree. She's very good. Look, you must be shattered, darling. Why don't you go to bed; I'll finish up down here and I'll join you. *(Gently kisses her on the cheek. PEN exits.)*

PEN: Night, darling. Don't be too long.

JOSS: I won't.

(Shakes his head in almost disbelief at what's transpired during the evening. He looks around the room, tidies up the sofa and sits down and reflects in silence. After a short while he reaches over for his brief case, takes out a file, which he begins to thumb through.)

(The 'phone rings.)

(He rushes to the 'phone expecting it to be Susie, and he's right.)

JOSS: Susie. Are you on the mobile? I know we didn't, but..., no, I agree, yes, but, can we discuss this tomorrow? I'll ring you first thing... Look, it's impossible you know it is..., please let's speak tomorrow. *(She obviously slams the 'phone down and he says to himself)* My god what am I doing! What have I got myself into!

(The doorbell rings.)

Bloody hell, what next! *(JOSS exits and rushes to the door not wanting to disturb PEN, fearing that SUSIE has returned for a row, but instead it's INSPECTOR COLLMAN.)* Inspector Collman..., what can I do for you at this time?

(They both enter the sitting room accompanied by POLICEWOMAN, EDY. She is in her late 20's 30's and is in uniform.)

INSP C: I'm sorry it's so late sir, but I'm keen to ask you and Mrs Taylor a few questions based on some new evidence that's come to light.

JOSS: *(irritated and mildly exasperated)* Couldn't it wait until the morning Inspector?

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INSP C: No, I'm afraid not. (*He pauses expecting Joss to go off to get PEN.*)

JOSS: So, what's it all about then?

INSP C: We have conducted a thorough search of your brother's house and believe we have found a cord that was almost certainly responsible for strangling Mrs Taylor. It was partly concealed in the back of a draw...

JOSS: So, you want to question my brother; can't it wait until tomorrow? He's been through quite an ordeal you know and he's asleep at the moment...

INSP C: (*interrupting his flow*) No! I don't want to question your brother over this – at least not at the moment - but I do want to speak to Mrs Taylor...

JOSS: (*showing great irritation*) But, she's dead inspector; she's dead!

INSP C: Your wife, Sir. Mrs Taylor, your wife! She's still alive, I hope?

JOSS: (*incredulously*) My wife? You want to question her? Why would you want to question her? If it's a progress report I really think it can wait.

INSP C: (*patiently and deliberately*) Let me repeat Sir, we've found evidence that suggests we should speak to Mrs Penelope Taylor. Would you be kind enough to ask her if she would be good enough to join us?

JOSS: Forgive me Inspector, but she knows less than I do about this whole unfortunate affair...

INSP C: That may very well be the case, but to enable me to eliminate her from our investigation I do need to have a few words with her, in private.

JOSS: (*stunned by what he's heard*) Eliminate her? My wife! Forgive me Inspector, I'm totally confused. What has my wife got to do with this investigation?

INSP C: That's precisely what I need to find out, Sir, Would you get her for me?

JOSS: She's in bed, but OK, I'll get her! This is absolutely ridiculous!

(*JOSS storms out to wake PEN. INSP C and PW EDY just look around the room until JOSS returns.*)

JOSS: She's on her way down. I hope you can justify this Inspector. What's going on, can you tell me?

INSP C: All in good time, sir.

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(PEN enters in her dressing gown.)

PEN: Hello, Inspector, do sit down. *(Notices PW EDY and looks quite worried.)* I see you've come in force.

INSP C: *(sits on the sofa with PW EDY)* May I speak to Mrs Taylor alone, sir.

JOSS: Alone? Why alone? Very well, I shall be in my study. Is that OK with you, Darling? If it's not I'd be happy to stay... *(PEN nods and JOSS exits.)*

INSP C: This is my colleague Constable Edy. I'm sorry to trouble you at this late hour, but I need to ask you a number of questions.

PEN: About what?

INSP C: Concerning your sister-in-law's murder. May I ask you what kind of relationship you had with the deceased?

PEN: Relationship? We got on reasonably well..., why?

INSP C: Forgive me, but I think we would be able to get through this a lot quicker if I asked the questions and you just answered them.

PEN: Golly... *(Feeling the pressure and quite nervous)* Very well; I wouldn't say we were close, but on the occasions we met we always managed to find things to talk about. Joss and Rod as brothers were never that close you see, so I suppose there was never a real opportunity to get to know her that well. We didn't see much of them.

INSP C: And what sort of relationship did your husband have with her?

PEN: Joss? He was ambivalent toward her. I know that sounds awful..., but well, they were friendly enough, not too dissimilar to my relationship with her. Inspector, why are you asking me these questions?

INSP C: Did you ever suspect that your husband was having an affair with the deceased?

PEN: *(sounding surprised but mildly amused by the question)* An affair? Joss and Mary..., hardly!

INSP C: Can you explain why we found a number of letters at the home of the deceased apparently from you, warning Mrs Taylor that unless she stopped seeing your husband you'd kill her!

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PEN: *(visibly shocked and astounded. She pauses before responding)*
From me? From me, about Joss! No, I think you've made a mistake, Inspector.

INSP C: The letters are very frank and to the point. They refer to your husband's affair and are signed, Penelope.

PEN: I just don't know what to say. Can I see them?

INSP C: I can show you copies. The originals are with forensics at the present time. *(Hands a few letters to her.)*

PEN: *(thumbs through anxiously stopping to read sentences aloud)*
'You're a bitch, how could you possibly treat me like this. Please leave my husband alone'. ...'I have seen you together, please don't deny it. How do you think I feel seeing you and Joss together like this'... Inspector, I just don't know what to say, but I certainly have no knowledge of them. I certainly didn't write them albeit I can see they have been typed on our personal home stationery. I'm not the author... I admit my name has been used signing off each letter, but as you can see the name is typed, not signed by hand. Anyone could have done that..., but why?

INSP C: So, you deny any knowledge of the letters.

PEN: *(very much in control)* emphatically! I cannot begin to tell you how absurd this is. Of course, they are not from me. Can we tell Joss what's happened?

INSP C: Yes. I think he should join us.

(PEN goes to the door and calls JOSS. JOSS returns. He's still annoyed and sits on the edge of the chair.)

JOSS: So, what's all this about?

INSP C: Mr Taylor, let me get straight to the point. Were you, or have you ever had an affair with your brother's deceased wife Mary?

JOSS: *(pauses and looks at the INSPECTOR and PEN with a look of incredulity on his face. This turns to playfulness)* Yes, of course I have. We were passionate about each other. *(For a split second both the INSPECTOR and PEN look amazed)* For god's sake, this is farcical! Where did this totally absurd notion come from?

INSP C: From letters we found at your brother's house. *(Hands the copied letters to JOSS)* The letters suggest, as you will see, that the author – your

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wife – was bitterly complaining about the relationship you were having with Mrs Mary Taylor, and that she threatened to kill her.

JOSS: *(unlike PEN he reads to himself several paragraphs from one letter and then another before commenting)* Let me be clear. You found these letters at Rod's house... Pen, ridiculous as this may seem, you didn't type them did you?

PEN: *(amazed he should even have to ask the question)* Joss, are you serious? I can't believe you are asking me that question! *(Turning on him)* Why, had you, were you having an affair with Mary?

JOSS: Bizarre! Pen, I'm sorry but all this is..., well, it's unbelievable. Inspector, it must be clear to you from our reactions that we know absolutely nothing about the letters, or the supposed affair.

INSP C: It's not for me to decided guilt or innocence sir. So, you are denying an affair with Mary Taylor?

JOSS: Of course I deny it. *(Thinking about what's transpired)* Inspector, are you really suggesting that we were involved in Mary's murder?

INSP C: Can you explain why, in addition to the letters, we found this locket hidden away and as you will see it is inscribed, 'To my darling Mary, love, Joss'. *(Passes the locket to JOSS.)*

(JOSS and PEN look at each other in bewilderment.)

JOSS: *(pauses and fumbles his words)* I have no knowledge of the locket Inspector, no knowledge of the locket, nor what's going on here and why I have been implicated. I am staggered..., lost for words!

PEN: Why would anyone want to implicate us in this way? Surely Rod must be able to shed some light on all this?

INSP C: I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you both to accompany us to the Police Station for further questioning. I have Officers in the car who will accompany your brother as your surety is no longer valid.

PEN: *(in disbelief)* What us! What, us? You are arresting us?

JOSS: It's preposterous! The whole thing is preposterous!

INSP C: Mr Taylor, can you inform your brother that he will need to get dressed and bring his belongings down with him.

JOSS: Are you serious Inspector?

INSP C: Never more so.

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(JOSS exits to fetch Rod. PEN breaks down in tears.)

INSP C: Mrs Taylor, is there anyone you wish to inform that you are leaving the house?

PEN: *(still sobbing)* How long will it take?

INSP C: It's difficult to say, but certainly several hours. If it's necessary to keep you longer, arrangements will be made for you to collect personal belongings.

PEN: Yes, then I had better call a friend. *(Goes to phone GINNY)* Ginny..., I'm sorry to 'phone you so late and I can't say anything now, but, Joss, Rod and I have to go to the Police Station..., yes, now. Could you just keep an eye on the house if we are not back in the morning...? I'll call you. Yes, of course. Thanks. Bye.

(JOSS and ROD enter.)

ROD: *(looking exhausted and directing his question at the INSPECTOR)* Why do I have to go back? Can't I stay here?

INSP C: Has your brother said anything to you?

ROD: Just that I had to go back to the cell whilst you sort out a few things.

INSP C: I'm afraid we have to question your brother and Mrs Taylor about your wife's murder.

ROD: Joss and Pen, why?

INSP C: It's just a part of our investigation.

JOSS: *(worried that ROD may get alarmed and irritated if an explanation is forthcoming)* Look, come on, let's go, shall we, let's get this over so we can all go to bed and get some sleep.

(They all leave the room. JOSS is last to leave. He switches off all the lights, exits and closes the door behind him. Blackout.)

Curtain

ACT III

As the curtain opens the scene is the same. JOSS and PEN's sitting room. JOSS enters with SUSIE.

Lights up

SUSIE: So were you being questioned all night? *(They both sit on sofa.)*

JOSS: It seemed like it. When we arrived at the Police Station, Pen and I were taken to different interview rooms for questioning. I insisted that my lawyer was present and a colleague accompanied Pen. They took at least an hour to arrive. God knows how much all this is going to cost me! Then, we were kept waiting for no apparent reason for the interview. Derek stayed with me and Peter Connor went in with Pen. I only saw her briefly before they let me go. She looked awful, as though she'd been crying all the time. What I can't understand is why they released me but detained her?

SUSIE: So, you have no idea what they questioned her about.

JOSS: The letters, I would imagine.

SUSIE: Letters?

JOSS: During the course of searching Rod's house after Mary's body was found the Police discovered a number of letters, which were supposedly sent by Pen to Mary, threatening to kill her if she didn't..., well if she didn't stop the affair she was having with me!

SUSIE: The affair she was having with you?

JOSS: I know; it's ridiculous. They also found a locket hidden away inscribed: 'To Mary much love Joss'. The whole thing is just unbelievable!

SUSIE: Poor Joss. So..., two affairs! What a naughty boy! *(SUSIE tries to embrace him.)*

JOSS: *(enraged, he pulls away and gets up and strides the room)* do you find this funny? My god, you are so stupid, stupid and bloody insensitive! How could you make light of this when Pen's going through hell!? Don't you understand that she's being accused of murdering my brother's wife, and I'm not out of the woods either! What goes on in that tiny brain of yours?

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SUSIE: (*hurt and sarcastic*) You bastard! Well, how do you account for the locket? Why was your name on it, and why, oh, why, whenever I dare to utter that's woman's name do you go off at the deep end...?

JOSS: What woman's name?

SUSIE: (*hurt and sarcasm turn to anger*) Your 'holier than thou' wife, Penny. Who else do you think I am referring to? It was only hours ago that you were saying how much you loved me and wanted to escape from a sterile marriage with her. You made love to me on that sofa, that very sofa..., but, oh no, that means absolutely zero to you! So long as you can have me whenever you want to without any hassle, that's fine, but the moment I want more, the moment I ask you to make a commitment..., a commitment you gladly made months back, you turn on me...

JOSS: (*trying to bring some sanity to the argument*) But don't you understand my wife, my brother, are locked up and Mary is dead. Can you not comprehend the pressure I'm under, the strain this has put on me? Do you really think at a time like this I can show any affection toward you? People aren't like that. I'd have to be a monster without a trace of human decency if I were to view this whole sorry scene through your eyes!

SUSIE: Why not rub salt into the wound! Now, I'm a monster for demanding what you offered me months back, when you persuaded me to give up a serious relationship to be with you. If I'm a monster, then so are you...

JOSS: Perhaps I am; (*exasperated*) What do you want from me!?

SUSIE: I want you to stop worrying about that woman and start thinking about me, about us...

JOSS: I'm not getting through, am I? Do you really think I could derive pleasure from what my wife is going through right now? Do you? Do you really think that I could ignore all that and run off with you and life would be a ball? Get real!

SUSIE: Oh, your wife, your bloody wife, what does she matter now? If you love me, Joss, you wouldn't be reacting like this! You would see things from my perspective.

JOSS: (*disbelieving that she is unable to understand his position*) From your perspective...? Can't you get it into your thick skull that my wife; yes my wife, is the main suspect for a murder?

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SUSIE: (*screaming at him she too gets up and confronts him*) And hasn't it occurred to you that she may be guilty of the murder, because she suspected that you were having an affair with Mary; when it was me you were seeing?

JOSS: (*angry but trying to understand where this is leading*) What are you talking about? If Pen suspected I was having an affair, why would she think it was Mary? There's just no logic in Pen believing I was seeing anyone, let alone Mary. Mary is the last person she would suspect.

SUSIE: How do you account for the letters?

JOSS: I don't know. I just don't know. I can't explain any of this. Pen knew nothing, nothing about the letters and certainly nothing about us.

SUSIE: According to you, Joss, you rarely exchanged the time of day and when you did you argued. There was no affection, no sex between you, the marriage was a sham; it was over! Any woman knowing that to be the case may well keep up appearances to avoid hurt, but she would naturally suspect that, if she wasn't the focus of attention, perhaps someone else was. I hate to say it, but you are an attractive man and Penny must have suspected something and Mary was her target. Perhaps she'd seen something between you; a word, a gesture, something that clicked in her brain that set her mind wandering. Out of malice, and desperate to win you back she sent the letters suggesting she'd seen you together...

JOSS: (*disbelieving, but, sufficiently interested in the logic probes further*) But, none of it makes sense! Mary and I just didn't click. Pen couldn't have interpreted anything from our exchanges. It's just not plausible, not plausible. ...so, how do you account for the locket?

SUSIE: Who knows? Maybe she had it made and sent it to Mary, in the hope that she would respond in a way that would bring the relationship into the open. Perhaps she wanted Rod to find it and expected him to confront you. Who knows, there could have been any number of permutations..., Joss, no one knows what goes on in the minds of obsessed people.

JOSS: I'm sorry, but you just don't know, Pen. She's not like that. She's never felt that way and I've never given her reason to feel insecure about our relationship.

SUSIE: (*sarcastically*) I know that now!

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JOSS: Oh, Susie.

SUSIE: My little Joss.

JOSS: *(realises that Susie has based her illogical argument on the lies he has given her about his relationship with Pen and feels awful. JOSS sits with his head in his hands not knowing what to think or say. SUSIE once again takes the opportunity to comfort him, this is enough to arouse his sexual desires and they begin to kiss passionately)* Susie, you make me feel so good. I just can't resist you.

SUSIE: *(the passion continues stretched out of the sofa)* Darling, I feel the same way. It doesn't matter what's happened we can still be together. Tell me you love me Joss. Tell me you want me...

JOSS: I do!

(The front door is heard opening but they are oblivious to it. GINNY has popped across to see the house is OK. She walks into the sitting room and finds them.)

GINNY: *(stands there, lost for words. She is utterly shocked)* My god! Joss, what are you doing? You bastard... Who is this woman? Where's...

JOSS: *(shocked rigid and terrified he's been found out. JOSS jumps up, adjusting himself, she turns, heading toward the door, hysterical)* Ginny! Ginny, look, you don't understand, it's not what you... Ginny, please listen to me...

GINNY: I understand! I understand, alright! Do you think I'm a fool, do you think I am stupid. I'm not blind!

(In a panicked state, JOSS grabs Ginny's arm as she struggles to get away. GINNY drags him out of the drawing room door and into the lobby. Off-stage they are heard fighting. SUSIE is in a state of partial undress; follows and stands in the doorway watching what's going on. She pleads for them to stop.)

JOSS: Ginny, Ginny, you must listen, stop for a second, just listen to me, please listen...

GINNY: *(She screams at him and in frenzy. SUSIE leaves the room to assist)* Just get off me, just get off...

JOSS: *(the struggle continues until we hear a loud thud. Ginny's head has obviously been hit hard against an object or the wall – she falls to the*

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ground.) Ginny, Ginny..., are you OK? I'm sorry, Ginny. I didn't mean to hurt you. Ginny, please...

(SUSIE hurries back into the sitting room. In a dishevelled state, JOSS staggers back into the room. Blood covers his shirt and hands.)

SUSIE: *(nervously and terrified)* Is she dead Joss? Is she dead?

JOSS: *(slumps onto the sofa, he takes time to respond)* I don't know, but she's not moving, she's not breathing...

SUSIE: *(exits to see.)* Joss, she's dead, she definitely dead! *(She returns to his side and tries to comfort him)* Joss, listen to me. You don't have to worry. I'm here for you. I'll stand by you. It was an accident; I'll say it was, don't worry...

JOSS: I can't believe what's happening to me! Tell me it's not true...

SUSIE: Darling, I love you. Nothing matters, we're together, we can go away, we can be together; don't you see, everything will be OK?

JOSS: *(pushes her to one side, gets up and begins to rage)* Nothing matters! Are you insane! You just don't understand, do you? Despite all that's happened you haven't got the message! We have two women dead. One not just fifteen feet away! We have another arrested for murder and my brother a widower and you persist with this fantasy about our future! Get real. You are a fool if you think I would ever give up my wife for you. What are you doing here? Get out! Get out! I'm in this mess because of you!

(SUSIE cannot comprehend what he's saying. In desperation she throws her arms around him and begs him.)

SUSIE: Joss, tell me you didn't mean it? Tell me you love me, tell me...?

JOSS: *(forces her aside. His tone is firm and unapologetic)* I don't know how to say this so you will understand... I've lied to you. I've been lying all along! I've used you for sex. You were good for my ego, but I never intended to leave Pen, never! I used you like a whore! You never meant anything to me and you never will. Now do you understand!

SUSIE: *(her reaction to this is of an obsessed woman. She becomes manic.)* You see me as a whore? After everything I've done for you, after everything you said and promised you call me a whore!

JOSS: Don't you get it?

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SUSIE: You told me a catalogue of lies, so I'd fall in love with you. You insisted I ended a relationship to be yours exclusively and all the time you had no intention of being with me. You are a bastard, (*SUSIE starts to hit him*) bastard, bastard. I gave up my life for you, every minute of every day I could think of nothing but the two of us together. (*JOSS manages to restrain her by putting his arms around her as they face front of stage, she falls to her knees and sobs uncontrollably*) How could you do this to me...?

JOSS: (*in despair and slowly*) What have I done!? What have I become!?! (*JOSS drops to the floor next to her she continues to cry like a wounded animal. He embraces her and kisses her on the head*) Susie, forgive me, forgive me. (*JOSS too begins to cry and she turns to him and they embrace on the floor*)

SUSIE: Joss, I don't care what you said; I love you; just don't leave me. Tell me you love me, please tell me... (*They kiss passionately until Joss begins to come to his senses and backs off again.*)

JOSS: (*starts to get up, drained, confused*) I'm ..., I'm sorry, I can't; I just can't; it's all over!

SUSIE: (*struggling to stop him from leaving her side and said in an almost unconscious way*) I only did it for us, so that we could be together. For us Joss! Tell me you love me, Joss. Please tell me you didn't mean what you said...

JOSS: You did what? What did you do?

SUSIE: (*in a dreamlike possessed way she admits the crime*) I did it. I strangled Mary. I murdered her. I did it! I typed the letters and had the locket engraved. I did it for us, Joss.

JOSS: You killed Mary! Susie, you're not thinking straight. Tell me it's not true. You didn't kill her. (*Shouting*) Tell me! Tell me!

SUSIE: I didn't mean to, not at first. She came into the office one day and went on and on about you and Penny and what a wonderful marriage you had, but I detected she was jealous of Penny, and she seemed to have some attraction to you!

JOSS: To me! Well, I suppose that's understandable, with my magnetic attraction. No! What am I saying, tell me, why did you kill her?

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SUSIE: (*quietly*) We became quite friendly, really. She needed some help with filling out legal documents and I agreed to help her, so I went to her home a few times. Always, she asked questions about you and Penny, what you were up to, you know, that sort of thing. I began to hate how she made Penny out to be some sort of saint, but I knew she was nothing like that...

JOSS: Because, I told you lies about her...?

SUSIE: You were a great liar; a noble character trait, don't you think?

JOSS: Stop it! How could you do it? How could you kill someone you had befriended? Woman, tell me?

SUSIE: Woman! I like that. You sound so manly!

JOSS: Don't go there...

SUSIE: I thought if I could make up a story that you had an affair with her and Penny found out, she would leave you and we could be together, forever. (*Goes all coy*) I knew it wouldn't work unless she was dead...!

JOSS: So, you came up with the idea to kill her?

SUSIE: I had to, there was no other way. (*Sobbing*) I wanted to be with you every moment of my life, not just...

JOSS: (*putting his arm around her*). You poor darling; wait, you are a cold blooded murderer; that's what you are. Let me see, did you kill her before or after you sent those letters in my wife's name?

SUSIE: Wife! I wanted that title! Well, first I had to make sure she met a peaceful end! I decided I would strangle her.

JOSS: Meditated murder! (*JOSS stares, aghast, disbelieving.*)

SUSIE: Of course, as I always do, plan my life, plan my work; plan my moves; you didn't love Penny any more, you said so. Why do you care now? (*She laughs*) It wasn't hard; just a few stupid letters; an engraved locket; I'm very intelligent you see!

JOSS: Huh! If you count murder as intelligent!

SUSIE: (*looks into his face with admiration*) I do! Passion and intelligence, that's my style, didn't you know that! (*She laughs again*) I used that beautiful silk scarf you gave me when we celebrated months ago!

JOSS: I don't believe this. How could you be so shallow?

The Brother's Wife

SUSIE: Shallow! Have a good look in the mirror... It was such a sad occasion.

JOSS: So, you do feel remorse for killing Mary. Thank...

SUSIE: That beautiful scarf was ruined! Had to hide it away; what a pity you didn't even notice that I never wore it again...

JOSS: My God, you're more concerned about a silk scarf than someone's life. I can't believe I fell for your charms when I have a beautiful wife who loves me; whom I love. I don't believe anyone could stoop so low...

SUSIE: (*with vehemence*) You never said that when I was below you! Love! You know absolutely nothing! I really loved you so much that my head spins when I want you.

(JOSS releases his hold as she speaks. SUSIE leaps up, grabs the scissors on the table and stands poised with the scissors held like a dagger in her fist.)

JOSS: Put that down, Susie, good girl...

SUSIE: Good girl, I'm not. I wanted you before, but now I want to kill you more than anything, loving bastard! If I can't have you, nobody will have you! (*SUSIE screams as she lunges at Joss with the scissors*) I mean it; I am going to kill you!

(PEN hears the scream as she enters the house, screams at the same time as SUSIE screams as she sees Ginny; thinks there's an intruder still inside. She holds her hand to her mouth as she becomes visible in the sitting room doorway and sees the back of SUSIE with scissors in hand, threatening Joss. PEN takes a large vase off the sideboard near the door and slams it onto Susie's head. SUSIE collapses onto the floor.)

PEN: Oh, my God, what have I done? I've killed her!

JOSS: Pen, Darling. (*He rushes to her side and holds her close.*) She was a mad-woman, who tried to blackmail me, us; that's when Ginny came in saw us arguing..., and she had an accident; I didn't kill her, I swear.

(The INSPECTOR comes through the door, rushes to the body on the floor as PEN and JOSS huddle together, hoping beyond hope she is alive.)

INSP C: (*looks up gravely*) She's dead, I'm afraid.

The Brother's Wife

PEN: *(bursts out crying)* No, no! I killed her; I can't believe that I killed her.

JOSS: It wasn't your fault; she was going to kill me. You saved my life...

INSP C: Mr Taylor, Mrs Taylor, I'm afraid I will have to arrest you both on suspicion of manslaughter. You will have to come with me to the station for questioning. Hands straight out! *(They both put their hands out like zombies. He handcuffs them together with one pair of cuffs)* I have to caution you that anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence... By the way, I've called for an ambulance, the woman in the hallway was still breathing.

JOSS: No! Do you think she'll be alright?

INSP C: We can only wait and see. She would be a very valuable witness...

PEN: *(half mumbling)* Dear God; please let her be alright...

JOSS: Dear God; no!

(PEN and INSPECTOR C look at him with questioning faces.)

Final Curtain & Black Out

Properties

ACT I

The sitting room of Pen and Joss .It is elegantly furnished with quality antique items and a sizeable bookcase full to bursting with an assortment of titles.

A coffee table

A comfortable sofa

A bookcase

An audio system

A recliner

Books and magazines

A large pair of scissors

Brief Case

A coffee maker

Cups, saucers and tea spoons

A telephone

A variety of alcohol- spirit bottles and wine

Cut Glass tumbler, wine and champagne glasses

A silver tray

ACT II

Scene is the same as the start of ACT I

ACT III

Scene is the same as the start of ACT I

Effects Plot

ACT I

- Cue 1:* Lights up *Page 2*
Cue 2: Joss heard opening the front door *Page 7*
Cue 3: The 'phone rings *Page 11*
Cue 4: Joss heard opening front door *Page 13*
Cue 5: The 'phone rings *Page 16*
Cue 6: Joss turns out the lights *Page 17*
Cue 7: Joss turns on light switch and table lamp *Page 17*
Cue 8: Doorbell rings *Page 17*
Cue 9: Insp C heard entering house *Page 22*
Cue 10: Doorbell rings *Page 29*
Cue 11: Lights fade *Page 29*

ACT II

- Cue 12:* Joss switches lights and table lamp on *Page 30*
Cue 13: Doorbell rings *Page 32*
Cue 14: 'Phone rings *Page 35*
Cue 15: Doorbell rings *Page 36*
Cue 16: Doorbell rings *Page 45*
Cue 17: The 'phone rings *Page 48*
Cue 18: Lights fade *Page 50*
Cue 19: Joss turns dimmer up *Page 51*
Cue 20: Front door heard opening *Page 51*
Cue 21: The 'phone rings *Page 53*
Cue 22: Joss switches light off Blackout *Page 58*

ACT III

- Cue 23:* Lights up *Page 59*
Cue 24: Front door heard opening *Page 62*
Cue 25: Loud thud as Ginny's head hits floor *Page 63*
Cue 26: Final curtain Blackout *Page 67*

Lighting Plot

ACT I Scene 1

Early afternoon

To open: Lights up on sitting room
Cue 1: Curtain Lights fade
"As much support as we can muster" *Page 18*

ACT I Scene 2

Late afternoon/early evening *Page 18*

To open: Joss & Pen enter. Joss switches light and lamp on
Cue 2: Curtain Lights fade
"We'll help you, you know we will" *Page 31*

ACT II Scene 1

Evening

To open
Cue 3: Curtain opens in black *Page 31*
Cue 4: Joss switches on light *Page 31*
Cue 5: Curtain and Black out
"...and I want you" *Page 54*

ACT II Scene 2

To open
Cue 6: Curtain opens Lights dimmed spots on Joss and Susie *Page 54*
Cue 7: Joss switches dimmer up spots fade *Page 54*
"without compromising our future"
Cue 8: Joss switches lights off and exits . Black out *Page 62*

ACT III Scene 1

To open
Cue 9: Lights up as Curtain opens *Page 62*
Cue 10: Final Curtain and Black Out *Page 71*

**Stage Set
-
Drawing Room**

