

A photograph of a broom leaning against a window frame. The broom has a dark wooden handle and light-colored bristles. The window is on the right, and light is streaming in, creating a bright area on the floor and the broom's head. The rest of the room is dark.

**SWEPT AWAY  
BY MURDER**

featuring  
**Inspector Honor Broom**

**A Murder Mystery  
In Two Acts**

**Terry Adcock**

**SWEPT AWAY BY MURDER**

**A play in two acts**

**by:**

**Terry Adcock**

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**CHARACTERS**  
(in order of appearance)

**Sir Edward Banfield (M)** Late 50's; retired judge; he would be surprised and hurt to know people hated him so intensely.

**Nivens (M)** Mid-60's; efficient English butler.

**Jane Talifaro (F)** Early 30's; Sir Edward's niece who manages his financial portfolio.

**Miss Martie Pants (F)** Mid-20's; secretary helping the judge produce his memoirs.

**Lady Eleanor Banfield (F)** Early 40's; the judge's elegant second wife who is obsessed with her life of luxury.

**\* Harold Nomoney (M)** Early 30's; desperately wants to marry Jane. Insists his name is French, but everyone still gets it wrong.

**Sir Percy Pews (M)** Late 50's; passed over for an appointment to the bench at the hands of his law partner and oldest friend.

**Paul Collier (M)** Mid-30's; an invited guest; recently released from prison.

**Cook (F)** Late 30's; long-suffering domestic servant.

**\* Sergeant Boswell (M)** Late 30's; veteran police officer.

**Insp. Honor Broom (F)** Late 20's; newly promoted; the old adage 'a new broom sweeps clean' aptly describes her approach to policing.

**\*Note: The characters, Harold and Sgt Boswell, can be played by the same person.**

## SETTING

A grand old country house somewhere in England.

## TIME

Early on a summer's evening. Sometime in the early 1930's.  
Time may be altered at director's discretion.

## SCENES

### ACT 1

Scene 1	Great room Banfield Manor	Early evening
Scene 2	Same	Later that evening

### ACT 2

Scene 1	Great room Banfield Manor	Next morning
Scene 2	Same	Several minutes

later

## Act I

### Scene 1 – Great Room

**(At rise, early on a summer's evening in the great room of Banfield Manor. The rumble of thunder and occasional flash of lightning threatens to let loose at any moment. The furnishings are tasteful and comfortable.)**

**Sir Edward Banfield gazes out the bay window. Nivens enters carrying a silver salver.)**

**Sir Edward:** What are the gardeners up to, Nivens? Looks like they're putting something on the roses.

**Nivens:** Pesticide, sir. Apparently the roses suffer from an infestation of greenfly.

**Sir Edward:** Really? How effective is it?

**Nivens:** Oh, my, extremely effective, sir.

**Sir Edward:** **(Absently)** Very interesting.

**Nivens:** A telegram arrived for you, sir.

**(Nivens presents the salver. Sir Edward opens the envelope.)**

**Sir Edward:** Of all the nerve . . .

**Nivens:** Not bad news, I hope, sir.

**Sir Edward:** No, just a bad penny that keeps turning up. Jane's so-called fiancé insists on seeing me yet again. The man's a complete nuisance.

**Nivens:** Your guests will arrive soon. Shall I send him away?

**Sir Edward:** That won't be necessary. I know how to deal with irritating pests like him.

**(Sir Edward gazes out the window once more ostensibly watching the gardeners at work.)**

**Sir Edward:** Effective, you say? We'll see about that. By the way, Nivens, you may recall we're expecting a special guest this evening. **(Smiles broadly.)**

**Nivens:** The young man you mentioned earlier?

**Sir Edward:** Yes, indeed. Paul Collier, a petty thief that I sent away several years ago. He's just now coming out of prison.

**Nivens:** I do remember now. Pardon me for suggesting it, but won't the ladies find it awkward, sir? I mean, having an ex-convict on the premises?

**Sir Edward:** He'll behave himself alright. As a parolee, he knows I can have him back in stir any time I want. No, I invited him because I wanted to see for myself whether he'd learned his lesson. I know a thing or two about human nature, and I'm convinced a man's behavior can be changed given the right inducement. I'm about to prove a point.

**Nivens:** A little experiment; this should make for an interesting evening. *Very good, sir.*

**(Sir Edward exits and Nivens follows.)**

**Jane Talifaro enters, checks the room over, crosses to table and adjusts the chair. Moves to sofa table and straightens the flowers.**

**Miss Martie Pants enters. They give each other a hard stare for a couple beats before carrying on. With an exaggerated perky strut, Martie crosses to place a file on the desk.)**

**Jane:** What do you have there?

**Martie:** Some correspondence Sir Edward needs to sign.

**Jane:** I don't think the Judge will bother with those today, not with guests arriving soon.

**Martie:** He's worked hard on this all week, and I happen to know it's going to come as big news to everyone.

**Jane:** Oh, really. Let me have a look.

**Martie:** You'll just have to wait. I wouldn't dream of spoiling his surprise.

**Jane:** I think I know my uncle pretty well, and I promise you he's more interested in entertaining his guests than worrying about some boring old papers.

**Martie:** You don't even know what they're about, so mind your own business.

**Jane:** Ooh, you're going to regret that. I would drop that "little Miss Efficient" act if I were you. I'm not the only one who finds your performance laughable.

**Martie:** That's rich coming from the 'financial genius.' You may manage the Judge's portfolio, but was it truly remarkable investing on your part, or pure luck? Hmm, I wonder . . . did Sir Edward receive all the profits due him? A little "elf" says they think not.

**Jane:** Whatever you think you know about my business, I advise you to stay out of it.

**Martie:** I've got three words for you, missy. East London Fidelity. That's right, the 'ELF.' Such a cute name for a bank, don't you agree?

**(Angrily, Jane whirls about and abruptly exits. Nivens enters pushing a liquor trolley. He starts turning glasses right-side up.)**

**Martie:** Tell me, Nivens, what's all the fuss about today? Who are we expecting? I've never seen the Judge so animated before. He's as giddy as a schoolboy.

**Nivens:** It's not for me to say, Miss. I expect the Judge has his reasons for not sharing.

**Martie:** **(Wheedling)** C'mon, you can tell me. After all, I'm helping write his memoirs and privy to his most intimate thoughts.

**Nivens:** Then I'm surprised you haven't learned the Judge's Golden Rule: Thou shalt be discreet.

**(Martie moves up and looks out the French window as Lady Eleanor Banfield enters, casts a critical eye around, lowers herself onto the sofa, and nonchalantly flicks a hand in Nivens' direction. He immediately prepares her drink.)**



**Lady Eleanor:** I hate these last minute impositions. Now I hear we're expecting new guests tonight? Who is it this time, Nivens? Someone interesting, I hope.

**Nivens:** I'm not sure, ma'am, although I overheard his lordship and Sir Percy arguing yesterday. Sir Percy was most insistent about coming this evening. He practically invited himself.

**(Nivens delivers Lady Eleanor's drink; takes up position next to hall door.)**

**Lady Eleanor:** Oh, pooh! That's hardly news. Percy ought to take up residence here; the man can hardly stay away. **(She laughs to herself at some private joke)** Anyone else? Like someone fun?

**Nivens:** I gather our visitor is someone the Judge knew a long time ago. His lordship was vague when giving Cook her instructions. She's to prepare for nine or ten. And ma'am, I'm afraid dinner *will not* be served.

**Lady Eleanor:** No dinner? What are we expected to do, chew our nails? What sort of party is this anyway?

**Nivens:** A telegram arrived earlier this week, and another today. Perhaps that has something to do with the informality, ma'am.

**Lady Eleanor:** No dinner, indeed. We'll see about this. I've had it with these last minute changes. Probably some boozy old boor from one of Edward's clubs. This is an outrage!

**(Lady Eleanor rises quickly and exits. The doorbell chimes; Nivens crosses to answer it. Martie needles Nivens.)**

**Martie:** So, Nivens, that's your idea of discretion, is it? I'll make a note of it.

**(Muffled voices can be heard off stage. Nivens enters followed by Harold Nomoney. He crosses to Martie.)**

**Harold:** Good evening, Miss Pants.

**Martie:** Oh, hello, Mr. Nomoney.

**Harold:** It's pronounced "Nom-Mo-Nay" – as you well know. It's French.

**Martie:** Of course it is. Why do I always forget?

**Harold:** Why, indeed? Have you seen Jane?

**Martie:** I haven't seen her all day. Perhaps she's with her new friend.

**Harold:** Friend? What new friend? Someone I know?

**Martie:** Impossible for me to say. Are you sure she's expecting you?

**Harold:** Of course, she is. Why not? I demand to know about this so-called friend.

**(Harold takes an aggressive step toward Martie. She moves back and places a hand to her throat.)**

**The doorbell chimes and Nivens goes to answer. Harold backs off. Sir Percy Pews enters, slaps his hat against his raincoat to get rid of rain drops. Rolling thunder is occasionally heard.)**

**Sir Percy:** Hello, you two. Either I'm too early or too late. Hopefully the latter.

**Martie:** (For safety, she moves closer) So very glad to see you, Sir Percy. I expect the others will be along any moment.

**(Jane enters, pauses momentarily in mid-stride when she spots Harold, and then continues toward Sir Percy.)**

**Jane:** Good evening, Sir Percy. Has anyone offered you a drink?

**Sir Percy:** I'll have my usual, if you don't mind.

**Nivens:** Very good, sir.

**(Nivens pours a large whiskey and hands it to Sir Percy then stands near the hall door. Jane moves up stage, and with several quick steps Harold joins her.)**

**Jane:** I wasn't expecting you this evening, Harold. What are you doing here?

**Harold:** I've come to see Sir Edward. Your uncle has a lot to answer for. I'm tired of him meddling in our affairs, and I intend to settle things once and for all!

**Jane:** Not today, Harold, it's not convenient. Go away before you cause a scene.

**Harold:** Then let's have a scene. What's he got against me anyway? Why won't he let us marry? It's not right, I tell you.

**Sir Percy:** Give it a rest, you muttonhead. Your marital woes are not important at the moment. Settle down before I have Nivens throw you out.

**(Harold slumps into a chair. Jane moves near Martie.)**

**Sir Percy:** I see Sir Edward summoned you two lovelies as well. What's in store for this evening's entertainment . . . besides the obvious? **(Nods his head in Harold's direction.)** I suppose our illustrious host feels neglected and needs propping up?

**Martie:** We thought you might know. I understand Sir Edward received some news this week. Do you know what it was about?

**Sir Percy:** Afraid not, old girl. When His Greatness calls, I respond. 'Tis our lot in life to serve our betters.

**(Lady Eleanor and Sir Edward enter. At the same time, the doorbell chimes followed by a loud clap of thunder causing everyone to jump. Nivens crosses to answer the door.)**

**Nivens returns followed by Paul Collier. Paul looks disheveled compared to everyone else. Sir Edward approaches and grips Paul's hand in both of his.)**

**Sir Edward:** **(Hearty, booming voice)** Paul! My good fellow! So glad you could join us. Come meet everyone.

**(Sir Edward and Paul approach Lady Eleanor. Sir Percy moves closer to join them.)**

**Sir Percy:** Well, I'll be. Paul Collier! Made the jump from Wormwood Scrubs to Banfield Manor. Quite the social climber, isn't he?

**Sir Edward:** Don't be that way, Percy. Mr. Collier is our guest and we must make him feel welcome. After all, he's paid his debt to society and is now a free man. Let's let bygones be bygones, shall we?

**(Snaps his fingers impatiently at Nivens )** Nivens! Don't stand there like a shop window dummy! Get the man a drink.

**(To Paul, calmly)** Now, Paul, allow me to introduce you to my wife, Lady Eleanor.

**Paul:** Pleased to meet you, madam.

**(Nivens hands Paul a drink. They exchange a brief nod before Nivens moves to the hall door.)**

**Lady Eleanor:** I read about you in the newspaper. You've just come out of prison.

**Paul:** It's true; I was sent away for my sins. That was a long time ago, but I'm not the same man I was back then.

**Lady Eleanor:** Let's hope not. And now you're here . . . for what purpose?

**Sir Edward:** *I* invited him. I heard Paul was being released and wanted to prove to all of you my instincts about human nature have always been correct. Like I always say, take a man out of a bad element and it'll change his life forever. Isn't that right, my boy? **(Claps him on the shoulder.)**

**Lady Eleanor:** Don't be a boor, Edward. You do go on about your so-called 'instincts.' You claim to know whether someone has true criminal intent, but I think you're just a conceited old fool.

**Sir Edward:** I don't just claim it. When I'm on that bench I instinctively know – yes, I know – who deserves punishment and who deserves leniency. Don't lecture me about criminal intent. No one can pull the wool over my eyes.

**Paul:** You probably saved my life, sir. I'd be dead by now if I had continued a life of crime. I suppose I should thank you.

**Sir Edward:** **(Beams proudly as if showing off a prized possession.)** Think nothing of it. I knew you'd see the light eventually.

**Sir Percy:** Still spreading the joy wherever you go, eh, Judge? You gave the poor man ten years for . . . what was it? Stealing a car? A bit harsh, wouldn't you say, old boy?

**Sir Edward:** Nonsense! You can see for yourself the end justifies the means. Sure, I was hard on him, but it was for his own good. Mr. Collier seems to agree with me.

**Paul:** I wouldn't say that. To be sure, I resented such a harsh sentence at first, but I've learned so much since then. Thankfully, I served only five years. Got out early for good behavior because they could see I'm a changed man.

**Sir Edward:** **(Looks pointedly at Sir Percy)** Did you hear that? An early release for good behavior. The man is living proof my instincts about human nature are spot on.

**Sir Percy:** **(Addresses Paul)** Sir Percy Pews. Please forgive my earlier outburst. I was surprised, that's all. Sir Edward and I practiced law together before he became a judge, that is. Congratulations on your release. I'm sure you'll quickly adjust to this crazy world of ours.

**(Martie rises from the sofa and squeezes in next to Paul as Sir Percy moves to the sofa.)**

**Martie:** **(Offers her hand to Paul)** Hello, I'm Martie Pants. What an interesting story. I was fascinated by what you said just now.

**Paul:** **(With feeling and a hint of innuendo)** Pleased to meet you. I assure you, the pleasure is all mine.

**(Their handshake lingers suggestively for a moment before they release.)**

**Martie:** I can't imagine being locked up in prison with all those thuggish brutes. It must have been terribly . . . lonely.

**Paul:** I managed to adapt. You know, I haven't been in 'polite' company for a long time now. This is certainly a change of pace from what I'm used to.

**Martie:** Maybe I could show you around. A lot has changed in the last five years.

**Jane:** **(Approaches Martie from behind, leans in close, and speaks to her in a stage whisper)** Give the man room to breathe. He just got free.

**(Addresses Paul)** Hello, I'm Jane Talifaro. I help manage my uncle's estate and keep the books straight.

**Sir Edward:** Nonsense, she's far too modest! She's made me a fortune. I couldn't manage without her. You'd be wise to let her show you how to invest properly. You won't be sorry.

**(Martie and Jane exchange nuanced glances.)**

**Paul:** **(Makes a show of looking down at his rumpled attire)** I'll do that the next time I'm rolling in money.

**Martie:** **(Moves close to Harold)** Don't you find Jane's new friend interesting? And so handsome, too!

**Harold:** So that's Jane's new friend, is it? We'll see about that.

**(Harold stares at Paul with open hostility. Martie drifts away with a satisfied smile on her face.)**

**Sir Edward:** Come on everyone, drink up! Nivens, step lively, old son!

**(Guests intermingle while Nivens circulates with the drinks tray. Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy help themselves then move to the sofa. Martie moves near Sir Edward.)**

**Martie:** I brought those papers you requested, Sir Edward. If you'll sign them now, I can post them in the morning.

**Sir Edward:** This is most inappropriate, Miss Pants. Why are you bothering me with such trivial matters?

**Martie:** I'm so sorry. I just thought . . .

**Sir Edward:** You thought what? That I should neglect my guests? There's a time and a place, but this isn't it. Now be off, you silly girl.

**(Sir Edward abruptly turns his back on Martie to resume chatting with Paul. Jane overhears the rebuke and with a triumphant smile approaches Martie.)**

**Jane:** You poor fool, but I did try to warn you. Now run along and stay out of trouble.

**Martie:** *(Sotto voce)* Sir Edward should be more careful how he speaks to people.

**(Martie slinks off to join Sir Percy. Cook enters pushing a trolley laden with appetizers. She keeps her eyes and head down; everything about her says she's not comfortable in this setting.)**



**Sir Edward sidles up to Cook. While pretending to look over the food, he tries to pinch her bottom, but she deftly moves out of reach.)**

**Cook:** Be careful, the dishes are hot!

**Sir Edward:** That's not all that's hot. How about we get together later after everyone's gone?

**Cook:** No, Sir Edward! That would be wrong. What would your wife say? Shall we ask her?

**Sir Edward:** Since when did she start caring? You can't say no to me forever. How about it?

**Cook:** No, thank you. I have the washing up to do.

**(Cook moves away and gives Sir Edward a hostile stare. Sir Edward crosses to center.)**

**Sir Edward:** Ladies and gentlemen, the feast has arrived. However, before we indulge I have a little announcement to make.

**(Everyone, but Harold draws nearer and listens intently.)**

**Sir Edward:** Tonight we not only celebrate new beginnings for our guest, Paul Collier (**Paul nods in acknowledgment**), but for myself as well. I've given it a lot of thought and have decided it's time to retire from the bench. I want to publish my memoirs.

**(Percy and Eleanor exchange concerned looks.)**

**Sir Edward:** But, that's not all. A few days ago I received the most extraordinary telegram. I am pleased to announce that Eddie is coming home after all these years! He would have been here tonight except for delays on the high seas – to be expected, I suppose, but he will arrive by mid-week.

**(A stunned silence envelops the room. No one is quite sure how to react or what to say. Confused by their silence, Sir Edward continues.)**

**Sir Edward:** I know what you're thinking, and I'm as shocked as you are. After all, it's been ten years since Eddie left. He now wants to reconcile our differences.

**(Lady Eleanor stares straight ahead; the news has left her shaken. Jane and Martie fidget. Paul observes the various reactions.)**

**Sir Percy:** Congratulations, Sir Edward . . . I suppose. What a surprise after all these years. You'll forgive me for bringing this up, but I thought you told us Eddie had *died*?

**Sir Edward:** It was a mistaken assumption on my part, old boy. I hadn't heard from him in years and assumed the worst, but, thankfully, I was wrong.

**Jane:** So what happens now? What does this mean?

**Sir Edward:** Nothing changes. We'll carry on as usual only there will be one more member of the household. It will be fine. Now, everyone, come taste these delicious savories Cook has prepared for us.

**(Sir Edward stands aside so guests can access the food. Nivens assists Cook in removing serving dish covers and glasses; they exit.)**

**Conversations are muted as the news sinks in. Sir Percy crosses to sit with Lady Eleanor. Paul roams around not sure what to do with himself. Martie approaches Jane.)**

**Martie:** My, oh my! I'll bet you can't wait to see Cousin Eddie. Soon you'll have *two* masters to contend with. I wonder how much that will cost them.

**(Martie sashays away grinning to herself.)**

**Jane:** **(Unconsciously speaks out loud as Harold approaches from behind.)** One day I'm going to wring that girl's neck!

**Harold:** Forget about her. Listen, Sir Edward can't prevent our marrying forever. Will you tell him I'd like to have a word?

**Jane:** For heaven's sake, Harold. Act like a man and tell him yourself!

**(Jane storms off. Harold moves up stage. Martie observes Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy, and assumes a listening attitude to better eavesdrop on their conversation.)**

**Sir Percy:** **(In a hushed, but strident voice)** How's that for timing? Just as the Judge retires the prodigal son returns. Does it get any better than that?

**Lady Eleanor:** Of all times for Edward's son to rise from the dead. Why now?

**Sir Percy:** What are you going to do about it?

**Lady Eleanor:** I don't know. I need time to think.

**Sir Percy:** Now would be the perfect time to run away together. My offer stands. Say the word, and we'll leave tonight.

**Lady Eleanor:** I've told you before I could never leave Edward . . . at least, not without my fair share.

**Sir Percy:** Cut your losses and come away with me. Let me take care of you, my darling.

**Lady Eleanor:** Dear, Percy, you're so gallant. But, I'm not leaving until I get what's mine, and that's final.

**Sir Percy:** I dare say you won't see as much of his fortune as you think you will, not after Eddie gets home. What do you propose to do? Wait until Edward keels over before making your move?

**Lady Eleanor:** It's all a matter of timing. Now that Edward's retiring, surely you're in line to take his position. You've waited all these years, are you going to turn your back on that now?

**Sir Percy:** I should have been on the bench years ago, except that Edward put the boot in. The back-stabbing snake that he is.

**Lady Eleanor:** Then take what is rightfully yours. You know you want it. It would be the ultimate triumph.

**Sir Percy:** Serves him right, too. You get his money, and I take his place on the bench *and* his wife. As they say, all's fair in love and war.

**Lady Eleanor:** It appears we have a common problem standing in the way of our mutual happiness.

**Sir Percy:** If you mean what I think you do, you can't be serious. We'd never get away with it.

**Lady Eleanor:** You know I'm right. Logically, it's the only solution. Now listen to me, I have a plan.

**Sir Percy:** Oh great! A plan that will probably put a noose around both our necks!

**Lady Eleanor:** Edward will likely go to London next week to change his will in Eddie's favor. Before he can do that, what if he met with a little, shall we say misfortune? Something that keeps both of us in the clear? Oh, I can almost see the headlines now, 'Retired Judge dies in accident.'

**Sir Percy:** *If I were inclined to agree with your crazy idea – and this is strictly hypothetical – I might know just the thing. There's a sharp curve along the old Oxford Road. If you're not careful, you end up going over the cliff. What if the Judge never makes that turn?*

**Lady Eleanor:** That's brilliant, darling! You take care of this little problem of ours and I promise we will be so happy together.

**(Lady Eleanor sets her glass down with enough force to be heard across the room then exits. Martie watches her leave.)**

**Jane enters and crosses to the drinks trolley. Paul, who is being monopolized by Sir Edward, excuses himself and approaches Jane.)**

**Paul:** I couldn't help noticing the Judge's announcement upset you. May I ask why?

**Jane:** I was quite shocked, if you must know. The last we heard Eddie had died while roaming the outbacks of Australia. Now he's hale and hearty and on his way home.

**Paul:** What was all that about being reconciled? Did something happen?

**Jane:** A bit of family trouble. Lady Margaret found out about Sir Edward's affair with Eleanor. She was already emotionally unstable . . . sadly, it didn't end well.

**Paul:** That must have been rough. How did your cousin take it?

**Jane:** After his mother's death, Eddie denounced his father and left for Australia. That was ten years ago, but it will be good to have him home again.

**Paul:** Hey, you don't have to convince me. I couldn't care less. But then, I'm not the one who has to worry about my position.

**Jane:** Do I look worried to you?

**Paul:** That look on our face says yes. Sir Edward announces his son is coming home, but for you, this is not pleasant news. Tell me, what's troubling you?

**Jane:** The only thing troubling me is how everyone keeps sticking their nose into my business. I suggest you keep your opinions to yourself, Mr. Collier, this is a family matter.

**Paul:** You know, family troubles have a way of spilling over. Before long everyone gets caught up.

**Jane:** Whatever do you mean?

**(Without responding, Paul drifts over to speak to Harold. Jane approaches Sir Edward.)**

**Jane:** (With forced cheerfulness) What wonderful news, Uncle. I'm so pleased Eddie's coming home after all this time.

**Sir Edward:** Yes, good news, indeed. His telegram indicated he'd sold his interest in a goldmine. Can you believe it? I knew my boy would make good one day. Didn't I always say so?

**Jane:** Actually, I recall at the time you said he was a no-good waster and not worthy of your time or money, and then you disinherited him.

**Sir Edward:** (Gruffly) That was then, this is now. And thanks for reminding me. I must see old Trent about drafting a new will now that Eddie's coming home. Tell him I'll call round Tuesday. By the way, it's about time I had a full audit of all my accounts as well.

**Jane:** Is there anything the matter? Everything is in proper order, I can assure you.

**Sir Edward:** I prefer to see for myself. As they say, you get what you *inspect*, not what you *expect*.

**Jane:** (Changes the subject) I must say, Uncle, that man you invited, there's something not quite right about him.

**Sir Edward:** (Looks around at Paul) That's ridiculous, the man's harmless. You heard him; he learned his lesson the hard way. Don't go looking for trouble where there is none, my girl. Next you'll be seeing villains hiding in the bushes.

**Jane:** I dare say the villains are among us already.

**(Jane exits. Sir Edward crosses to join Sir Percy. Percy stands as he approaches.)**

**Sir Edward:** I see you and my wife are still conspiring against me. What are you up to now?

**Sir Percy:** **(Nearly chokes on his drink)** Nothing of the sort! We were just discussing the miracle of Eddie's resurrection. An incredible turn of events to say the least.

**Sir Edward:** And if I told you the best is yet to come, what would you say to that?

**Sir Percy:** You're still full of surprises, Judge, even after all these years. I wouldn't put it past you to disinherit the lot of them and give it all to that wayward son of yours. That's what I say.

**Sir Edward:** The man is practically clairvoyant.

**(As Sir Edward moves away there's an unusually loud peal of thunder. Nivens, Cook, Lady Eleanor, and Jane return on stage and disperse. Everyone looks uneasy as the storm rages. Sir Edward's loud voice cuts through the noise.)**

**Sir Edward:** What are you afraid of, a little tempest? If you're that concerned, then I insist everyone stay over tonight. No sense in tempting Mother Nature on a miserable night like this.

**Jane:** But, I wasn't expecting to stay the night. I didn't bring a change of clothes or anything.

**Sir Percy:** None of us did, my dear. It's just for the one night. You'll be fine.

**Jane:** I prefer a fresh change of clothes. I don't like wearing the same clothes for days on end.



**Martie:** Not that anyone would notice.

**Sir Edward:** It's settled then. After a good breakfast in the morning, you can be on your way. Now, let's put some life into this dreary party. Nivens! Let's have champagne, the really good stuff for a change.

**(In spite of themselves, everyone livens up at this. Nivens reaches for champagne bottles on the lower shelf, pops the cork, and together with Cook, they fill fluted glasses. Suddenly, one of the French windows flies open. The sound of the raging storm is loud.)**

**Note: the champagne glasses must be filled before the lights go out. Nivens and Cook continue filling glasses while Harold and Paul secure the window.**

**Just as they get it closed all the lights go out; the stage is in complete darkness. Martie shrieks in fear and everyone talks excitedly. Sir Edward's booming voice is heard above all.)**

**Sir Edward:** Somebody find some candles. Nivens, get that blasted generator started immediately!

**(After several seconds, Nivens and Cook enter with lighted candlesticks. Cook places one on the desk. Nivens places the other on the table.)**

**Nivens exits ostensibly to start the generator. Cook follows him out. Meantime, everyone nervously mills about the partially darkened stage. Shortly, the lights come back on to everyone's immense relief.)**

**Sir Edward:** Ah, that's better. Now, everyone, please charge your glasses. I'd like to propose a toast.

**(Each takes a champagne glass from the trolley. Everyone congregates loosely on stage.)**

**Sir Edward:** **(Lifts his glass as he toasts)** To our new friend, Paul Collier. From now on may you know only good fortune.

**All:** **(In unison, everyone raises their glass, toasts, and drinks.)**  
To Paul!

**Sir Edward:** And here's to a happy family reunion when Eddie returns to the bosom of his family.

**All:** **(Again, in unison, but less enthusiastically)** To Eddie.

**(Suddenly, Harold drops his glass, grabs his throat, and makes strangling noises. He struggles to breathe, falls to the floor, cries out once and then lies still. For a couple of beats everyone is stunned into silence. Lady Eleanor cries out; as she's about to faint Sir Percy rushes to her side. Sir Edward remains rooted in place. Martie stands by helplessly; she covers her mouth and stares at the body. Nivens and Cook enter quickly and stop upon seeing Harold on the floor.**

**Jane starts forward to help, but Paul is closer and kneels down to check on Harold. He stands and faces the group; there's a solemn look on his face.)**

**Paul:** I'm afraid it's no use. He is . . . dead.

**(Curtains fall.)**

**End of Act 1, Scene 1.**

**Act I****Scene 2 – Great Room**

**(At rise, two hours later, Harold’s body has been removed. Sergeant Boswell interviews Jane. She is seated on the sofa. Sir Percy is in a chair next to the desk with a drink in hand. The drinks trolley remains, but the food trolley has been removed.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** It goes without saying, but I’ll say it anyway. I’m very sorry for your loss. When were you and Mr. Nomoney planning to marry?

**Jane:** It’s pronounced “Nom-Mo-Nay.” It’s French.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Of course, it is. When were you and Mr. Nom-Mo-Nay (**over emphasis**) planning to marry?

**Jane:** My uncle adamantly opposed the marriage so we hadn’t set a date. In fact, I don’t recall Harold formally proposing. He could be so . . . assuming, if you know what I mean?

**Sgt. Boswell:** Actually, I don’t. Perhaps you could elaborate?

**Jane:** Let me put it this way: I never knew whether Harold was in love with me or the idea of marrying me. He was not very enterprising. I suspect he merely wanted an easy life. Besides, I hadn’t made up my mind.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Viewed that way, it certainly was a lop-sided relationship. Before the deceased became, well, the deceased, did you two have a row?

**Jane:** Nothing out of the ordinary.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Then it was commonplace for you two to argue? What did you argue about this time?

**Jane:** Harold was insistent on confronting Sir Edward, but Uncle refused to meet with him so he asked me to intercede. Frankly, I couldn't be bothered. Getting married was more Harold's idea than mine.

**Sgt. Boswell:** **(Shakes his head sadly)** Now those happy plans are dashed forever owing to a tragic accident.

**Jane:** Happy? I hope you don't think me insensitive, Sergeant, but I've just been spared a disastrous marriage. Harold quite put me off the idea, but in a way it's a huge relief. Are we finished here?

**(Not waiting for a response, Jane abruptly exits leaving a befuddled Sgt. Boswell staring after her. Sir Percy moves to trolley to pour another drink. Sgt. Boswell goes to meet Sir Percy.)**

**Sir Percy:** She can be a handful, Sergeant, but don't let that put you off. She's got a terrific mind for business and nerves of steel that any stockbroker would give his eye-teeth to have, but she's vulnerable just now.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Vulnerable, eh? How so?

**Sir Percy:** She had Harold pulling at her from one side, and now she learns her long-lost cousin, Eddie, is about to arrive home. She's been on a bit of a see-saw, I suppose.

**Sgt. Boswell:** **(Consults his notes)** That would be the cousin from Australia? Why should that be a concern?

**Sir Percy:** Plainly speaking, it puts her further down the inheritance list. Until today, she was the Judge's sole living blood relation. She and the lady of the house would have split the entire estate one day, but now the son will likely inherit the lion's share. And with Harold pushing her into marriage, you can appreciate she has a lot on her mind.

**Sgt. Boswell:** **(Reverting to the obvious pronunciation)** And where were you when Mr. Nomoney bought the farm, so to speak?

**Sir Percy:** I was having a drink with Lady Eleanor. So typical of her, she was complaining she was bored to tears with the party and everyone there.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Bored . . . to . . . tears.

**(Sgt. Boswell mouths each word as he takes precise notes. Inspector Honor Broom enters and crosses to center stage. Sgt. Boswell glances up, but continues writing.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** Take a seat, Miss. Be with you in a minute.

**Inspector Broom:** If you don't mind, Sergeant, I'll take it from here.

**Sgt. Boswell:** What? Just who the . . . ?

**(Inspector Broom quickly intercepts Sgt. Boswell before he can finish the expletive; her timing is perfect.)**

**Inspector Broom:** *Happy* to meet you at last! I'm your new Inspector.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Says who? I don't give a . . . ?

**Inspector Broom:** *Darned* glad to be here too. I see Headquarters failed to notify you of my arrival. So typical of them. And I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head, Sergeant.

**(Inspector Broom addresses Sir Percy while Sgt. Boswell looks on with a perplexed expression on his face.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Inspector Honor Broom at your service. And whom do I have the pleasure of addressing?

**Sir Percy:** You're joking? 'On her broom?' What an unfortunate choice of names.

**Inspector Broom:** As they say, 'A new broom sweeps clean.' And that's exactly how I intend to conduct this investigation.

**Sir Percy:** **(Short bow)** Sir Percy Pews. The sergeant was just taking my statement.

**Inspector Broom:** Don't let us keep you from your investigations, Sergeant.

**Sgt. Boswell:** I don't know what's happening here, and I don't give a . . .

**(Again, Inspector Broom intercepts his expletive, and again, her timing is perfect. She is determined to keep the sergeant from cluttering up the investigation with a lot of crude talk.)**

**Inspector Broom:** *Don't* forget clues, Sergeant! We need clues. I suggest you go and find some.

**(Sgt. Boswell closes his notebook with a snap and exits muttering to himself. Inspector Broom and Sir Percy move closer.)**

**Sir Percy:** Well, this is one for the books, I must say. A suspicious death at Banfield Manor and the police send us a woman detective. How quaint.

**Inspector Broom:** Not to worry. My knowledge of police procedure is unsurpassed, even by seasoned veterans like our esteemed Sergeant Boswell.

**Sir Percy:** Oh, you have extensive experience, do you?

**Inspector Broom:** Well . . . to be honest, this is my first murder case.

**Sir Percy:** From the look of things, your first case ever I would imagine.

**Exasperated, Inspector Broom takes out her own notebook.**

**Inspector Broom:** Shall we continue?

**Sir Percy:** By all means; I was telling your colleague about the deceased, Harold Nomoney. Pardon me, it's pronounced "Nom-Mo-Nay" – it's French. Anyway, the Judge had just proposed a toast when Harold collapsed right before our eyes.

**Inspector Broom: (Takes accurate notes)** Hmm, French, yes, of course it is. And what exactly was Mr. Nom-Mo-Nay (**over emphasis**) doing immediately before he collapsed?

**Sir Percy:** Eating and drinking, the same as everyone. He helped Paul Collier secure the window that flew open during the storm. Then the lights went out.

**Inspector Broom:** That was some storm! What happened then?

**Sir Percy:** Oh, the lights came back on quickly enough. Then everyone helped themselves to champagne while Sir Edward proposed a toast.

**Inspector Broom: (Reverting to the obvious pronunciation)** So, anyone could have picked up that particular glass, but it just happened to be Mr. Nomoney?

**Sir Percy:** That's correct, Inspector.

**Inspector Broom:** And since no one else is showing signs of distress, we can assume Mr. Nomoney was poisoned, although, the lab report will determine the cause of death.

**Sir Percy:** You're quick on the up-take. What I can't figure out is who would want to kill Harold in the first place. He was a silly little man, but totally harmless; certainly not a threat to anyone.

**Inspector Broom:** Not that we know of. Tell me, who stands to gain by his death?

**Sir Percy:** That's just it, no one. He was always broke. By the way, keep an eye on our infamous house guest, Paul Collier. He's an old lag and just out of nick, if you know what I mean.

**Inspector Broom:** I am familiar with the lingo, sir. I'd like to speak with the others now, so we'll talk again later.

**(Martie enters and waits expectantly when she sees Sir Percy is about to exit.)**

**Martie:** I was looking for the sergeant. Is he still around?

**Inspector Broom:** He's around somewhere. He better be looking for clues. And you are . . . ?



**Martie:** I'm Sir Edward's secretary, Martie Pants. Are you helping the police?

**Inspector Broom:** Inspector Honor Broom. I'm in charge of the case.

**Martie:** You're in charge? But, what about the *real* policeman? I thought he was investigating Harold's death.

**Inspector Broom: (Mockingly)** Let's be clear, Miss Martie Pants. I'm leading this investigation and the sergeant is assisting *me*. So, where were you when Mr. Nomoney expired?

**Martie:** I was here with everyone else. We drank a toast to that ex-convict person and also the Judge's son, who's supposed to be dead. Now we find out he's alive and well, if you can believe that!

**Inspector Broom:** What happened next?

**Martie:** It was horrible! Harold started choking then fell down and . . . died.

**(Martie stares at the floor as if remembering.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Before that, did you see anything suspicious, like someone fiddling with the champagne?

**Martie:** No, but why would anyone kill Harold? He wasn't a very nice man, but he wasn't a threat either, except perhaps to good manners.

**Inspector Broom:** Rest assured, Miss. We shall get to the bottom of this.

**Martie:** (Confidentially) I think you should know there are some here with a perfect motive for murder. And others, in my opinion, who themselves deserve to be murdered.

**Inspector Broom:** *What?* Do you realize what you're saying? Who did you have in mind?

**Martie:** Why, Lady Eleanor, of course. She and her lap dog, Sir Percy. In fact, you should investigate him, too. They've been carrying on behind the Judge's back for some time.

**Inspector Broom:** The same Sir Percy I just met? Lady Eleanor is having an affair with *him*?

**Martie:** Silly men . . . they fall all over themselves for Eleanor. She went after the Judge, and now she's going after Sir Percy. All she has to do is crook her little finger and he comes running with his tongue hanging out. It's really too embarrassing.

**Inspector Broom:** Is Sir Edward aware of this liaison?

**Martie:** He is, and he's very annoyed about it, too. He once mentioned he believes they're conspiring against him.

**Inspector Broom:** Conspiring in what way?

**Martie:** To get his money, of course! Sir Edward's very rich. There's no telling what those two are capable of.

**Inspector Broom:** Why not confront them?

**Martie:** His reputation is at stake. The Judge is very proud of his time on the bench, but if the affair ever came out, he'd look like a fool. He won't allow that.

**Inspector Broom:** As they say, ‘pride goeth before a fall.’ Well, thank you for this information. Is there anything else you can think of?

**Martie:** Nooo . . . except watch out for that lying hussy, Jane. Jane Talifaro. She’s up to no good as well.

**Inspector Broom:** You don’t particularly care for Miss Talifaro?

**Martie:** She’s jealous of my relationship with the Judge. You see, Sir Edward and I spend quite a lot of time together. As he often says, he can’t do without me.

**Inspector Broom:** He actually says that, does he? You and the Judge . . . close, are you? Not only his secretary, perhaps your relationship is a bit more on a personal level?

**Martie:** Nothing like that! Eww! He’s old! As his private secretary, he confides in me more than his own niece. She’s supposed to be so smart about investing, but I think she got lucky once or twice. Pretends she knows what she’s doing.

**Inspector Broom:** My, you’re a fountain of information. If this secretarial thing doesn’t work out for you, you might consider a career in police work. We could always use a good snitch.

**(Martie exits. Inspector Broom writes up her notes. Jane sticks her head in and looks around then crosses to join the Inspector.)**

**Jane:** Excuse me. Are you the Inspector handling the case?

**Inspector Broom:** Yes, and you are?

**Jane:** Jane Talifaro. I just wanted to say whatever she told you it’s probably a lie.

**Inspector Broom:** ‘She’ being Miss Pants? Why do you say that?

**Jane:** She plays up to my uncle. She likes to pretend she’s practically a member of the family, but she’s only the hired help.

**Inspector Broom:** You don’t like Miss Pants, I take it?

**Jane:** Not one bit. She enjoys creating conflict then runs to Sir Edward when trouble starts. And she tells the most outrageous lies.

**(Lady Eleanor sweeps into the room in regal fashion.)**

**Lady Eleanor:** Forgive my intrusion, but I must have a word with you, Inspector.

**Jane:** Excuse me, but *I’m* talking to the Inspector now . . .

**Lady Eleanor:** **(Commandingly)** Leave us at once!

**(Furiously, Jane exits with a hostile backward glance. Inspector Broom adjusts her position as Lady Eleanor approaches.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Lady Eleanor, I presume?

**Lady Eleanor:** Tell me, Inspector. Have you identified the culprit yet?

**Inspector Broom:** It’s early, we’ve only started investigating. You have some information for me?

**Lady Eleanor:** It’s my husband; I believe he’s trying to kill me. That poisoned drink was meant for me, I just know it, but somehow poor Harold ended up with it.

**Inspector Broom:** We don't know it was poison. Besides, anyone could have chosen that particular glass. What makes you think Sir Edward wanted to spike your drink?

**Lady Eleanor:** He may be mistaken that my . . . friendship . . . with Sir Percy is more than it seems.

**Inspector Broom:** Have you given your husband any reason to believe it's true?

**Lady Eleanor:** Of course not! Edward and Sir Percy were at law school together – rowing club, all-night parties, old school ties; all that chummy stuff. Then they joined some boring old London firm. It's only natural Edward's friends are my friends, too.

**Inspector Broom:** I see. So, if I were to tell you Sir Percy confessed the two of you are lovers, would he be lying?

**Lady Eleanor:** He wouldn't dare say such a thing! We're friends, socially, nothing more.

**Inspector Broom:** (Airily) Okay, I was just checking. I appreciate you setting me straight about things not yet in evidence. Is there anything else?

**Lady Eleanor:** Are you aware we have an actual criminal on the premises? I should place him under arrest immediately, if I were you. He claims to be a changed man, but I think he's a no-good thief and not to be trusted.

**Inspector Broom:** I am aware of Mr. Collier's presence here at the manor, and his criminal past as well. But, don't worry; we're keeping a close eye on him.

**Lady Eleanor:** Well, that's something at least. I don't want to be murdered in my bed under the noses of the police. I feel better knowing you're close by, even though you're *only* a woman.

**(Lady Eleanor abruptly exits. Inspector Broom shakes her clenched fist at her retreating back in frustration. Paul and Sgt. Boswell enter and join the Inspector.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** Thought you might want to interview the house guest, ma'am.

**Inspector Broom:** Yes, thank you, Sergeant. Take a seat, Mr. Collier.

**Paul:** I don't know how I can help you. I just arrived this afternoon. I don't know these people.

**Inspector Broom:** Then why would Sir Edward invite a perfect stranger into his home?

**Paul:** Well . . . actually I'm not a complete stranger. You see, it was Sir Edward who sentenced me to prison – for a relatively minor offense, I might add. He decided to make an example of me; he gave me ten years for stealing a second-rate car.

**Inspector Broom:** Why should the Judge be so interested in an ex-con? I'm afraid I don't understand.

**Paul:** Because he's an interfering, self-righteous do-gooder. You know that lengthy sentence he handed out? That was not intended as punishment. Oh no, it was time for *reflection* because the good Judge always knows what's best for everyone.

**Sgt. Boswell:** While you reflected on the poor choices you made, do you think it worked?

**Paul:** Yes, to the extent that I'll do whatever it takes to stay out of prison.

**Inspector Broom:** Then it sounds like the end justified the means, wouldn't you say?

**Paul:** I gave up five years of my life for stealing an old banger! Do you think that was fair?

**Inspector Broom:** My, but you sound bitter.

**Paul:** Me, bitter? No, not at all. And I suppose you wouldn't be either, right?

**Sgt. Boswell:** Did you tell all this to the Judge? I will bet not. I'll bet you were quite conciliatory.

**Paul:** I didn't want to give Sir Edward an excuse to send me back to prison. For all I know, this weekend was merely a test. Either I performed as expected or he'd put me back inside.

**Sgt. Boswell:** That bit about you being a 'changed man' was for the Judge's benefit. At heart, I suspect you're still a thief.

**Paul:** Ironic, isn't it? Thanks to Sir Edward, I learned more in prison about thieving than I ever would have on my own. I hated Wormwood Scrubs. I'll never go back.

**Inspector Broom:** I don't blame you. I wouldn't wish prison on anyone.

**Paul:** The thing is, the Judge likes to control people, but always claims it's for their own good. Ask anybody.

**Inspector Broom:** Alright, Mr. Collier, I appreciate your candor. I'm afraid I must insist you remain here at the manor until we conclude our investigations.

**Paul:** **(Looks around the room)** Hey, take your time! I've never had it so good. I could get used to this place.

**(As Paul exits Nivens enters with a trolley laden with tea and biscuits. They pause, Paul starts to speak, but Nivens silences him with a curt nod of his head.)**

**Nivens:** I thought you and the sergeant might enjoy some refreshments.

**Inspector Broom:** Ah, thank you, Mr. Nivens. How very kind.

**Nivens:** Customarily, it's simply "Nivens," ma'am. The "mister" is superfluous.

**(Nivens leaves the food trolley and exits with the drinks trolley.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** You ain't buying that story, are you? I've never met an old lag yet who ran straight and true after a stint as His Majesty's guest. You heard him – he picked up a few tips on the inside he's anxious to try out.

**Inspector Broom:** You have a low opinion of your fellow man, Sergeant. Perhaps Mr. Collier really has learned his lesson, even if he was coerced into submission.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Don't go soft on me. Did you get that part about the Judge interfering with people? He's a piece of work, too. Be careful you don't ruffle his feathers. He probably golfs with the Chief Commissioner.



**Inspector Broom:** Duly noted, Sergeant.

**(Nivens re-enters with a feather duster in hand. He's in shirt sleeves and wearing an apron.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Nivens, may we have another word?

**Nivens:** How may I be of service?

**Inspector Broom:** We need to understand more about Mr. Nomoney. What can you tell us?

**Nivens:** May I speak freely, ma'am?

**Inspector Broom:** Of course, whatever you say will be held in the strictest confidence.

**Nivens:** In my opinion, Mr. Nomoney was like a housefly. And like a housefly, he was always hanging about bothering people. He was a complete nuisance.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Don't hold back on our account. How do you really feel?

**Nivens:** Perhaps I've said too much already.

**Inspector Broom:** No, go on; you're doing fine. It's just an opinion, of course, but who do you believe has a reason to kill Mr. Nomoney?

**Nivens:** Well, it's really not for me to say. I don't want to jeopardize my position.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Do I have to remind you this is a murder inquiry? All information is important.

**Nivens:** Naturally, I'm reluctant to speak out of turn, however, if anyone held a grudge it would be Sir Edward. He detested the young man for constantly pestering his niece.

**Inspector Broom:** Did the Judge dislike Mr. Nomoney enough to want him dead?

**Nivens:** Not actually dead, but certainly out of the way. The man was a complete nuisance.

**Inspector Broom:** Yes, so you said. Listen, we could use your help. What else can you tell us?

**Nivens:** You must understand, around here I'm like a piece of furniture. I exist solely for the benefit and comfort of my masters.

**Inspector Broom:** Surely in your time here you've picked up one or two things that are, shall we say, less than discreet?

**Nivens:** If you mean the way Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy carry on, then yes, I may have noticed they are comfortable in each other's company, but that's all I'll say about that.

**Inspector Broom:** What can you tell me about Miss Pants and Miss Talifaro? What's their relationship like?

**Nivens:** Like two alley cats circling for the kill, to put it mildly. Always sniping at each other, always looking to outdo the other.

**Inspector Broom:** Oh, really? Tell me more!

**Nivens:** Miss Pants is young and inexperienced. She tries too hard to impress everyone, but it only makes her look desperate. And she enjoys creating controversy.

**Inspector Broom:** She certainly has definite opinions about people.

**Nivens:** Too opinionated, if you ask me. There's trouble brewing between the two young Misses, but I stay right out of it. On the other hand, Miss Talifaro is educated, poised, and she knows how to invest money.

**Inspector Broom:** Do you know for a fact she's as good as people say she is?

**Nivens:** If doubling Sir Edward's holdings counts for anything I'd say definitely yes.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Doubled! That's quite impressive. Not something you chalk up to luck, I imagine.

**Nivens:** Luck is for suckers, much like betting on horses. Investing in the markets takes patience and a certain flair for how markets move. No doubt about it, Miss Talifaro is the genuine article.

**Inspector Broom:** Would you say the Judge is dependent on her?

**Nivens:** Very much so. In fact, she manages his entire portfolio.

**Inspector Broom:** And Miss Pants, I suppose the Judge is dependent on her as well?

**Nivens:** **(Bursts out laughing)** Ha! I'll bet Miss Pants told you that. Puh-lease!

**Sgt. Boswell:** That would explain the Judge's animosity toward Mr. Nomoney

**Nivens:** It's a complicated household, but easily understood if viewed from the perspective of money. A most unhealthy attitude, but there it is.

**Sgt. Boswell:** That figures. Either you've already got money, or you're scheming how to get it.

**Nivens:** Exactly.

**Inspector Broom:** Some things will never change. Thank you, Nivens, you've been most helpful.

**Nivens:** **(Starts to leave)** Oh, and you might find Cook has an interesting perspective on things. She and the Judge go back quite a few years.

**Inspector Broom:** By all means, ask Cook to step in here, please.

**(Nivens exits. Cook enters looking like a scared rabbit.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** If it's all the same to you, Inspector, I think I'll follow up on a few leads elsewhere.

**Inspector Broom:** Thank you, Sergeant, very enterprising of you.

**(Sgt. Boswell exits.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Please take a seat. I have a few questions for you, Miss . . . ?

**Cook:** It's just Cook.

**Inspector Broom:** Right. Tell me, how well did you know Mr. Nomoney?

**Cook:** Not at all. I'm not close to any of the family members much less their guests.

**Inspector Broom:** Did you happen to overhear or see anything out of the ordinary prior to Mr. Nomoney's death? Something that stuck out in your mind?

**Cook:** I don't know what is ordinary for these people, only what's ordinary for me. I prepare and serve the food, clear away the dishes, and do the washing up.

**Inspector Broom:** Can you describe for me your relationship with Sir Edward?

**Cook:** **(Visibly startled)** I work for Sir Edward. Have done for nearly five years now.

**Inspector Broom:** So, there's nothing of a personal nature in your relationship other than that of employer and domestic servant?

**Cook:** What have you heard?

**Inspector Broom:** Nothing, but I know you're not telling me everything I want to know. Should we continue this conversation down at the station?

**Cook:** He may be my employer, but that doesn't give him the right to constantly bother me, the randy old goat!

**Inspector Broom:** You don't say! I wonder what Lady Eleanor thinks about that. Does she know?

**Cook:** Dear, Lord, I hope not!

**Inspector Broom:** How long has this been going on?

**Cook:** He's made a few passes at me before, but lately he's got worse. He said that . . .

**Inspector Broom:** Go on.

**Cook:** He said if I didn't go along he'd send me back to prison.

**Inspector Broom:** *You* were in prison as well? What for?

**Cook:** It was a misunderstanding. They said I stole food from the last house where I worked, but it wasn't stealing. They'd have thrown the food out anyway, so I gave it away. There were people in our village that didn't have anything. I didn't see the harm, but the Judge decided he would give me a 'break' and brought me here as his personal cook.

**Inspector Broom:** Why not leave? You're not a slave here, are you?

**Cook:** In one sense, yes. He said he'd put me back inside if I tried to leave. It's been so long now I don't have anywhere else to go.

**Inspector Broom:** That's a shame. You poor thing, I promise to look into this on your behalf.

**Cook:** Please, no! You must not interfere. I'm tired of people meddling in my life. He'll send me back to prison and claim it's for my own good. He's like that.

**Inspector Broom:** Not after all this time, surely? Besides, it won't come to that, I promise.

**(Cook is close to tears as she exits. Sgt. Boswell enters with a satisfied grin on his face.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Did you find something, Sergeant?

**Sgt. Boswell:** Yes, I found –

**Inspector Broom:** **(Pulls rank)** Yes, *what*, Sergeant?

**Sgt. Boswell:** Excuse me. Yes, *ma'am*. As I was saying, I found a box of pesticide under the kitchen sink.

**(Sgt. Boswell holds up a paper bag that appears to contain a small box.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Well, goody for you, Sergeant. If we need any bugs exterminated, we'll know just where to go.

**(Sgt. Boswell clasps his hands behind his back and looks up while rocking back and forth on his heels.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** As the Inspector is new, she may not be aware of the significance.

**Inspector Broom:** What are you yammering on about? What's so important about pesticide?

**Sgt. Boswell:** **(As if lecturing a slow student)** It's the content, *ma'am*. Pesticide is primarily arsenic trioxide or white arsenic. Also known as "*poudre de succession*." **(Pronounces this perfectly!)** That's French for "inheritance powder." The aristocracy often used it to bump off their relatives to seize the throne.

**Inspector Broom:** French! Of course, it has to be *French!* Although, that was very astute of you, Sergeant. I'm thoroughly impressed. And you know all this how?

**Sgt. Boswell:** I like to think it comes from years of extensive field work, *ma'am*.

**Inspector Broom:** I take it the preliminary lab report came back.

**Sgt. Boswell:** And . . . the lab report came back. The champagne consumed by Mr. Nomoney was, indeed, laced with arsenic. It's definitely a case of murder!

**Inspector Broom:** Right! Finally we're getting somewhere. Be sure to check Mr. Nomoney's glass for fingerprints.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Um, Inspector, you're not going to like this, but the coroner mentioned one glass has gone missing.

**Inspector Broom:** What? You're just now telling me this?

**Sgt. Boswell:** Sorry, ma'am. There were seven people drinking champagne, but only six glasses were recovered from the scene. I checked just now, they're part of a set of twelve. Six glasses are back in the cupboard. Someone must have slipped the missing glass among the others.

**Inspector Broom:** How could this happen, and under our very noses no less? This does not inspire confidence in police methods, Sergeant. Round up everyone, I want them here immediately. We're going to get to the bottom of this.

**(Sgt. Boswell exits to gather the household. Inspector Broom paces back and forth muttering to herself. She stops pacing as everyone returns on stage.)**

**Inspector Broom:** It appears we have some new developments. Enlighten them, Sergeant.

**(Inspector Broom moves back. Sgt. Boswell steps forward and holds up the paper bag for everyone to see.)**



**Sgt. Boswell:** I have here a box containing pesticide, arsenic to be more precise. I found it under the kitchen sink. Can anyone tell me how it got there?

**(Each looks at the others with suspicion. Sgt Boswell suddenly accuses Cook.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** Why would a cook keep arsenic in the kitchen? Are you having problems with creepy crawlers? Or do you use it for a bit of extra spice?

**Cook:** Not me, sir! I would never –

**Sgt. Boswell:** Then tell us where this pesticide came from.

**Cook:** There's plenty in the gardener's shed. Help yourself.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Have you used any recently?

**Cook:** Don't be daft. I wouldn't allow that muck near my kitchen. Why would I? Someone put it there to frame me.

**Inspector Broom:** Have you seen anyone near the gardener's shed lately?

**Cook:** Believe it or not, it was the gardeners. You might want to question them.

**Inspector Broom: (Sarcastically)** Why didn't I think of that? Thanks for the tip. We've already established your motive for murder. Don't go anywhere. I'll speak to you later.

**(Cook hurriedly exits.)**

**Sir Edward:** See here, Inspector, you can't believe Cook is a murderer. She's the most trustworthy employee I've ever had except for Nivens here. And he's the salt of the earth. There's no call to cast suspicion on anyone here.

**Inspector Broom: (Holds up her hand to interrupt him speaking)** There's more. A key piece of evidence has gone missing: the glass used to poison Mr. Nomoney. What can you tell me about that?

**Sir Percy:** Anyone could have taken that glass. There was a lot of confusion at the time.

**Inspector Broom:** Such a thoughtful poisoner – cleans the incriminating evidence and places it back in the cupboard. I suggest, Sir Edward, you were the intended victim, not Mr. Nomoney. He was killed by accident. Do you have any idea who might want to harm you?

**Sir Edward:** Nonsense! No one would dare do something so despicable. I can personally vouch for everyone.

**(Frustrated, Inspector Broom makes gestures “shooing” the others out of the room.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Everyone get out! I want a private word with Sir Edward.

**(Sgt. Boswell herds everyone out of the room and closes the door behind them. Inspector Broom moves closer to Sir Edward.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Sir Edward, you cannot ignore the obvious fact we have a body. Someone wants you dead. Any idea who?

**Sir Edward:** If I had to single out one person it would have been Harold, but we know that's not possible. I cannot imagine anyone else wanting to harm me.

**Inspector Broom:** Have you considered your son's return creates a problem for someone? A twisted mind sees their problem as so extreme that murder is the only solution.

**Sir Edward:** No, no, no. I made generous provisions for everyone named in my will prior to Eddie's telegram. He will be well provided for, of course, but no one can believe they will be inconvenienced by Eddie's return.

**Inspector Broom:** What if people don't know this and someone intends to maintain the status quo?

**Sir Edward:** Then I'll disinherit the entire lot of ungrateful beggars! I might just do it anyway! No one tells me what to do with my money.

**(SFX. The sound of a door quietly closing causes all three to look around. Obviously, someone had been listening to their conversation. Inspector Broom motions for the sergeant to find out who was listening. Sgt. Boswell moves quickly, briefly exits and then returns shaking his head.)**

**Inspector Broom:** May I suggest you do nothing rash? Sit on it for a few days, at least until we can determine who tried to poison you.

**Sir Edward:** I'll do what I can, but this is beyond the pale!

**Inspector Broom:** Nevertheless, you should take precautions. Trust no one! The poison in Mr. Nomoney's drink didn't appear by magic.

**(SFX. A grandfather clock in the foyer strikes midnight.)**

**Inspector Broom:** It's late, so we'll be off. We'll return in the morning and begin again.

**(Inspector Broom and Sgt. Boswell exit. Lady Eleanor enters and approaches Sir Edward.)**

**Lady Eleanor:** Edward, I . . . I wanted to say I'm sorry for the way things turned out between us. Is there any chance for us to start again?

**Sir Edward:** That's interesting. The Inspector just warned me not to trust anyone. So, what are you up to now?

**Lady Eleanor:** I know I've behaved badly, but if we could try once more things will be different this time. I'm sure of it. I want to save our marriage.

**Sir Edward:** **(Laughs out loud; then turns hateful)** I'm afraid you've left it a bit too late. When Eddie returns, he will take charge of the estate. Now that I'm retired I have no use for *excess baggage*.

**Lady Eleanor:** What do you mean by that?

**Sir Edward:** You needn't worry. I'll provide you with a comfortable flat in London, and a little something to tide you over while you learn to support yourself.

**Lady Eleanor:** **(Dripping with sarcasm)** Oh, how very generous of you, Edward. I feel so secure knowing my future is in your capable hands.

**Sir Edward:** **(Laughs)** Think nothing of it, my dear, it's the least I could do. The *very* least.

**(Sir Edward turns his back refusing to speak further. Angrily, Lady Eleanor storms out. Nivens enters from the right and turns off the nearest lamp. Half the stage is now dark. Nivens moves to the desk, but Sir Edward motions him away.)**

**Sir Edward:** Leave it. I'll be a while longer. I have some matters to attend to.

**Nivens:** As you wish, sir. May I prepare a nightcap?

**Sir Edward:** No thank you, and goodnight, Nivens. You're my rock in a desert of shifting sand.

**(Nivens exits. Sir Edward sits at the desk and begins writing. The only light now on stage is an extremely low wattage desk lamp and a dim spotlight directly on Sir Edward. The rest of the stage is almost completely dark.**

**After a few seconds a dark figure enters dressed head to toe in black to conceal his/her identity, and crosses behind Sir Edward. The dark figure is in silhouette as the stage is nearly blacked out.**

**The dark figure winds what looks like a cord around his/her hands then quickly drops it over Sir Edward's head and chokes him to death.**

**After a moment, Sir Edward slumps face down on the desk. The dark figure retreats. For a few beats, the scene on stage shows Sir Edward lying across the desk.)**

**(Curtains fall.)**

**End of Act 1, Scene 2. Intermission.**

**Act 2****Scene 1 – Great Room**

**(At rise, it is mid-morning. Inspector Broom is writing up her notes while waiting for Sgt. Boswell, who is running late. The body has been removed.)**

**Since no one was prepared for an overnight stay, when everyone reappears on stage they are dressed much the same as they were in the previous scene, but with subtle differences (see stage notes) except for Lady Eleanor, who appears in an extremely elegant nightgown and robe.**

**Martie is seated on the sofa. Sgt. Boswell comes charging in and immediately starts complaining.)**

**Sgt. Boswell:** I wish these hoity-toity, high society snobs would hold off murdering each other long enough for a bloke to finish breakfast. I'm so bone tired, I feel like I'm dragging my . . .

**Inspector Broom:** *Alibis*, Sergeant! We need to check everyone's alibi for the time of the murder. Get cracking now, and no more of that language. I find it in poor taste.

**Sgt. Boswell:** Poor taste? C'mon, Inspector. You've got to let a bloke blow off a little steam now and then. Besides, you can bet when I find out who did these blinking murders, I personally will kill that son-of-a- . . .

**Inspector Broom:** *Be* sure to check the windows and doors for signs of a break-in, too. Without fail, someone will suggest this is the work of a local madman because it's '*simply not possible*' it could be one of them!

**Sgt. Boswell:** **(With a hint of admiration)** I wholeheartedly agree with you, ma'am. Y'know, I've found the landed gentry always stick together no matter how serious the charge. The stories I could tell you –

**Inspector Broom:** I'd love to hear them, Sergeant. You can tell me over a pint, but right now we've got work to do.

**(Sgt. Boswell crosses to check the French window. He moves to the desk where he picks up several pages then exits. Inspector Broom sits in the chair opposite Martie.)**

**Inspector Broom:** Suppose you describe for me what happened this morning.

**Martie:** I came down early to lay out some letters for Sir Edward's signature. I was hoping to catch the morning post.

**Inspector Broom:** Earlier you said you couldn't understand why anyone would kill Mr. Nomoney, but I believe Sir Edward was the intended victim. Think carefully, who has a big enough reason to kill the Judge, and why?

**Martie:** **(Makes a show of serious thought)** Hmm . . . no one comes to mind. It doesn't seem possible. It doesn't seem real. When I came in and saw Sir Edward sprawled across the desk . . . oh, it was horrible!

**Inspector Broom:** You didn't think to check if he was merely asleep or had taken ill?

**Martie:** No, I was too frightened. I think I screamed. That nice Paul Collier came in from over there **(indicates the hall door)**.

**Inspector Broom:** After you screamed, how long did it take Mr. Collier to arrive?

Martie: Oh, almost immediately. He must have been on his way down. I guess he's an early riser like me.

Inspector Broom: Almost immediately, you say? By some chance, you two didn't happen to meet earlier, did you?

Martie: **(Scandalized)** *Certainly not, Inspector!*

Inspector Broom: Okay, that will be all, Miss Pants. And please remain here at the manor for the time being. Ask Sir Percy to step in, if you please.

**(Martie exits in a great huff. Inspector Broom continues writing up her notes. Shortly thereafter, Sir Percy enters.)**

Inspector Broom: Sir Percy, I understand you called the police upon discovering the Judge had been murdered, is that correct?

Sir Percy: Not exactly. I had to warn Paul not to touch the body. You see, he was about to do so, but I thought it prudent to wait for the police.

Inspector Broom: Good thinking, sir. Carry on.

Sir Percy: I instructed Nivens to ring up the police and told everyone else to remain here.

Inspector Broom: So, you arrived after Miss Pants and Mr. Collier, right? Who else was here?

Sir Percy: Only myself . . . well, and Lady Eleanor. We happened to come down at the same time – from separate rooms, I assure you! We were looking forward to our morning coffee when the commotion started. We heard a scream and came directly here.



Inspector Broom: Who arrived next?

Sir Percy: Let's see . . . I'm not sure. I got distracted when Lady Eleanor nearly fainted. Paul helped me carry her to the sofa. It must have been Cook because suddenly she was there with hot water and a towel for Lady Eleanor.

Inspector Broom: Did you notice anything unusual when you arrived? Something out of place or not quite right?

Sir Percy: I'm afraid not. Although I remember thinking how strange everyone looked still in their evening attire, like we'd just come from an all-night party. Now it feels like we're destined to live in these same clothes for an eternity.

Inspector Broom: You may be right about that. Since no one is leaving soon I hope they will make the best of it. Thank you, Sir Percy, that's all for now.

**(Sir Percy exits. Sgt. Boswell enters and approaches Inspector Broom.)**

Inspector Broom: Anything to report, Sergeant?

Sgt. Boswell: You bet! Blimey! You wouldn't believe the spread they put on for breakfast around here!

Inspector Broom: I meant related to the case.

Sgt. Boswell: Nah, the place is buttoned up tight. Nothing doing with a break-in. Almost managed to nick a bit of toast and marmalade except for that blinking Cook hanging about keeping an eye on things.

Inspector Broom: I want you to interview Lady Eleanor while I have a look around. And, Sergeant, try to behave yourself!

**(Sgt. Boswell renders a short salute as Inspector Broom exits. Lady Eleanor sweeps in and crosses to the sofa. Sgt. Boswell sits in the chair facing her.)**

Sgt. Boswell: I know this is a difficult time, ma'am, but I need to ask you a few questions. Could you describe your relationship with Sir Edward?

Lady Eleanor: I beg your pardon, Sergeant, but how is that remotely relevant to my husband's death? Shall I also describe what I had for breakfast, would that be relevant as well?

Sgt. Boswell: **(Mutters under his breath)** Some of us haven't had the pleasure. **(Continues questioning)** If you're going to take that attitude, ma'am, then let's get right to it. Where were you when the Judge dropped . . . uh, I mean, expired?

Lady Eleanor: I find your questions impertinent, Sergeant. However, I'm sure I was in bed when he was found. At least, I don't recall being disturbed.

Sgt. Boswell: **(Sarcastically)** Disturb your sleep? Perish the thought! We wouldn't want that. So, when was the last time you saw your husband alive?

Lady Eleanor: Let me think . . . it was just before I went to bed. In fact, you and the Inspector had just left.

Sgt. Boswell: That was around midnight. And you didn't see him again until the body was discovered this morning?

Lady Eleanor: I remember Edward stayed up late to write some letters. Sir Percy and I happened to come down to breakfast at the same time. Actually, we didn't even get a chance to sit down when we heard a scream.

Sgt. Boswell: Did you two have an argument – you and the Judge, that is?

Lady Eleanor: We never argued. By mutual agreement, our disregard for one another was nearly perfect. He ignored me, and I did my best to avoid him.

Sgt. Boswell: That must get awkward when entertaining a houseful of guests.

Lady Eleanor: Really, Sergeant, you haven't a clue about the ways of the landed gentry. Let's just say I have my own particular interests, and I'm sure Edward had his. We left each other to our respective vices. Are you starting to get the picture?

Sgt. Boswell: **(Embarrassed)** Um, the picture. Yes, much clearer now that you mention it.

Lady Eleanor: We live in hope.

Sgt. Boswell: With the Judge now deceased, I assume you inherit the estate?

Lady Eleanor: Of course, I will. That is, along with Jane and her cousin, Eddie.

Sgt. Boswell: Just so I'm clear, this Eddie person, he's not your son, but the Judge's? By a previous marriage, I assume?

Lady Eleanor: You assume correctly, Sergeant. What are you driving at?

Sgt. Boswell: Just that, in spite of your unusual relationship with the Judge, you come out of this extremely well off. Allow me to be direct; did you kill your husband for his money?

Lady Eleanor: **(Outraged!)** You insolent little man! How dare you suggest such a thing! I shall report you to your superiors!

Sgt. Boswell: My superior? She's in the next room, shall I get her? . . .  
**(Pause)** . . . I still need an answer, madam. For the record, you're saying you had no reason to want your husband dead?

Lady Eleanor: Get out! Get out of here right now, I want to be alone!

**(Sgt. Boswell hurriedly exits. Sir Percy enters and quickly joins Lady Eleanor.)**

Sir Percy: Darling, are you alright? I heard shouting.

Lady Eleanor: **(Miraculously recovers from hysterical outburst; continues calmly)** Can you believe it? That plodding policeman accused *me* of killing Edward.

Sir Percy: He's trying to bluff you into making an admission. Did he offer any evidence?

Lady Eleanor: No, but he sounded so confident that I did it, even after I threatened to inform his superiors about his outrageous behavior.

Sir Percy: Then don't worry about it, he has nothing. We're still in the clear.

Lady Eleanor: It's such a relief now that Edward is finally out of the way. I knew you wouldn't let me down, darling.

Sir Percy: Hold on . . . I didn't kill Sir Edward. I thought you did.

Lady Eleanor: You thought what? No, you were supposed to take care of that. You're the man after all. Don't men take care of such things?

Sir Percy: Not if you want to keep your neck out of a noose, you don't. It wasn't me who dispatched Sir Edward, but if it wasn't you . . . then who . . . ?

Lady Eleanor: Something's wrong, dreadfully wrong. If you didn't do it . . . and I know I didn't do it . . .

**(Martie enters and approaches Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy. They immediately stop talking.)**

Martie: I'm glad I found you. I was hoping to have a quiet word about my future here at Banfield Manor.

Lady Eleanor: Oh, do you? A bit too soon to worry about that, isn't it? Not to mention inappropriate, but then I heard you lack a certain amount of discretion.

Martie: I'll get right to the point. I want to know what my options are now that Sir Edward is no longer with us.

Lady Eleanor: I should have thought it obvious. Given the circumstances, your services are no longer needed. **(Wiggles her fingers)** Good-bye.

Martie: On the contrary, I believe I could be very useful to you, perhaps as your personal secretary?

Lady Eleanor: What do I need with a secretary? There's nothing for you to do.

Martie: Why not keep me on as a loyal and silent employee rather than one with loose lips?

Sir Percy: You jumped up little tart! Do you know who you're speaking to? Show some respect!

Martie: **(With sly innocence)** It's just that I'm confused about what to do. Should I tell the police what they want to know, or should I keep silent because it's in the best interest of the Banfield family – and for me as well? I'll let you make the choice.

Lady Eleanor: Why should I do that?

Martie: It's simple. I overheard you two talking last evening. I know what you had in store for Sir Edward. And I must say the results were spectacular!

Lady Eleanor: You're bluffing. If you knew anything you'd go straight to the police.

Martie: I'm finding it hard to choose between that satisfied feeling you get when you've helped the police, and that satisfied feeling you get when you know your future is secured.

Lady Eleanor: You think we murdered my husband, do you? That's ridiculous. And what was our motive?

Martie: Money, of course! Financial security. And I want nothing more than what you want for yourself, only on a smaller scale.

Sir Percy: **(Takes a threatening step toward Martie)** You impertinent little . . . I should break your neck right now and be done with it.

Martie: **(Backs up quickly)** Oh, but you won't! I've made certain arrangements. Should anything happen to me, you'll be the first ones the police come looking for. So, don't threaten me, Sir Percy!

Lady Eleanor: **(Places a restraining hand on Sir Percy's arm)** Let's all calm down, shall we? Now that Edward's gone, there's no reason why we all can't get what we want.

**(Sir Percy backs down, but still glares at Martie.)**

Martie: I was hoping you'd say that. I could be very useful to you once you inherit the estate.

Lady Eleanor: But, I won't inherit the entire estate. There's Jane and Eddie to consider.

Martie: I've been thinking about that. Sir Edward didn't have time to file a new will, right? And aren't there laws about not profiting from a crime . . . ?

**(Jane enters carrying an overcoat, hat, and briefcase and places them on the nearest chair. She crosses to join the others.)**

Jane; Sorry to intrude, but have you seen the Inspector?

Martie: **(Makes a show of looking around)** Well, she's obviously not here.

Lady Eleanor: You'll forgive me for not staying, but I have to make funeral arrangements. Percy, be a dear and lend a hand.

**(Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy exit.)**

Martie: Well, isn't this convenient?

Jane: Convenient? What do you mean?

Martie: I was hoping we could have a private chat.

Jane: We have nothing to say to one another, thank you very much.

Martie: Oh, but we do. My friend at the bank . . . you remember the ELF, don't you? So cute. She tells me you're one of their most frequent customers.

Jane: I warned you to stay out of my business –

Martie: Now don't go making threats. You haven't heard the best part.

Jane: What is the 'best part?'

Martie: Where you and I become partners. I want my share of all that lovely money you've been siphoning from the Judge's account. Or else.

**(Jane glares angrily at Martie, and turns her back on her.)**

Martie: Just so you know, I've made certain provisions in case I should have an unfortunate accident. Unlike Sir Edward, I'm not so trusting. I've seen what you're capable of.

Jane: **(Whirls about facing Martie)** You think that I . . . ? Preposterous! Why should I kill Sir Edward? Like you said, he trusted me.

Martie: Well, I don't! But, if it wasn't you, then who?



Jane: I should think Eleanor and Percy are the most obvious suspects, but I wouldn't know about that. Now listen to me, don't go saying crazy things to the police or anything. We can work something out. I need a couple days to make arrangements. Do we have a deal?

Martie: I can afford to be patient, but if you try any funny business I'll have a nice little heart-to-heart chat with Inspector Broom.

**(Suddenly, Inspector Broom enters. Jane and Martie immediately stop talking.)**

Inspector Broom: Did someone mention my name? Ah, there you are, Miss Talifaro. I wanted to follow up with you, if I may.

Martie: I think I'll go somewhere else.

**(Martie exits.)**

Jane: I wanted a word with you, too, Inspector. I have urgent business in London and will be away for a day or two.

Inspector Broom: I'm afraid that's not possible. Your presence is required here until we conclude our investigations.

Jane: You don't understand. There are financial matters that affect the Judge's estate. I must get to the bank by tomorrow.

Inspector Broom: You're the one that doesn't understand. Let me be perfectly clear, if you attempt to leave I will arrest you for obstructing my investigation.

Jane: If I don't get to London then you'll have to explain any financial losses the estate suffers. Our solicitors will see to it.

Inspector Broom: Thanks for the warning, but I'll take my chances. Although, feel free to call whomever you need to speak to.

Jane: Fine. As you wish, but on your own head be it. I believe you have more questions for me?

Inspector Broom: Yes, I do. Tell me, what is the current state of Sir Edward's holdings?

Jane: What do you mean?

Inspector Broom: It's simple enough. I'm trying to understand who gains by Sir Edward's death.

Jane: I get it, Inspector. You think I have a motive for killing him. It's true, I will inherit a sizable portion of the estate, but so will Lady Eleanor. We are, after all, his only surviving heirs. But, I categorically deny I had anything to do with my uncle's death.

Inspector Broom: Not the *only heir*, Miss Talifaro. There's your cousin, Eddie. He also has a claim to the estate, does he not?

Jane: Not if the existing will is still valid, which means Eddie has no legal claim. However, I will see that he is well provided for. After all, he's family.

Inspector Broom: How thoughtful of you. Do you think Lady Eleanor will be as accommodating?

Jane: Ha! If she were given the entire estate it still wouldn't be enough. There's no amount that could ever satisfy our Eleanor.

Inspector Broom: Do you believe she's capable of murder?

Jane: I wouldn't rule it out. She is focused solely on self-preservation. Do yourself a favor, Inspector. Never get between Eleanor and what she wants out of life.

Inspector Broom: I'll remember that. **(Starts to leave then turns back.)** Um . . . this is on a completely different topic, if you don't mind. I was admiring your scarf; it's very becoming on you.

Jane: **(Taken aback)** Well – thank you, Inspector. Since none of us came prepared, Lady Eleanor generously made her wardrobe available. And thank God for low-heeled shoes! **(Turns her foot for inspection)** Those high heels were killing my feet.

Inspector Broom: I love the bold colors; it somehow changes your entire look, although, against that black dress you couldn't go wrong.

Jane: It's no big thing, really. A splash of color here . . . a small addition there . . . a bit of jewelry, and – *voila!* – a whole new ensemble. Unlike a gentleman's attire; they can get away with wearing the same old tweeds and old school ties every day of the week and it wouldn't matter.

Inspector Broom: Oh, I agree. Men don't have to try at all, but then who would notice? I've never been successful at coordinating colors or accessories. Besides, police regulations don't allow for individual creativity.

Jane: If I may say without offense, Inspector, go lightly on the make-up. It's the one time where less is more, so to speak.

**(Inspector Broom hurriedly takes out her handkerchief to remove the excess rouge from her cheeks.)**

Inspector Broom: I hadn't realized . . . oh, how embarrassing! I told you I'm no good at this. Thank you, Miss Talifaro. Thank you very much! May I . . . may I call you Jane?

Jane: No, you may not. Getting a bit too familiar, aren't we?

Inspector Broom: **(Quickly recovers from being put in her place)** I'm so sorry! That's all for now. And remember what I said; do not attempt to leave, *Miss Talifaro!*

**(Jane exits. Inspector Broom wipes her face again then scribbles in her notebook. The hall door opens and Cook stands silently in the doorway until Inspector Broom finally takes notice of her.)**

Cook: Can you spare a moment for me?

Inspector Broom: Please come in. How may I help?

**(Cook crosses to join Inspector Broom.)**

Cook: I don't want any more trouble, that's all. What with Mr. Harold being poisoned, and the Sergeant finding that arsenic in my kitchen. And now the Judge. Something's been bothering me all morning that I think you should know about.

Inspector Broom: By all means, please tell me what's troubling you.

Cook: It's . . . it's my kitchen, see? I mean, it's mine. I do all the cooking around here. I serve the food, and clean up the mess. Nothing leaves my kitchen that I don't serve myself. It's always been that way.

Inspector Broom: Okay, we've established the kitchen is your private domain. What are you trying to say?

Cook: Private domain, yes, that's it. So, if the kitchen is my domain as you say then why was my stove still warm this morning when I went to prepare breakfast?

Inspector Broom: I don't understand. Stoves get hot enough for cooking, and when you're done they eventually cool down. So what?

Cook: My stove is never warm when I come down to start breakfast. The first thing I have to do is stoke it up before I begin cooking. It's what I always do. This morning, the stove was still warm to the touch. So I asked myself why?

Inspector Broom: Why, indeed? And what conclusions did you come to?

Cook: Somebody was in my kitchen last night. Maybe they wanted some warm milk or a pot of coffee. But, then I noticed the service tray was untouched, and there were no cups or saucers in the sink for me to clean up.

Inspector Broom: Maybe whoever prepared the hot drink also cleaned up afterwards. Is that not possible?

Cook: That's a laugh. This lot can barely clean their own backsides much less clean up after themselves. No one ever comes downstairs, yet the same night the Judge gets knocked off someone is roaming around my kitchen doing who-knows-what.

Inspector Broom: And you have no idea who it might have been?

Cook: Not at all. That's why I wanted you to know before someone tries to frame me again for something I didn't do.

Inspector Broom: Very interesting, if I may say so.

Cook: You can say whatever you like, just put it in your notebook that Cook had nothing to do with these goings-on in the middle of the night. Go ahead, write it down.

Inspector Broom: You can be sure I will make a note of it. It's an extraordinary event to say the least.

**(Cook exits. Paul enters and joins Inspector Broom as she continues writing up her notes.)**

Paul: Inspector, when are we allowed to leave this dreadful place? If this is what passes for country hospitality, they can keep it.

Inspector Broom: Like everyone else, Mr. Collier, your presence is required until we conclude our investigations.

Paul: I've spent years cooped up against my will, but not a minute longer. You can reach me at the Boar's Head Inn in the village. Perhaps there I'll get a good night's sleep.

Inspector Broom: I strongly advise you not to leave. Tell me, did you not sleep well last night?

Paul: Not a wink! And now there are two murders, and the weekend only half over. I felt safer in prison compared with this!

Inspector Broom: If you couldn't sleep, what did you do? Did you leave your room at any time?

Paul: I stayed in bed listening to the rain all night.

Inspector Broom: You didn't, for instance, go down to the kitchen for a late night snack?

Paul: As I said, I was in bed.

Inspector Broom: Other than the storm, did you hear anything that could help pinpoint the exact time of the murder?

Paul: Afraid not, Inspector. I was in the west wing, and the murder occurred here in the main part of the house. The pounding rain and thunder drowned out any noises I might have heard.

Inspector Broom: What time did you come down this morning?

Paul: I can't be precise. It was early, say . . . seven o'clock? As I came down the stairs I heard a scream. When I entered the room I saw the Judge slumped over the desk and Martie standing nearby in a frenzy.

Inspector Broom: You say you entered the great room from the hall door?

Paul: Yes, that's correct.

Inspector Broom: But, your room is in the west wing. Why didn't you come from that direction?

Paul: I got lost, didn't I? It's a big house. I missed the back stairs and ended up wandering the halls until I came to the main staircase, the one that leads straight out the front door. I would have left, too, but I heard Martie cry out.

Inspector Broom: You'd have left without paying your respects to your host? That wouldn't have been proper etiquette, now would it, Mr. Collier?

Paul: Who cares? Let's face it, I don't have a penny to my name, and I've spent the last two days in the only clothes I own. I don't have a man-servant to lay out a new suit for every occasion.

Inspector Broom: No offense, but a change of clothes would be a good start. Of all people, why did you accept the Judge's invitation?

Paul: You could call it morbid curiosity, if you like.

Inspector Broom: What did you hope to gain?

Paul: I admit I was surprised when the Judge sent word he wanted to meet me. I decided to take him up on his offer. After prison, a few days in the country sounded like heaven. Shows how little I know.

Inspector Broom: If you hadn't come here, where would you have gone?

Paul: I grew up in a small village called Wesley, south of here. I was hoping someone who knew my family before I got sent away would give me a job. When in need there's no place like home. Right, Inspector?

Inspector Broom: I suppose so. Your mother . . . she's no longer living?

Paul: She passed away while I was locked up. I'm convinced she died from the shame I caused her. I'll never forgive myself for that.

Inspector Broom: And your father? What happened to him?

Paul: I heard he may have gone into service.

Inspector Broom: You mean domestic service? Did you try to trace him? There's always the labor exchange.

Paul: He never once visited me in prison. I'm not sure where he ended up, and I don't care. It doesn't matter now.



Inspector Broom: I'm sorry for your loss. I suggest you focus on the future, Mr. Collier. New beginnings and all that. What's done is done.

Paul: We can't change our past, but we can right old wrongs.

Inspector Broom: What do you mean by that?

Paul: Oh, nothing. Just that I stirred up a lot of trouble years ago. Now I hope to live a blameless life to make up for my mistakes.

Inspector Broom: I'm sure you'll be fine. Regarding the Judge, you claimed to have no animosity toward him, but that's not true, is it?

Paul: The truth is I hated the old man. He stole the best years of my life from me like he's done to others. I'm surprised it took this long for someone to even the score.

Inspector Broom: Whoever killed Sir Edward is in this house, I'm convinced of that. Among this small circle of people, is there anyone you strongly suspect?

Paul: I'd say you're spoiled for choices, Inspector. Pick anyone. Although, there is one person who appeared deeply affected when the Judge announced his son's return. I sensed an underlying panic.

Inspector Broom: Don't keep me in suspense, who is it?

Paul: Miss Talifaro, the Judge's niece. She's hiding something, of that I'm quite sure.

**(SFX. At that moment a loud crash is heard in the front hall. Martie staggers into the great room and collapses.)**

**Inspector Broom and Paul rush to her side. Paul wraps an arm around her shoulders to lift and cradle her as she starts to revive.)**

Inspector Broom: What happened, Miss Pants? Are you alright?

Martie: **(Pointing toward the hall door)** Just now . . . in the hall . . . a vase missed my head by inches! Someone tried to kill me!

**(Curtains fall.)**

**End of Act 2, Scene 1.**

**Act 2**

**Scene 2 – Great Room**

**(At rise, moments later, Paul still cradles Martie in his arms with Inspector Broom standing over them. Sgt. Boswell and Sir Percy enter on the run and stop upon seeing everyone.)**

Sgt. Boswell: I heard a crash. Are you alright, Inspector?

Inspector Broom: Quickly, Sergeant, the hall! Someone tried to kill Miss Pants!

Martie: It's no use, they're gone by now. That vase must have fallen from the second floor. It was so close. I'm going to be next, aren't I, Inspector? Please, I don't want to die!

**(Together, Sgt. Boswell and Paul lift Martie to her feet. Martie throws her arms around Paul's neck and cries as she presses her face against his chest.)**

Inspector Broom: No one leaves this room until I say so. Sergeant, get everyone in here now.

**(Sgt. Boswell exits to summon the remaining household. Paul helps Martie to the sofa and they sit close together. The others arrive and form a semi-circle around Inspector Broom. Sgt. Boswell moves behind the sofa table.)**

Inspector Broom: I want to know your exact movements for the past few minutes beginning with you, Miss Talifaro.

Jane: I was in my room when I heard the crash, but I was nowhere near the stairwell, I swear it.

Inspector Broom: And where were you, Lady Eleanor?

Lady Eleanor: I was in my bedroom as well when I thought I heard a small bomb explode. Really, Inspector, I do not appreciate being grilled in this manner!

Inspector Broom: **(Pointing to Cook)** How about you?

Cook: I was in the kitchen, of course. Someone's got to serve breakfast.

Sgt. Boswell: **(Grumbling as he pats his belly)** I could make do with an egg sandwich.

Inspector Broom: Please focus on something other than your stomach, Sergeant.

Sgt. Boswell: Just saying.

Inspector Broom: And you, Nivens, where were you when Miss Pants was nearly killed?

Nivens: I was polishing the silver in my pantry. See for yourself, I left everything as it was when the Sergeant came for me.

Sgt. Boswell: It's true, I can attest to that.

Inspector Broom: Not one of you thought to investigate when the vase came crashing down?

Lady Eleanor: It's nothing to do with me. That's what I pay the servants to do, sort out these trifling matters.

Martie: Trifling matter? Thanks a lot. I was nearly killed! Now that we're all here, Inspector, perhaps you can tell us when we're allowed to leave. We're like sitting ducks getting picked off one by one.

Inspector Broom: There is a killer loose in this very house, and he or she is one of you. I should think you'd be a bit more concerned about finding out who it is.

**(Everyone looks around and withdraws to themselves.)**

Inspector Broom: Let's take a moment to assess the situation, shall we? First, Mr. Harold Nomoney was poisoned to death in a botched attempt on Sir Edward's life. Shortly afterwards, the lord of the manor himself is killed in a brutal manner.

Sgt. Boswell: Don't forget someone tampered with the evidence. The champagne glass didn't clean itself and hop back on the shelf.

Inspector Broom: Right, Sergeant. And there's the arsenic taken from the gardener's shed. All of you had the means and opportunity. In time, I'm sure we'll establish each of you had a motive for murder as well.

Lady Eleanor: That's total nonsense, Inspector. I had no motive for killing my husband.

Sgt. Boswell: Ah! Now that's where you're full of . . .

Inspector Broom: *Shall* we stick to the facts, Sergeant? Just the facts, if you please.

Sgt. Boswell: **(With a flourish, he produces papers from an inside pocket)** Okay, let's talk motive. I have Sir Edward's letter to his solicitors where he planned to leave his *entire* estate to his son! The rest of you, including Nivens and Cook, still would have inherited, but your legacies were significantly reduced. The letter was never sent. There's your motive.

Lady Eleanor: Your entire case is based on gratuitous accusations.

Inspector Broom: On the contrary, Sir Edward suspected you and Sir Percy were conspiring against him. It looks to me like his suspicions were well-founded.

Lady Eleanor: Let's not pretend Edward cared all that much for me. I was merely an ornament to make him look good wherever we went. The 'noble' judge was an insecure little man who abused his power over people whenever he could.

**(Sir Percy, Martie, Cook, and Paul nod their heads and murmur in agreement.)**

Inspector Broom: Now that he's out of the way, your pampered lifestyle can continue unabated. I'd call that a credible motive.

Sir Percy: Be careful about throwing around accusations you cannot prove, Inspector. There are strict laws against slander in this country, as you well know.

Inspector Broom: Sir Edward knew his wife was having an affair with his so-called friend. Had the Judge lived to file a new will, she would have inherited almost nothing when the prodigal son returned. Could your relationship survive the strain? I think not.

Lady Eleanor: Eddie's return has no bearing. As his wife and heir, I'm entitled to a significant portion of Edward's estate, the same as Jane.

Jane: Don't drag me into your little drama. Besides, the will was signed well before we knew Eddie was still alive. It remains valid and practically set in stone.

Sir Percy: That settles it. There was no reason for anyone here to kill Sir Edward.

Inspector Broom: It settles nothing. I submit Sir Edward was murdered to prevent him changing his will in favor of his son.

Sir Percy: It had to be the work of some lunatic on the loose, Inspector. It couldn't have been any of us here.

Sgt. Boswell: By God, it's just like you called it, Inspector!

Sir Percy: What's that? Called what?

Sgt. Boswell: The Inspector predicted one of you would claim the murders were committed by some madman. She warned me that someone would try that old trick.

Lady Eleanor: Are you mocking us, Inspector? Do you think this is some sort of parlor game? I suggest you start taking these murders more seriously!

Inspector Broom: I do take them seriously, just as I know the murderer is here now in this very room.

**(Each looks around and observes the others with suspicion.)**

Inspector Broom: Whoever it is, they've killed twice already, and they are willing to kill again. Just ask Miss Pants about that.

Martie: Then I want police protection now! I can't take it anymore. I'll tell you what you want to know, just don't let them kill me!

**(There's a collective gasp of surprise.)**

Inspector Broom: Miss Pants, are you confessing to the murders of Sir Edward Banfield and Mr. Harold Nomoney?

Lady Eleanor: I knew it! I knew the little hussy was the murderer!

**(Martie and Paul rise in response to Lady Eleanor's accusation.)**

Martie: No, not me! Let me explain. Last night I overheard Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy planning to do away with the Judge. And sure enough this morning he's dead. You two murdered Sir Edward!

Lady Eleanor: She's lying, I tell you!

Sir Percy: She's making it all up!

Inspector Broom: Everyone, quiet! Help me understand, Miss Pants. To what exactly are you confessing?

Martie: When I found the Judge dead, I said to myself they've gone and done it. I saw an opportunity to make a little money, so I suggested they could buy my silence. After all, I have to look after my own interests, don't I?

Sgt. Boswell: Blackmail, is it? The dirtiest game in the book!

Inspector Broom: And who's to say she wouldn't come back for more? So you decided to end it right away. From two floors, that vase would have silenced your blackmailer forever. Isn't that true, Lady Eleanor?

Lady Eleanor: I did no such thing, and besides she had it coming. It's true, the little tart tried to blackmail me, but I'm not the only one who wants her dead.

Martie: **(Bitterly)** You really want to kill me? But, I thought we had agreed . . . and to think I was going to tell you about the rest of the money. I was a fool to trust you.



Sir Percy: What money? What are you babbling on about?

Inspector Broom: Yes, I'd love to know too.

Martie: It was Jane! She's been stealing from the Judge all along. I have a friend at the bank who will confirm it.

Jane: Let's tell the whole story, shall we? Eleanor and Percy weren't the only ones being blackmailed. What little Miss Martie Pants couldn't possibly know is Sir Edward had me open a separate account, what he called his slush fund. But, she wouldn't know about that because she's a complete ninny.

Inspector Broom: How convenient the Judge isn't here to confirm or dispute your word. That's why you were so desperate to get to London. To put back the money you stole and thereby remove any threat Miss Pants held over you. It was your secret account wasn't it? Tell the truth!

Jane: **(Deep sigh)** Alright, I admit it's true. She thought she was going to waltz in and take half for herself. Well, she got lucky once, but I wouldn't have missed a second time!

**(Martie gasps and looks as if she's about to faint. Paul reaches out to help steady her.)**

Sgt. Boswell: There you have it! Means, motive, and opportunity. I submit it was the three of you – Lady Eleanor, Sir Percy, and Miss Talifaro – you three conspired to murder the Judge, killed Harold Nomoney by mistake, and attempted to murder Miss Martie Pants.

**(Total chaos erupts, each talking over the other. There is much yelling and finger-pointing.)**

Inspector Broom: **(Holds up her hands)** Quiet, please!

**(Everyone stops talking. Inspector Broom puts a hand to her forehead and moves around the stage as if deep in thought while everyone watches.)**

Inspector Broom: Of course, that's it. I've got it now!

Sgt. Boswell: Are you okay, Inspector? Would you like a glass of water? Something stronger, perhaps?

Inspector Broom: Sergeant, isn't it gratifying to know one's suspicions are spot on?

Sgt. Boswell: I'm not sure, ma'am. How so?

Inspector Broom: I couldn't remember what it was that kept bothering me, but suddenly it came to me while everyone was talking.

**(Everyone pays close attention.)**

Inspector Broom: It's crystal clear to me now. The missing pieces are finally in place. **(Indicates Jane)** That is, knowing about Miss Talifaro's embezzlement scheme, and her attempt to kill Miss Pants.

**(Indicates Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy)** And Lady Eleanor conspiring with Sir Percy to murder the Judge.

**(Indicates Martie)** And, of course, the failed attempt at blackmail by Miss Pants. But, in spite of all this, none of it explains two murders, now does it?

Sgt. Boswell: Sorry, ma'am. I know I speak for everyone here when I say I'm totally lost. Are you telling us you know who killed Sir Edward and Mr. Nomoney?

Inspector Broom: Yes, Sergeant. And you would, too, if you had been paying attention. To be fair, I missed it at first. From the start someone's been orchestrating this whole ghastly business, but there was some small detail I missed. And then I remembered what Miss Talifaro said.

Jane: Me? What was it I said?

Inspector Broom: It was when you showed me how to accessorize, and how small changes can be so dramatic – like your scarf, and Miss Pants with her pearls and colorful sweater. So subtle, yet so highly effective.

Jane: It's not hard, really. Every woman knows how to enhance her looks without too much trouble. **(Looks Inspector Broom up and down)** . . . Well, most women anyway.

Inspector Broom: You mentioned Lady Eleanor provided access to her wardrobe. That was most generous of you, too, milady.

Lady Eleanor: Merely a common courtesy. I know it's distressing to be out of one's element.

Inspector Broom: Thanks to our fashion expert, Miss Talifaro, I now realize what I missed earlier. For instance, take Lady Eleanor's stylish gown and robe. Of course, she could change clothes any time she wanted; it's her home. Her guests, however, didn't have it so easy, but with access to her wardrobe, Miss Talifaro and Miss Pants could accessorize to their heart's content. It was these subtle changes that helped me identify the murderer.

**(Inspector Broom slowly strolls around the room eyeing each one in turn and then stops.)**

Inspector Broom: It was you, Mr. Collier! You murdered Sir Edward!

**(Everyone voices their shock and disbelief.)**

Paul: That's not true! Oh sure, I hated the miserable old fool, but I didn't kill him. It was one of them! **(Paul indicates Lady Eleanor, Sir Percy, Jane, and Martie.)**

Inspector Broom: While that's plausible, sir, I'm afraid it's not possible. I finally realized what was different about you. If a subtle change can have such a dramatic effect on the ladies, it could equally apply to the men. And that's when I knew I had you!

**(Pause)** Your tie, sir. It's impossible that the tie you're wearing now is the same one you wore when you first arrived, and I can prove it.

Paul: This is absurd! I told you I've been in these same clothes for the past two days. I may be sick of them, but they're all I've got.

Sir Percy: Wait! The Inspector is absolutely correct! I should have noticed that particular pattern before. That's our old school tie you're wearing— the Boating Club! Unless, of course, you want to convince us that *you* rowed for Cambridge.

Inspector Broom: You used your own tie to strangle Sir Edward, but what did you do with it? Where did you dispose of the evidence?

Cook: My stove! It was still warm this morning after he burned it! I'll bet we can still find the ashes!

Inspector Broom: But, you still had a problem, Mr. Collier. Without being too obvious, you had to replace your tie with one similar to it. The only person who could provide that kind of assistance was you, Mr. Nivens!

**(Inspector Broom turns quickly and points an accusing finger at the butler).**

Nivens: It's simply 'Nivens,' ma'am, as I've told you before.

Inspector Broom: Nevertheless, *Nivens*, you had us going in all the wrong directions. You knew the Judge had invited an ex-con to demonstrate his alleged instincts into human nature. And you said the household was best understood when viewed through the prism of money.

You also alluded to trouble between Miss Talifaro and Miss Pants, and that Cook had something to hide. After Mr. Nomoney was mistakenly poisoned, you returned the incriminating glass to the cupboard.

Therefore, it stands to reason you replaced Mr. Collier's tie and helped him destroy the evidence. Your only mistake was choosing a tie that held significance for certain people.

**(Addresses the entire group)** You may ask why Nivens would help an ex-con to commit murder. There can be only one explanation – Nivens is Paul's father!

**(Everyone reacts and gasps in surprise.)**

Inspector Broom: Think about it. Father and son separated for years because the Judge was an interfering old fool at heart. Even with Paul's early release, the damage was done. This was payback for all those lost years. I'm right, aren't I, Nivens?

Nivens: **(After a deep sigh, he capitulates)** I hated Sir Edward for what he did to Paul and my poor wife. When a position opened here at the manor, I jumped at the chance. Then we learned Paul would be paroled early, so the Judge decided to invite him to gauge the effect his sentence had on Paul. The Judge's ego got the better of him.

Of course, I knew about the arsenic in the shed, but so did everyone else. I left it under the kitchen sink in case the police figured out it was poison and came looking for the evidence.

Then it all went horribly wrong. I hadn't counted on the storm. I went to start the generator and was out of the room when everyone selected a champagne glass. I wasn't there to ensure the Judge had the correct one. Mr. Nomoney, unfortunately, chose the wrong glass. When the Judge decided to stay up late making changes to his will, it was the perfect opportunity to carry out our plan.

Paul: **(Picks up the narrative)** I took the back way and came round the main stairs to the hall door. I knew the Judge would have his back to me. It couldn't have been easier. I slipped the tie around his neck and finished him off!

**(Simulates strangulation using a garrote)**

Paul: But then I had to get rid of the evidence. Father suggested the stove. **(Looks toward Nivens)** Neither of us stopped to think about 'old school ties,' did we? Of all the ones to choose from, I had to pick *that* one!

Nivens: We almost got away with it, son, except for a lousy thunder storm.

Inspector Broom: Don't forget the old school tie. Like the hymn says, 'blest be the tie that binds.'

**(Everyone groans out loud at Inspector Broom's feeble attempt at humor.)**

Inspector Broom: Take them down to the station, Sergeant.

Sgt. Boswell: With pleasure, ma'am. Everybody out! I've got a nice police van waiting out front.

**(The entire cast exits except for Inspector Broom.)**

Sgt. Boswell: By the way, Inspector, I believe I owe you a pint. And have I got some great stories to tell you.

Inspector Broom: I will gladly take you up on it, Sergeant. I believe we deserve a pint or two.

**(Sgt. Boswell grandly holds the door for Inspector Broom as they exit. After a few seconds, Sgt Boswell quietly sneaks back on stage. He moves down center to address the audience directly, thus breaking the fourth wall.)**

Sgt. Boswell: Hello, everyone. Well, what do you think? Not a bad score, eh?

Two done for murder. Two more for conspiracy to commit murder. One for embezzlement and attempted murder. And another for blackmail.

I guess you could say the Inspector and me; we make a pretty good team. Although she's still a bit green, she'll get better once I've had a chance to work with her.

Don't you worry though; I promise we'll be back again soon.  
**(Boswell looks over his shoulder to ensure the Inspector cannot overhear him.)** On that you can bet your . . . *derrière!*

**(Sgt. Boswell laughs as he exits. SFX. The door closes behind him with a *bang* then all is quiet.)**

**(Curtains fall.)**

**The End.**



## **Production Notes**

**SETTING:** A grand old country house somewhere in England.

**ERA:** Sometime in the 1930's, although time can be altered at director's discretion.

**STORY:** The story unfolds at the country home of retired judge, Sir Edward Banfield, who believes he is infallible when it comes to assessing someone's innocence or guilt. He invites a recently paroled ex-convict, Paul Collier, to gauge the effect of a lengthy sentence on his behavior. The judge intends to prove his insight into human nature is always correct.

Meantime, Harold Nomoney arrives – he pronounces it “Nom-Mo-Nay.” Although Harold insists his name is French everyone gets it wrong anyway. He pursues the judge's niece, Jane, and is desperate to settle into an easy life, but the judge objects to their marriage.

There are deep resentments and hidden agendas among the other characters. Jane manages the judge's portfolio and doubled his holdings, but she's hiding something. There is something sinister brewing between Lady Eleanor and Sir Percy Pews, the judge's elegant second wife and his old law partner.

The flirtatious Miss Martie Pants is a trouble-maker at heart; she gets into everyone's business and tends to rub them up the wrong way, which doesn't bode well for her. Even the innocuous domestic servants have their secrets.

With mounting tensions, it's not long before someone lashes out in lethal fashion, and soon the police are called to sort the trouble. Enter Inspector Honor Broom, interpreted as ‘on-her-broom.’ As the old adage goes, ‘a new broom sweeps clean,’ which is exactly how Inspector Broom intends to conduct her investigations. She's a bit of a bookworm with very little field experience. She is partnered with veteran policeman, Sergeant Boswell, who has a penchant for swearing, but the Inspector intercepts him at every turn and won't allow him to utter a single expletive.

Through a series of interviews, keen observation, and astute logic, Inspector Broom sorts through various clues and ties up all the loose ends to arrive at a satisfying solution to the murders. As the cast exits the stage for the final time, Sergeant Boswell has the last word . . . and the last laugh.

**STAGING:** One set: the great room at Banfield Manor, which is tastefully decorated and furnished.

**COSTUME:** At the start of the play, everyone is dressed in fashionable cloths suitable for a cocktail party, but not formal wear, except for Nivens, who always appears in a tuxedo (except for the one appearance wearing an apron with feather duster in hand).

One other exception: When Paul Collier first arrives on scene, his clothes are old, but clean and rumpled. He looks disheveled in comparison to everyone else, but that's understandable as he was just released from prison, and these are the only clothes he owns.

When Inspector Broom first arrives she is dressed in civilian clothes: Open trench coat, cream blouse and brown tweed skirt, over-sized glasses, and her unkempt frizzy hair sticks out (with or without a hat; director's discretion). However, her excessive use of make-up is noticeable, **but not applied in a clownish manner;** just a bit too much as if she's not used to wearing make-up!

**Noted wardrobe changes at the start of Act 2, Scene 1:** Since no one was prepared for an over-night stay, everyone appears in the same clothes as the previous scene with the following notable changes:

Jane wears a multi-colored scarf draped around her shoulders to accent her LBD.

Martie wears a string of pearls and a bright solid colored sweater over her original dress.

Both Jane and Martie are wearing low-heeled shoes provided by Lady Eleanor for their comfort.

Lady Eleanor is the one major exception: She appears in Act 2 wearing an extremely elegant nightgown and flowing robe. She's able to change since it is her house after all.

Paul has a slightly different striped tie, which closely matches his original tie.

Cook has a bright checked apron over her dress.

Sir Percy and Nivens remain unchanged.

**Personal Props (other than wardrobe):**

Sir Percy's wet raincoat and hat.

Niven's feather duster and apron.

Jane's hat, coat, and briefcase in anticipation of her trip to London.

Inspector Broom's handkerchief and excessive use of rouge – **again, her make-up is not applied in a clownish manner**, just a bit too much by someone not accustomed to wearing make-up.

**STAGE NOTES:**

Sir Edward Banfield is a force of nature, and as such has a dominant personality. His manner of speaking is always forceful; perhaps a bit loud, but definitely commanding or at least domineering.

Lady Eleanor always exhibits a haughty attitude and it comes out in the posh way she speaks. She considers everyone around her to be inferior, and always 'talks down' to people.

Sgt. Boswell has a penchant for swearing, but Inspector Broom intercepts him in the nick of time at every turn before he can utter a single expletive.

Miss Martie Pants always exhibits a perky, flirty attitude, and is often sarcastic. When she's on stage she walks with a perky strut. She doesn't like Jane and the two of them often make snide remarks to each other. Martie acts 'above her station' believing she's 'protected' because she works directly for Sir Edward.

Jane believes Martie is trying to ingratiate herself with the Judge at her expense. Early on, it is established that Martie knows something about Jane's business dealings, which emboldens her to speak out as she does.

**PROPS:**

File folder Martie places on desk ostensibly for Sir Edwards's signature.

Drinks and food trolleys with actual liquids and foods.

Several sheets of paper that Sgt. Boswell retrieves upon his initial inspection of the desk.

Sgt Boswell exhibits a brown paper bag, ostensibly containing a box of pesticide/arsenic.

Paul's two similar (but different) colored striped ties.

Jane's colorful scarf.

Martie's pearls and sweater.

Jane and Martie wear low-heeled shoes.

Lady Eleanor's dramatic nightgown and robe.

Cooks colorful apron.

Inspector Broom's handkerchief used to remove excess make-up when Jane calls attention to it.

## **SPECIAL EFFECTS (SFX):**

Lightning flashes.

Rolling thunder sounds.

Sir Percy's wet rain gear upon arrival.

Bay window flies open on cue, followed by loud storm noises.

Clock striking midnight.

## **Sound Effects:**

Storm noises.

Door chimes.

Clock strikes twelve.

Door closes quietly (when Broom, Judge, and Boswell were overheard talking).

Vase falls (nearly kills Martie).

Front door bangs shut at end of play.

## **Lighting Effects:**

Stage lights go out during the storm then return.

A lamp is turned off on stage prior to Judge's demise with only a low-wattage lamp and spotlight remaining on stage at that time.

Dark figure in silhouette; dressed head to toe in black.

## **SUGGESTED STAGE DESIGN:**

Stage Right (SR): An arched door with tall plants on either side leads to the foyer and front entrance; also the main stairs leads to the family quarters in the east wing. There is a dormant fireplace DR.

Right Center (RC): A cluster of furniture comprising a sofa, two end tables, a chair, and a sofa table with a vase of flowers backing to the sofa.

Up Right Center (URC): A table, flower vase, telephone, and two bolster chairs in front of a French window overlooking the rear garden.

Up Left Center (ULC): A writing desk, lamp, and appropriate desk paraphernalia, desk chair and bolster chair in front of a French window overlooking the rear garden.

Up Left (UL): A hall door to the servant's back stairs; connects east wing (family quarters) to west wing (guest quarters), and to kitchen and butler's pantry.

Stage Left (SL): A table with flower vase and tall plant; further down SL, a door to dining room, kitchen, and butler's pantry.

Left Center (LC): The area where the liquor and food trolleys are positioned when on stage.