

THE DEATH OF DR. DAVIDSON

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DR. JAMES DAVIDSON (70's) - Wealthy retired heart surgeon, owner of Wakefield Manor.

MRS. KITTY DAVIDSON (late 30's) - Beautiful young second wife of Dr. Davidson

MARLENA DAVIDSON SMYTHE (50'S) - The Doctor's eldest daughter. He has liquidated the trust fund her dead mother left her.

HARRISON SMYTHE (LATE 40'S) - Marlana's Spanish husband, who wants more money from Dr. Davidson.

SADIE DAVIDSON-FORRESTER (47)- The Doctor's youngest daughter, wants to turn Wakefield Manor into a home for unwed mothers.

OLIVER FORRESTER (50'S) - Sadie's husband and the Doctor's former attorney.

RODNEY DAVIDSON (41) - The Doctor's only son, a layabout Playboy and drunkard.

DULCINEA PANGIOTTIS (30) - The Doctor's personal secretary, a beautiful, sensual young woman.

HANNAH HIGGINBOTHAM (late 60's) - the Davidsons' faithful housekeeper for thirty years.

INSPECTOR MILES MCTAVISH (40'S) - The wise, carefully spoken police inspector in charge of the case.

SERGEANT ROY (30'S) - Inspector McTavish's assistant.

By Eve Elliot

ACT I SCENE ONE: INT. EVENING

NARRATOR

It's early evening at Wakefield Manor, the country home of Dr. James Davidson, wealthy retired heart surgeon. Dr. Davidson has summoned his grown children to attend a dinner, during which he plans to share some bad news. As our story opens, we find his eldest daughter Marlana Davidson-Smythe and her husband Harrison Smythe in the drawing room, waiting for the others to arrive...

[SFX: RAIN, THUNDER, 1930'S MUSIC, FIREPLACE]

HARRISON

(Frustrated) It's no use, he won't give it to me. You know he's turned me down three times already.

MARLENA

Well, try harder for pity's sake. Convince him you'll make something of yourself if he would only help you recoup your losses.

HARRISON

I already did "make something of myself" - it wasn't my fault the damned market crashed. In fact, I only bought those stocks on his recommendation.

MARLENA

I wouldn't take that approach, dear. He managed to survive the crash unscathed. Richer than ever, in fact.

HARRISON

(more frustrated) Why must it always be up to me to make us whole? What about you? He's holding up that trust your mother left you, it's been years now! That money is yours, she meant it for us!

MARLENA

For *me*, darling.

HARRISON

For you, of course. Of course. But what's yours is mine, dear heart.

MARLENA

And you'll never let me forget it. Ah - I hear someone coming, any wagers as to who will stumble in first? My sister perhaps? And that idiot husband of hers? Or my little brother?

HARRISON

I can't stand the lot of them.

MARLENA

Oh my dear, the feeling is entirely mutual, I assure you.

[SADIE ENTERS]

SADIE

(talking quietly to someone as she enters) Oliver, I know you don't want me to bring up the issue with Papa tonight, but I shan't have another chance, you see, and-

OLIVER

For heaven's sake, Sadie, of course you'll have another chance. You'll have plenty of chances. We live not five miles from here, you can call on him any time. Only let's not go on about this plan of yours tonight, please? Let's not bait the bear.

SADIE

He's *my* father, I dare say I should decide whether to speak to him tonight or not—

MARLENA

(cutting her off) Sadie, Oliver, how nice to see you. Care for a drink?

OLIVER

I'll take a gin and tonic, Marlina, thanks. You're looking as gorgeous as ever tonight.

MARLENA

Why thank you.

[SHE GETS UP TO FIX A DRINK]

SADIE

(spitefully) My, that's a lovely gown you're wearing, Marlina. And what a beautiful brooch. I don't think I've seen it before, it must be new.

MARLENA

Oh, uh, no...it's an older piece, nothing fancy really.

SADIE

(scoffing) Nothing fancy... my word. There must be two dozen diamonds all heaped together in that garish pile. And here I thought simplicity was the fashion for fine gems these days. Oh, unless of course they're paste...

HARRISON

Of course they're real diamonds. You think I'd let my wife wear fake diamonds? What kind of a man do you take me for?

SADIE

I meant no offence, Harrison dear. I simply meant that in your current...state...you and Marlana may need to economize. Although...my word, that silk Ascot looks very fetching on you, it goes so nicely with that Burberry great coat I saw Hannah hanging up. That is yours, I presume?

MARLENA

Sadie, do get to the point, if you have one. This circling around us like a lioness is so dull. Here you are, Ollie.

[SFX: ICE CLINKING IN GLASS]

OLIVER

Thank you Mar, cheers.

SADIE

(brightly) I have no point to make, I'm simply admiring your taste in expensive accessories. One can't help noticing them, they are so decidedly designed to catch the eye.

OLIVER

Sadie, enough. We haven't been here three minutes...

MARLENA

Never mind her, Ollie. She's just making sure her plea for Papa's money ends up looking that much more noble than ours...

SADIE

(shocked) *Looking* more noble? How can you possibly compare the two?

OLIVER

Sadie, enough!

SADIE

I've never heard such nonsense, Oliver, really. To imply that Papa's money would be better spent on baubles and fancy scarves when there are countless young women suffering-

[RODNEY ENTERS]

[SFX: MALE FOOTSTEPS]

RODNEY

(buoyantly, coming into the room) On about the wretched fallen women again, eh? Must be Sadie on her soapbox again. (Greeting Oliver) Hello old chap, Hello Harrison, Marlina...

OLIVER

Rodney.

MARLENA

(murmuring) Good evening Rodney.

HARRISON

(murmuring) Good evening.

RODNEY

Oh, come here, Sadie, embrace me. (Gives her a kiss on the cheek) It's been an age. You're looking well.

SADIE

You look drunk, Roddy.

RODNEY

I probably am! Where's Papa? Has he come down yet?

MARLENA

I imagine he's holding court upstairs with Kitty. You know him, he demanded we all dance attendance at 8pm-

RODNEY

(cutting her off) -which means he won't make his grand entrance til 9 at least. Righto. Anyone have the foggiest why he demanded we all assemble here?

[SFX: ALL MURMURING NO, NO IDEA]

RODNEY

Well, let's have a drink and catch up, shall we?

[HANNAH ENTERS]

[SFX: FEMALE FOOTSTEPS]

HANNAH

(greeting Rodney) Good evening, Mr Davidson, may I get you anything? Or how about yourself, Mrs Forrester?

SADIE

No thank you, Hannah. I'm sure my sister will be as delighted to fix me a drink as she was to furnish my husband with one.

MARLENA

Really, Sadie, you do go on...

HANNAH

The doctor says dinner will be promptly at eight, which is, oh my, five minutes. Excuse me...

[HANNAH EXITS]

[SFX: QUICK FEMALE FOOTSTEPS]

RODNEY

I say, where's that delightful wench Dulcie? Is she here yet?

SADIE

(sharply) Leave that poor girl alone, Roddy. Don't you think she suffers enough, working for Papa every hour God sends? Fending him off, too - I shudder to think of it.

OLIVER

(sotto voce) Fending him off? More like egging him on.

[MARLENA and HARRISON laugh]

SADIE

Oliver! What a dreadful thing to say. Dulcinea is not that kind of girl!

OLIVER

I think we all know what kind of girl Dulcie is, my dear. You needn't worry about Roddy succeeding with her...why would she settle for the son when she has her sights set so firmly on the *pater familias*?

SADIE

She does not! What a scandalous thing to say!

OLIVER

Oh come now, Sadie, it's just a bit of a joke. The old fool won't be done with Kitty for at least a few more years, and by then someone else will surely have turned Dulcie's head.

SADIE

Really, Oliver...

MARLENA

You may just get her after all, Roddy, if you're patient.

RODNEY

(sighing happily) For those lips, those eyes, that corking bosom...I'd wait an eternity her!

SADIE

Rodney!

[ALL laugh]

[DULCINEA ENTERS]

[SFX: SLOW HIGH HEEL FOOTSTEPS]

DULCINEA

Please tell me you're not talking about me, again, Rodney. Hello everyone.

RODNEY

Ah, there she is, my muse! Come here and kiss me, Miss Pangiottis!

DULCINEA

(shying away) Rodney, you'll never change. No, I won't kiss you, stop it...

HARRISON

Give it up, Roddy. You know she prefers older men.

RODNEY

I'm ancient! I'm on the wrong side of forty! I've got ten years on you, at least, Dulcie.

SADIE

Eleven. Nearly twelve!

OLIVER

That's nothing, the old man has half a century on Kitty. Dulcie's positively geriatric next to the current Mrs. Davidson.

DULCINEA

I'm already beginning to regret coming tonight.

MARLENA

They're all just jealous, my dear. You're so pretty and gay, you make the rest of us seem bloodless and dull.

DULCINEA

Jealous of me? Well you oughtn't be. I typed my fingers raw all this week, he must have sent out fifty letters of one kind or another. Not to mention the phone calls that never stopped.

RODNEY

(playfully) Run away with me, sweet Dulcinea, leave all that drudgery behind! We'll sail off to Havana and lie on the beach with rum cocktails and...

DULCINEA AND SADIE

Rodney! Stop it!

[HANNAH ENTERS]

[SFX: FEMALE FOOTSTEPS]

HANNAH

Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen...excuse me...(clearing throat) dinner is served. If you'll follow me to the dining room..

MARLENA

And so, here we go...let's find out what the old man wants.

Act I Scene 2: Int. Dining room, Evening

NARRATOR

In the grand dining room of Wakefield Manor, the guests are finishing up their lavish meal. Seated alone at the head of the elegant dining table is Dr. Davidson, and far at the other end, among the assembled guests, sits his beautiful young wife Kitty. As dinner draws to a close...

[SFX: DINNER CONVERSATION, FAINT CLASSICAL MUSIC, RAIN, THUNDER, PLATES AND CUTLERY CLINKING]

OLIVER

My compliments on the meal, Kitty. The pheasant was superb.

KITTY

(slightly bored) Yes, Hannah is an absolute treasure. James is so very fussy about what he can and can't eat, and when he wants to be served - goodness, I don't know how she does it.

HARRISON

When he wants to be served? How do you mean?

KITTY

Well, for instance... (lowers to a whisper) between you, me and the lamppost...did you know he makes Hannah bring him a cup of cocoa in his study at one am every single night? Can you

KITTY CONT'D

imagine? Every single night, without fail...and it has to be on time or he roars the house down. The poor dear, she's up with the birds every morning, she must be just exhausted.

MARLENA

(dryly) He used to make our mother do that, before Hannah came along.

SADIE

He says it helps him sleep.

KITTY

(brittle laugh) Well, he'd never get me to wait on him like that! What foolishness.

RODNEY

(whispers) I think he just likes to make sure the servants know their place.

KITTY

So your mother was a *servant* to him, then?

RODNEY

Isn't everyone?

[SFX OF A FORK AGAINST A WINE GLASS]

DR DAVIDSON

(Clearing his throat) Everyone...everyone...if you please...

[SFX: CONVERSATION STOPS] [CHAIR BEING PUSHED BACK AS HE STANDS]

DR DAVIDSON

You are most certainly wondering why I've called you all here on this most dreadful of nights. Well. I shan't keep in suspense any longer. I've gathered you all here because I have an important announcement to make.

MARLENA

(sotto voce) Dear God, don't say Kitty's expecting.

DR DAVIDSON

And it involves every person present here tonight. To be quite blunt, I have an appointment with my solicitor tomorrow morning, the purpose of which is...to amend my will.

[SFX: MURMURS]

DR DAVIDSON

(speaking a little louder over the murmurs) And it is my intention...to disinherit you all.

[SFX: ORGAN CHORD, LOUDER GASPS]

[ALL saying at once]

SADIE

Papa!

RODNEY

What?

OLIVER

Dear God, man!

HARRISON

I say, what the devil?

DR DAVIDSON

Silence, all of you! I will have silence! For many years now I have suffered through your constant appeals for money, your complaints, your scheming. At last I have made my decision; I have supported all of you long enough. I earned my fortune, through long study and hard work, and it's high time all of you did as well.

MARLENA

Papa, please explain what has brought this on? Have we offended you in some way?

DR DAVIDSON

You offend me with your very existence! I have been a loving father for more than half my life and how am I repaid? With your hand out! And not just your hand...nor your hand Sadie, nor yours, Rodney. But yours, too, gentlemen, my useless sons-in-law.

[all saying at once]

HARRISON

Really, James, this is out of line!

OLIVER

I resent the implication-

SADIE

So unfair of you, Papa...

MARLENA

We're your family-

DR DAVIDSON

Enough, all of you! There isn't one among you that has spared a thought for me, throughout the whole of your lives! You have lived off my money and my tender concern without once thinking of what *I* might need and deserve in return.

SADIE

(upset) Papa, that is untrue! Oliver and I live close by so we can attend to you should you ever need help-

RODNEY

And I gave up that sailing trip to South America when you fell ill last year. I never left your side!

SADIE

(continuing) - And Marlena won't say it, but she and Harrison nearly divorced over the bankruptcy-

MARLENA

Sadie!

HARRISON

How dare you!

SADIE

(continuing quickly) -but she sided with *you*, Papa, over her own husband!

DR DAVIDSON

Of course she didn't! She sided with that Spanish scoundrel, make no mistake! She eloped with him against my express wishes, didn't she? "Harrison Smythe"...I'll have you know I had my investigator on him, his real name is *Enrique Herrero* and he's wanted by-

MARLENA

Papa! Stop this at once! I told you that in the strictest of confidence!

HARRISON

(Curses in Spanish)(In English) I'll kill you, you...you...

DR DAVIDSON

(pounding the table) I will not hear another word! Vultures, all of you! I'm beset by vultures! And now you're all clamouring to deny your selfish, heartless behaviour! It abhorrent, I say. Unconscionable!

OLIVER

This is outrageous! Disinheriting your own flesh and blood? Calling *them* selfish because they aren't more devoted to *you*? That's the height of hypocrisy, James, the very height!

DR DAVIDSON

(thundering) You're one to talk about hypocrisy! Why, with what I know about you I could have you disbarred. In fact I probably should, for the public good!

SADIE

Papa!

RODNEY

If this is some sort of gag it's badly done, old chap. Very badly done.

DR DAVIDSON

Everything may be a joke to you, Rodney, but I assure you I don't find it the least bit amusing. You're the most ungrateful group of leeches I've ever seen.

MARLENA

Kitty, can you not talk some sense into him?

KITTY

He's right! None of you have ever appreciated him! I've seen it myself, you're all just using him, playing up to him so you can ask for more money.

DULCINEA

Mrs Davidson, that's absolutely untrue. I've only worked for Dr. Davidson a short time but I can promise you, I've seen genuine concern for their father from the family-

DR DAVIDSON

Miss Pangiottis, that is quite enough from you! Do not think yourself spared - consider your employment terminated effectively immediately.

DULCINEA

What? But...but...I don't understand...why?

DR DAVIDSON

A winsome young lady such as yourself, withering away behind a typewriter for sixty pounds sterling a year? Wearing such revealing attire and those new 'false eyelashes' so you can bat your eyes at me more fetchingly, dousing yourself in that French perfume that enters the room before you do? You can have no other object but usurping Mrs. Davidson!

DULCINEA

(shocked) Dr. Davidson, I swear, I never-

SADIE

(outraged) Oh Papa!

KITTY

(snidely, triumphant) His heart belongs to me, Dulcie, never forget that.

DR DAVIDSON

Does it, Kitty dear? You cold-hearted, empty-headed, gold-digging little prude - consider yourself cut off without a penny!

KITTY

(almost a shriek) What?

[SFX: INCREASING MURMURS OF DISMAY AND DISBELIEF FROM AROUND THE TABLE]

DR DAVIDSON

Do you think it has escaped my notice that before our wedding you were flirtatious and adventurous and attentive to a man's needs...and after the ceremony all affection between us ceased? When you redecorated my late wife's rooms and took to them in solitude?

MARLENA

Papa, this is horrid! Stop this at once!

OLIVER

James, you're upsetting everyone-

DR DAVIDSON

How long has it been since you warmed my bed, Kitty? Can you even remember?

KITTY

(sputtering) I...I...

DR DAVIDSON

Well, I remember. It was the night of our wedding, and no night since! Well, I will no longer tolerate such neglect from my own wife. Not only are you cut out of my will, I am filing for divorce in the morning!

KITTY

(crying) James...James, please...I love you, I'm so sorry...

[SFX: MURMURING AND TALKING GROWS LOUDER]

DR DAVIDSON

(speaking loudly over the din) That is all I have to say. I have made up my mind, I will not be persuaded otherwise, a good housecleaning is long overdue. In fact...Hannah...Hannah! Come in here please, this instant.

[HANNAH ENTERS]

[SFX: HURRIED FOOTSTEPS]

HANNAH

Yes, Doctor? Is everything alright?

DR DAVIDSON

It most is certainly not. Your services are no longer required in this household.

HANNAH

(sputtering) I beg your pardon?

DR DAVIDSON

I have just informed my family, and now I'm informing you. Thank you for your many years of service, some of which I will no doubt look back on with fond memories, but your employment here has come to an end. I have found a buyer for Wakefield Manor and will be releasing all the staff. I will, naturally, give you your last two weeks' pay, but by the end of the month you must find another position.

HANNAH

Oh my heavens! But doctor...I...

SADIE

(crying) Papa, you can't do this terrible thing...you simply can't!

DR DAVIDSON

I can and I will. You may fund your home for harlots with your own money, if that husband of yours still has a career when I'm done with him.

SADIE

(angry sobbing) You vile, horrible man! I hate you! I wish you were dead!

[SADIE RUNS FROM THE ROOM]

OLIVER

I say, James, that was a cruel thing to say...Sadie...Sadie, dear, come back...

[OLIVER EXITS]

RODNEY

Father, you simply can't do this. It's...it's...monstrous.

DR DAVIDSON

It's done, boy. Every penny of my estate will go to the Church of England Temperance Society, your mother's favourite charity. Now... I shall retire to the solitude of my bedroom. You, Kitty, will find the door locked, in case your conscience persuades you to try to be a better wife to me. The rest of you are permitted to stay the night on account of the storm, but I want all of you gone by morning. Good evening.

[DR DAVIDSON EXITS]

[SFX: SHOCKED SOUNDS, TEARS, MURMURS]

NARRATOR

Ah yes, avarice and greed, man's greatest failings. But can we not add to this list...self-pity? Was Dr. Davidson right about his family's neglect? Or were Sadie and Harrison justified in wishing him dead? Join us next time for some answers...

ACT 1 SCENE 3: INT. MORNING

NARRATOR

The next morning, everyone has arisen early, still reeling from the bombshell announcement by Dr. Davidson. While the guests begin to assemble in the drawing room to discuss the events of the night before, another, more clandestine conversation takes place upstairs...

[SFX: KNOCKING ON INTERIOR DOOR]

SADIE

Is that you Ollie?

[SFX: DOOR CREAKING OPEN]

DULCINEA

It's me...can I come in?

SADIE

Of course dear, but close the door.

[SFX: DOOR CREAKING CLOSED]

DULCINEA

I wanted to make sure you were alright.

SADIE

(sighing) Yes...it was just...just such a shock. I still can't quite believe it.

DULCINEA

Where did you go last night? You left in such a state.

SADIE

I headed home, of course. Or rather I started to. But then I decided I wasn't going to run away from this, I simply wasn't going to take this lying down. So I came back.

DULCINEA

(lowering her voice) I wanted to know if you think he knows.

SADIE

(lowering her voice) I don't think so. I think if he knew why I recommended you for the job he'd have fired you long before last night.

DULCINEA

(relieved) I never thought of that. Well, good. I'd hate to have caused this in any way.

SADIE

(sighing) It's not your fault, dear, put that notion out of your head. We'd better go downstairs to breakfast, I'm sure the others will have a lot to say. I'll go down first, you follow in a few moments.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, downstairs in the drawing room..

INT. DRAWING ROOM, MORNING

[SFX: BIRDS CHIRPING, FAINT 30'S MUSIC]

OLIVER

Well, that was a dreadful evening.

MARLENA

I'm beside myself, Ollie. I telephoned my solicitor last night after dinner and he told me Papa informed him my mother's trust is gone. Utterly gone, every penny!

OLIVER

Dear God...is the man...I mean to say, is it possible he lost his mind?

MARLENA

I can't imagine it...but how else to explain it? Divorcing Kitty? Banishing dear Hannah? It's monstrous.

OLIVER

Have you told Harrison? About the trust?

MARLENA

(grimly) I had a row with him last night, I made him sleep in one of the guest suites.

OLIVER

I know.

MARLENA

(sharply) You *know*? What do you mean?

OLIVER

Oh, Mar... (gathering courage) I was worried about you, that's all. I just came up to check on you, to make sure you were okay. I heard your row and saw him storm out.

MARLENA

(hissing) Ollie!

OLIVER

You know, maybe it's time we...the both of us...in light of this, this...

MARLENA

(Whispering harshly) Ollie, don't. Just don't. It's water under the bridge now, we both made our choices.

OLIVER

(angrily) Only because of your damned father! Tell the truth, Mar, darling, you'd never have run off with that Spaniard if your father hadn't forced me to marry Sa-

MARLENA

Hush! For heaven's sake, lower your voice.

OLIVER

I can't help it, Mar...I've always regretted losing you, maybe now we could make things right, maybe-

MARLENA

Oliver, stop this at once. We were young and foolish then, and now...

[SADIE ENTERS]

[SFX: FEMALE FOOTSTEPS]

SADIE

There you are, Oliver. (Tersely) Good morning Marlana

MARLENA

Are you alright, dear? You were so very upset last night.

SADIE

I'm still in shock, to be perfectly honest. I just can't believe it. All those horrid things he said to all of us. I regret my outburst of course, but really...how else were we to react to such...such venom?

OLIVER

There, now, Sadie. I'm sure things will work out. The bright light of day often paints a brighter picture.

MARLENA

And makes cockroaches scatter.

SADIE

Where did you sleep last night, Oliver? You weren't in bed when I returned.

OLIVER

Oh, I didn't know you'd come back. I...I...couldn't sleep, so I stretched out on the divan in the sunroom.

SADIE

Really? How odd. I could have sworn I saw you in the hallway when I returned last night. It looked like you were hurrying back from somewhere...I expected you to join me but you never did.

OLIVER

(Laughs nervously)

[HARRISON ENTERS]
[SFX: MALE FOOTSTEPS]

HARRISON

Marlena, I need to speak with you.

MARLENA

Not now, Harrison. We'll leave after breakfast and we can talk then.

HARRISON

No, it must be now. It's important.

OLIVER

Good morning, "*Enrique*".

MARLENA

Oliver, that's enough. What is it, Harrison? What's so deuced urgent?

HARRISON

Over here, in private (lowered voice, but urgent) We have to leave, immediately. I have to leave the country.

MARLENA

(exasperated) Harrison, I've had just about enough of your histrionics. We'll talk about this later.

HARRISON

No, you don't understand, I have to leave, now!

[DULCINEA ENTERS]

[SFX HIGH HEEL FOOTSTEPS]

DULCINEA

Good morning everyone. Such as it is...(after a silence) well, don't everyone greet me at the same time.

[HANNAH ENTERS]

[SFX: FEMALE FOOTSTEPS]

HANNAH

Good morning everyone. My goodness, what a terrible evening that was. I hardly know what to do with myself...but I figure we might as well start with a good meal. Would anyone like some breakfast?

MARLENA

Hannah, dear, you don't have to cook for us, not after what Papa did.

HANNAH

Thank you, Mrs. Smythe, but I need something to settle my nerves. I'll have to go wake Dr. Davidson and I'm not looking forward to it. Cooking might take my mind off it.

SADIE

Let one of us wake him, Hannah. Or go rouse Kitty and make her attend to him.

HANNAH

No, no, I'm still employed here, it's my responsibility. I'll just go get it over with...unless you all want to leave before he comes down. Wouldn't blame you if you did.

[RODNEY ENTERS]

[SFX: MALE FOOTSTEPS]

RODNEY

Not on your life, Hannah. I have a bone to pick with that man, and I'm not leaving here until I've said my piece.

HANNAH

(sighing) Very well, I'll go.

[SFX: KEYS JANGLING]

HANNAH CON'TD

That's odd...the key to his room isn't here...

MARLENA

I have a master key for all the rooms, shall I get it for you?

HANNAH

No, don't trouble yourself, I'll get the spare from his study.

[HANNAH EXITS]

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS GOING UPSTAIRS]

SADIE

(lowered voice) This is all so dreadful. She's been like a mother to us all, she's been here since I was a girl...how absolutely ghastly this all is.

RODNEY

And now none of us has the money to keep her on ourselves.

MARLENA

I suppose she could come live with us.

SADIE

Yes, you do have that large house, with so very many rooms no one's using.

[SFX: HANNAH SCREAMS FROM UPSTAIRS]

[SFX: CRIES OF SURPRISE]

[ALL SPEAKING AT ONCE]

OLIVER

What in blazes!

MARLENA

Hannah!

HARRISON

Dear god, what was that?

[SFX: MANY PEOPLE RUNNING UPSTAIRS]

SADIE

Where is she? And where's Papa? His bed doesn't even look slept in!

OLIVER

Hannah, what is it? Are you alright? Hannah, where are you?

MARLENA

She must be in Papa's study, look, the adjoining door is open. Hannah? Hannah dear?

SADIE

Are you in here, Han- Oh dear God!

[SFX: GASPS]

HANNAH

I...I...found him like this..

OLIVER

Stay back, everyone. It looks like...Hannah, did you check if he's breathing?

SADIE

For pity's sake Oliver of course he isn't breathing! Look at him! Sprawled on the floor like that, staring up at the ceiling in that horrible way. And that...that...what is that, foam in his mouth?

MARLENA

(urgently) Ollie, go check him anyway.

RODNEY

Be careful, Oliver! Look, there's a cup by his feet, don't tread on it.

OLIVER

Yes, it looks like he dropped it...when..when he...my word, it looks like he drank something and...and..

HANNAH

Oh dear God, that's the cocoa I brought him last night!

OLIVER

Yes, I'm afraid he's quite dead. We'd better ring the police. Dulcie, go get Kitty please.

DULCINEA

Of course.

RODNEY

I'll go call the police. No one touch anything for God's sake, especially not him.

[HARRISON ENTERS]

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS]

HARRISON

What is all the commotion about? Marlina, I have to - *¡por el amor de dios!* what happened?

SADIE

Papa has been...I can't believe I'm saying this but look...there's the broken cup, and look at that horrible frothing at his lips...it looks for all the world like he's been...poisoned.

HARRISON

Are you sure?

OLIVER

Of course we can't be sure, but what does it look like to you? It looks to me like he was sitting here in his chair - there's his book, his reading glasses - and then, of course, the cup on the floor. Hannah says it's the cocoa she brought him last night.

HANNAH

I just...I heard him talking to someone when I came up with the cocoa, so I left it outside his door as I do sometimes. I swear it! I swear I just put it down and left!

OLIVER

Well, at some point, Hannah, someone got to it.(sniffing)...and I'm no expert, but this cup smells decidedly of.. almonds.

SADIE

Almonds? What does that mean?

MARLENA AND OLIVER

Cyanide.

[SFX SHOCKED GASPS]

[DULCINEA AND KITTY ENTER]

DULCINEA

(Speaking to Kitty behind her) Prepare yourself Kitty, it isn't a pleasant sight.

KITTY

What on earth are you talking about? Why is everyone in James' study...(after a long silence). Oh. I see.

MARLENA

Kitty, are you alright? You aren't going to faint, are you?

SADIE

Dulcie, take her arm, she looks green around the gills.

KITTY

(shakily) I'm quite alright, really.

OLIVER

Alright everyone, let's clear the room, now. We need to lock it up and wait for the police. Come on, that's right, move along everyone, quickly please. Quickly, that's it.

[SFX: MURMURS, FOOTSTEPS, DOOR CLOSING]

SADIE

I simply can't believe this. Marlana, please, take my hand, I feel so odd...I feel...I don't know, I don't know to feel, now that's he's dead. It hardly seems possible...papa, murdered? By... by one of us?

MARLENA

It's alright, Sadie, let's go downstairs and have some tea. The police will be here soon, we'll know more then. Roddy, dear, come here, help Sadie downstairs. Stiff upper lip, Roddy, Sadie, we must face this like Davidsons.

RODNEY

Are you still feeling faint, Kitty? May I offer you my other arm?

KITTY

I'm fine, Rodney, thank you.

MARLENA

No need for false bravery, Kitty. You're one of the family, you can count on us for support.

KITTY

(more composed)I'm entirely fine, Marlana. In fact, I haven't felt this wonderful in years. Finally, the old bastard got what he deserved.

NARRATOR

Who killed Dr. Davidson? Every one of our suspects had reason to want him dead...but which one of them actually did it? Tune in next time as the investigation begins...

ACT TWO SCENE 1: INT. DRAWING ROOM, MORNING

NARRATOR

Dr. Davidson has been found dead in his study, the morning after announcing his intentions to disinherit his entire family. We join them in the drawing room later that morning as they are greeted by the police detective assigned to the case..

MCTAVISH

Good morning, everyone, my name is Inspector Miles McTavish and I'll be conducting the investigation into the death of Dr. Davidson. Thank you all for your co-operation, I will endeavour to make this unpleasant process as brief and painless as possible. Mr. Davidson, Mrs. Smythe, Mrs. Forrester, may I take this opportunity to express my condolences to you and your family.

MARLENA

Thank you, Inspector.

SADIE

(murmuring) Thank you.

MCTAVISH

Thank you for your patience while the photographers documented the scene, I understand they left only moments before I arrived. I have called the coroner's office for the removal of Dr. Davidson's remains, but of course I shall be examining the body first, and the crime scene itself, if one of you would be so good as to show me where the deceased was found.

OLIVER

I'll do it. Rodney, stay down here and make sure your sisters are alright, there's a good chap.

RODNEY

If you insist.

MCTAVISH

Speaking of, if it's not too indelicate a thing to say at such a moment, I have to insist that none of you leave the premises until I have concluded my investigation. My associate Sergeant Roy will be joining us shortly...ah, there he is now.

[SFX: SCUFFLE FROM THE HALLWAY, THE SOUNDS OF TWO MEN]
[SERGEANT ROY AND HARRISON ENTER]

SERGEANT ROY

Inside, with the others, come on..

HARRISON

Unhand me you ape, this is outrageous!

MARLENA

Harrison! What on earth were you doing?

SERGEANT ROY

The Inspector asked me to secure the grounds as soon as we arrived. Good thing too, because I caught this gentleman running through the back gate, wearing his coat and galoshes and carrying this valise.

MARLENA

Harrison!

HARRISON

(desperately) I can explain. If you'd only let me explain!

MCTAVISH

Please, calm yourself sir. I will be interviewing all of you shortly, you'll have plenty of opportunity to explain anything you wish. Now, Sergeant, if you would follow me upstairs please? And be so good as to radio our confederates in the police car at the front gate to keep an eye on all points of exit from this...fine abode.

SERGEANT ROY

Already spoken to them, sir. There won't be any more escape attempts.

SADIE

Escape attempts! He's talking like we're a bunch of criminals.

OLIVER

Somebody did kill him, Sadie. Let's not act too surprised they're keeping an eye on us.

MCTAVISH

Mr. Forrester, is it? Thank you, please do show me where the body was discovered. Sergeant Roy, would you join us please?

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON STAIRS]

[SFX: UNLOCKING DOOR]

OLIVER

He's in here, Inspector. No one has touched anything.

MCTAVISH

And it was you who discovered the body? Just as he is here, lying just so?

OLIVER

Yes...well, no, as a matter of fact, I didn't find him. Hannah, the Davidsons' housekeeper did. She screamed and we all came running.

MCTAVISH

I see. Thank you Mr. Forrester, please join your family downstairs. Sergeant Roy and I will be with you shortly.

OLIVER

Did you search Harrison Smythe? After you caught him attempting to leave the scene of the crime?

SERGEANT ROY

I patted him down for weapons, yes.

OLIVER

You should look into him very carefully, Inspector. We all found out last night he's not who he says he is, and there's some indication he's actually a wanted man.

MCTAVISH

Thank you, Mr. Forrester. I will be interviewing everyone. Now...if you please...

OLIVER

Certainly. I'll be downstairs consoling my wife and sister-in-law...whom I know are simply devastated by the loss of their dear father.

MCTAVISH

Of course. Please close the door when you leave.

[SFX: DOOR CLOSSES]

MCTAVISH

Well then...be so good as to take down some notes while I ponder the scene, Roy.

SERGEANT ROY

Ready when you are.

MCTAVISH

To begin...the body of Dr. James Davidson was found in his study by the housekeeper at approximately eight am this morning. He appears to be fully dressed in his dinner attire, meaning he was, perhaps, killed before having changed for bed last night. (Pause) There appears to be a pinkish foam in the victim's mouth, indicating some manner of poison, perhaps. The post mortem will determine this, of course. But there is also a china teacup on the floor by the victim's right hand... indicating that this is how the poison was administered. Hand me a pen, Roy, so I may lift this up by the handle and preserve any fingerprints, just in case...thank you. (Sniff) Oh yes, a strong smell of bitter almonds, very distinctive. Very likely to be cyanide residue in this cup. Do please secure the cup as evidence, sergeant.

SERGEANT ROY

Yes sir. Cyanide...there's a wonder.

[SFX: PLASTIC BAG RUSTLING]

MCTAVISH

There does not appear to be any other harm or insult to the body...do you concur Sergeant?

SERGEANT ROY

Not that I can see, sir. No bullet wounds or other injuries. Should we turn him over and check?

MCTAVISH

No, I see no need for us to undertake such a labour. When the coroner's men arrive to remove the body we may satisfy ourselves that there are no other injuries to his person.

SERGEANT ROY

(clicking tongue) Such a typical story. One of the family bumped off the old goat, probably for his money.

MCTAVISH

A good detective never leaps to conclusions when he can stroll there sedately and take in the view along the way, Sergeant.

SERGEANT ROY

If you say so, Sir. I've just seen my share of cases like these.

MCTAVISH

As have I, Sergeant. But nevertheless, we owe this man our due diligence. Now, moving along...the room shows no signs of a struggle, and in fact the scene seems unremarkable in every other respect...but one.

SERGEANT ROY

The wall safe. It's wide open...and from the looks of it...it's been rifled through. There's the odd few papers here...nothing out of the ordinary, just some...looks like insurance papers.

[SFX: RUSTLING PAPERS]

MCTAVISH

Please secure them as well, we'll have to examine them later.

SERGEANT ROY

Right you are. It doesn't look like the door was forced open... should I dust it for fingerprints? Oh hang on...hang on a minute, what's this?

MCTAVISH

Did you find something, Sergeant?

SERGEANT ROY

What in blazes...here, what do you make of this...it looks like... (dawning realization) oh, I've seen one of these before, my wife has been fiddling around with these silly things lately. It's a false eyelash.

MCTAVISH

(puzzled) A false eyelash? Just one lash...or a whole row?

SERGEANT ROY

It's the whole thing, see for yourself...you glue this part on to your eyelid and bob's your uncle. Makes the girls feel like they're film stars. I think it's daft. But you know women. But oh, does this one reek to high heaven of perfume! Whew!

MCTAVISH

Please bag the...uh...eyelash, Sergeant, and make note of where you found it.

[SFX: PLASTIC BAG RUSTLING]

MCTAVISH

We shall have to determine if there exists some sort of inventory of what was kept in the safe.

SERGEANT ROY

Cash, I'd imagine. Jewels maybe.

MCTAVISH

Stroll, sergeant. Don't leap.

SERGEANT ROY

Of course sir. But even on a stroll you're sure to get somewhere eventually. I think it stands to reason there were valuables in this safe.

MCTAVISH

You're probably right. But let us turn our attention to the other aspects of the room...Hmmm...Look at the doctor's desk here...does anything about this desk strike you as odd, Roy?

SERGEANT ROY

(unsure) Umm...should something strike me as odd? Besides this contraption here (taps something metal)...with the long tube and the horn thingamabob on the end.

MCTAVISH

That's a dictating machine, it records one's voice onto wax cylinders so a typist can then transcribe the spoken word. Dictaphone I believe it's called. Aside from that, however, the desk contains only a fountain pen and a writing tablet...and aside from this book on the floor, which it appears he was reading when he died...what's the title...*King Lear*.

MCTAVISH CONT'D

Ah, a devotee of the bard, not unexpected in an educated man... aside from this book, there is nothing else on any of the shelves. This room seems oddly sparse...There isn't even anything-

[SFX: DRAWERS OPENING]

-in any of the desk drawers.

[SFX: PENCIL ROLLING]

SERGEANT ROY

Except this one pencil.

MCTAVISH

How singular. You would think even a retired physician would keep files and paperwork in his study, perhaps even medical books.

SERGEANT ROY

There's no skeleton, either. I thought all doctors had skeletons in their surgeries.

MCTAVISH

(snapping his finger) His surgery. Of course, how careless of me. This must have be his personal study. He has a surgery downstairs, attached to the house, I made note of it when we arrived. I thought it odd at the time that a retired doctor would still maintain a surgery in his own home. We must investigate the surgery, come.

[SFX: CRUNCHING OF SOMETHING UNDERFOOT]

MCTAVISH

My goodness, what I have trod on...it looks like...it's some sort of ladies brooch. Oh dear, in my haste I fear I've ruined a rather fetching piece. Please help me collect the gems, Roy, I want this bagged as well.

ROY

Do you want all the little crushed bits, too? Or just the larger stones?

MCTAVISH

All of it, if you please. (Musing) Odd...how very odd...

NARRATOR

Downstairs in the drawing room, a few moments later...

SADIE

Where are they going now? Papa's surgery? Whatever for?

MARLENA

Come away from the window, Sadie, dear. You look suspicious, flicking the curtains like that.

SADIE

I just don't know what they could possibly want with Papa's surgery. He hasn't used it in years, has he?

MARLENA

He mentioned to me some time ago that he would come out of retirement if we end up going to war with Germany. To do his bit, you know. Maybe he was starting to open it back up. Hannah, did he say anything to you about the surgery?

HANNAH

Not as I recall. But come to think of it, he was down there last week, sorting out some old files or something, I don't know what, to tell the truth. But he was down there a good few hours, puttering about. But not since, and it was just the once.

DULCINEA

He dictated a letter for me to type up, to another doctor in Harley Street. It was about a patient, and he had me include some radiographs. He'd just gone down to the surgery to get them.

RODNEY

Who cares about any of this? None of it matters now.

OLIVER

It could matter very much Rodney...his surgery is where he kept all his chemicals and drugs...

NARRATOR

And in the doctor's surgery...

SERGEANT ROY

Where do we even begin? Looks like a typical doctor's office to me...

MCTAVISH

Indeed...

[SFX: OPENING A FILE CABINET]

MCTAVISH

Empty, all his patient files have been cleared out. To be expected of a retired doctor, I suppose.

SERGEANT ROY

He was some big time surgeon, wasn't he? For the heart, or something?

MCTAVISH

Yes, and he was quite famous for a particular suturing technique he invented, as I recall. He was a bit of a local celebrity, some people even bandied about the notion of a Nobel prize, at least according to the newspapers. Nevertheless, I know he retired from surgery and restricted himself to consultations with patients.

SERGEANT ROY

You amaze me, sir. How do you remember details like that from some newspaper story you read?

MCTAVISH

Much as I would like to take credit for it, alas, I cannot. My aunt Alice was a patient of his up until last year when she passed. She was quite smitten with him, and regaled me with tales of what an honourable, erudite man he was.

SERGEANT ROY

Well, someone didn't think so.

MCTAVISH

Indeed. Someone with access to this surgery...who could have chosen their murder weapon from this cabinet right here. Look at all these vials and bottles, Roy...this is where the murderer could have secured the cyanide...if it turns out to be the poison that was used. Which I believe it was.

SERGEANT ROY

Leaping, not strolling, sir?

MCTAVISH

(chuckling) Sometimes faith requires a leap, Roy.

SERGEANT ROY

Well, I don't believe that for a moment, sir. Why would a doctor have a deadly poison like cyanide? It makes no sense.

MCTAVISH

There is a form of cyanide that is used by doctors to treat maladies of the heart. It is not so much used now, but in her day, my aunt insisted she needed it to preserve her life. Used carefully, it can have therapeutic effects, but even in very small doses it is rapidly and violently fatal. Yes, I'm confident enough to make this leap of logic, Sergeant. I believe this is what caused the death of Dr. Davidson.

SERGEANT ROY

So we're looking for someone who knew about this here poison, and someone who knew how to handle it, and someone who had access to the doctor's study.

MCTAVISH

And of course, someone with a reason to want the doctor dead. If you would, please call the photographers back. We're going to need photographs of this surgery, and these vials. In the meantime, it's time to find more about this family...

NARRATOR

Why was Harrison trying to flee? What alibis do the other suspects have? Tune in next time find out the answers.

SCENE TWO: INT. DINING ROOM

NARRATOR

Inspector McTavish begins interviewing the family members one by one, trying to determine who had the strongest motive...or the strongest alibi. We find him in the dining room, sitting down to speak with...

MCTAVISH

Mr...Smythe. Thank you for joining me.

HARRISON

Of course. I always co-operate with the authorities.

MCTAVISH

Commendable. One might think your attempted escape this morning belies that sentiment, of course.

HARRISON

Escape! I resent that, I wasn't trying to-

MCTAVISH

Forgive me, I misspoke. Perhaps you were merely going for a walk.

HARRISON

I have urgent business out of town. Ask my wife, I told her this morning it was imperative I leave immediately.

MCTAVISH

I see. And what sort of business takes precedence over a murder investigation?

HARRISON

I had nothing to do with any murder.

MCTAVISH

That's not what I asked, sir.

HARRISON

I'm in finance. High finance. (Haughtily) I could explain further, but I doubt you'd understand.

MCTAVISH

I'm sure you're right. Tell me, you were with the others when the body was discovered?

HARRISON

We all heard Hannah scream, and we ran upstairs to see what was wrong.

MCTAVISH

And that's when you discovered the body.

HARRISON

(irritated) *I* didn't...I came in after the others, I...I had been waiting in the hall, since the study is so small. But I heard everyone gasp and cry out, and so I came in to see what the trouble was.

MCTAVISH

And what happened then?

HARRISON

Someone pointed out the cup on the floor, and Oliver said it smelled like almonds. I didn't know what that signified, until Sadie asked him, and he said "cyanide".

MCTAVISH

Mr. Forrester identified the smell as cyanide?

HARRISON

(Warming to the idea) Yes. Yes, absolutely. He knew right away. He seemed very familiar with it. He was like a military commander, ordering everyone around, telling Dulcie to go get Kitty, telling Rodney to phone the police-

MCTAVISH

So Mrs. Davidson wasn't in the room either?

HARRISON

No. She rarely associates with the family if she can help it. When she came in, it looked like she was going to faint, so Oliver ordered us all out of the room. He locked the door and told us to go downstairs to wait.

MCTAVISH

(flipping pages) He locked the door...to Dr. Davidson's study?

HARRISON

(thinking) No, actually, it was the bedroom door. The study adjoins the bedroom, and we all went out that way. Come to think of it...you're right, it is odd that Oliver should have a key to Davidson's room.

MCTAVISH

Did I say it was odd?

HARRISON

Clearly it is. And oh! Hannah said her key to Davidson's bedroom was missing from her key ring! *Madre de dios*...he must have taken the key from her keyring to let himself into the bedroom...and killed him!

MCTAVISH

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, Mr. Smythe.

HARRISON

(chastened) Of course. It's just that he had a motive, too.

MCTAVISH

Indeed?

HARRISON

Dr. Davidson called us all here last night to make an announcement, you see, and he told us... (falters)...I mean to say...

MCTAVISH

He told you...?

HARRISON

Well, I suppose it will come out when you talk to the others. He told everyone that he was going to change his will, and cut us all out. He was so angry and insulting he shook with rage as he spoke. He said he had been mistreated by his family for too long, and that he was going to sell the house and give his estate to charity.

MCTAVISH

Well now...how interesting.

HARRISON

But he said something about Oliver in particular...he said he could have Oliver disbarred for something, and that he really ought to, for the public good. And I swear I saw Oliver skulking about in the hallway last night. So you see, it's clear that-

MCTAVISH

(interrupting) Mr. Forrester claims that you are not who you say you are. Care to comment on that?

HARRISON

(barely containing his anger) I don't know what he's talking about. I changed my name to the English version when I left Spain, that's not a crime.

MCTAVISH

I see. Thank you, Mr. Smythe, you've been very helpful. That will be all for the moment.

HARRISON

Do you want me to go get him? I'd be happy to escort him in here for you.

MCTAVISH

Much obliged, sir. But I think I should speak with one of the Davidsons. You are married to Dr. Davidson's eldest daughter, yes? Be so good as to send her in next, please.

HARRISON

I would like to be here when you question my wife.

MCTAVISH

It's important that I speak to everyone individually, sir. Please. Oh, and Mr. Smythe?

HARRISON

(from doorway) Yes?

MCTAVISH

No more attempts to leave the residence...for business or any other reason. Understood?

HARRISON

(mutters as he leaves)

NARRATOR

Next to join the Inspector, Marlana glides in and takes a seat across from McTavish at the dining room table. She lights a cigarette and regards him suspiciously..

MCTAVISH

Good morning, Mrs. Smythe. Let me again express my condolences on your loss.

MARLENA

Thank you. It was a terrible shock.

MCTAVISH

I will try to make my inquiries brief. You were there when Dr. Davidson's body was discovered, yes?

MARLENA

Yes. Hannah, our housekeeper, had gone upstairs to wake him and we heard a dreadful scream. We all hurried upstairs...and well, there he was.

MCTAVISH

And it was clear your father was dead.

MARLENA

Quite. I asked my brother-in-law to check him regardless, just to be sure. But with the foaming at the mouth and his cyanosis, it was clear-

MCTAVISH

Cyanosis?

MARLENA

Forgive me, his skin was rather blue. I was a nurse during the Great War, you see, one doesn't forget the look of death, I'm afraid.

MCTAVISH

Indeed. And so you alone knew he had been poisoned with cyanide?

MARLENA

(blowing smoke) Look, Inspector Mc...Tavish, is it? Let's not beat about the bush, I know you have to interrogate all of us and look for the culprit among us. But let me assure you, I had nothing to do with my father's death. I simply recognised the smell of cyanide and put two and two together, as any sensible person would.

MCTAVISH

As your brother-in-law did.

MARLENA

It's a common fact that cyanide smells of almonds. At least among educated people.

MCTAVISH

And is Mr. Forrester in the medical field as well?

MARLENA

He's an attorney. He was my father's attorney for many years. He's a brilliant man, very well read. Look, why are you asking me about my sister's husband? Why aren't you talking to her about him? Or to him directly? I can't imagine what I could add to the investigation if you're looking at poor Ollie.

MCTAVISH

I am merely gathering information at this point, Mrs. Smythe. I understand that your father made some rather startling announcements last night...

MARLENA

Well, I see you've gathered quite a bit of information already, no doubt thanks to my hotheaded husband. Yes. Yes, he did. He blustered on a bit, felt a bit sorry for himself. Made some vague threats about changing his will.

MCTAVISH

Your husband said Dr. Davidson was going to sell the house and leave everything to charity. Is that how you remember it?

MARLENA

(blowing smoke) Something like that.

MCTAVISH

And that he was going to reveal something that would see Mr. Forrester disbarred.

MARLENA

(scoffing) You can't believe a word my father says. He's a...he was...a foolish old man with far too high an opinion of himself. Oliver had no reason to fear disbarment, that's quite absurd.

MCTAVISH

And yet Mr. Forrester did have the key to your father's bedroom door...

MARLENA

(surprised) I beg your pardon?

MCTAVISH

(flipping through notes) He locked the bedroom door after you all left the room. He must have had a key

MARLENA

I...well...I...don't recall that...perhaps the key was already in the lock, I don't know.

MCTAVISH

Do you happen to know why your husband was trying to leave the premises this morning?

MARLENA

I have no idea. Hadn't you better ask him?

MCTAVISH

One last question for now, Mrs. Smythe. Do you happen to know the combination to your father's wall safe?

MARLENA

Goodness, you do jump around. (Cooly) Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. I used to help him run his practice and deal with his affairs, before he hired Dulcie. Naturally I knew the combination to his safe.

MCTAVISH

And Dulcie is...

MARLENA

Miss Panglottis, his secretary. She was here last night too.

MCTAVISH

I see. And the safe... were you surprised to see that it was open and empty?

MARLENA

Was it open? It escaped my notice. My father's body rather monopolized my attention.

MCTAVISH

Would you happen to know if your father kept an inventory of the contents of his safe?

MARLENA

Yes, of course. I can find it for you if you like.

MCTAVISH

That would be very helpful. One last question for now, Mrs. Smythe...did you and Mr. Smythe retire together for the evening?

MARLENA

What kind of a question is that?

MCTAVISH

I'm simply trying to determine everyone's movements last night. Were you together all night?

MARLENA

Yes. Will that be all, Inspector?

MCTAVISH

Just out of curiosity...do you have any idea who might have killed your father?

MARLENA

I can't imagine any of us doing such a terrible thing. Certainly none of the family could have stooped to such barbarity.

MCTAVISH

Correct me if I'm wrong, the only non-family members present last night were...Miss Higginbotham, the housekeeper, and this Dulcie... Pangiottis, Dr. Davidson's secretary?

MARLENA

That's right. But Hannah has been with us for many years, she's as good as family. And Dulcie's just his secretary, I can't imagine her having experienced enough of him to want him dead. In fact, there was another non-family member there last night. Kitty.

MCTAVISH

You mean Mrs. Davidson. Surely she's considered family.

MARLENA

Lord knows I've tried to make her feel like one of us. But she's a cold one, that girl. I wouldn't be surprised if Papa's threat to divorce her was all the excuse she needed.

MCTAVISH

He threatened to divorce her *and* cut her out of the will?

MARLENA

He seemed adamant. And she was in tears, I tell you, and rather undignified about it.

MCTAVISH

Thank you, Mrs. Smythe. That will be all...for now.

MARLENA

I really must say, Inspector, I hope you'll be more delicate with my sister and brother. This interrogation is really quite unnecessary, it couldn't be more obvious that none of us would have killed our own father.

MCTAVISH

It is rather less obvious to *me* at this point, Madame. But I will endeavour to keep my questions...delicate, as you say. Thank you, Mrs. Smythe, please ask Mrs. Forrester to join me next.

NARRATOR

What will Sadie Forrester have to say? Will McTavish begin to suspect Dulcie? Don't miss the next episode as more of the suspects are questioned..

SCENE 3: INT. AFTERNOON

NARRATOR

Sadie Forrester has been called in to answer Inspector McTavish's questions. As the scene opens...

SADIE

(in the middle of talking quickly) And so you see, it's just been so awful for all of us, his outburst really was extraordinarily rude and hurtful and I don't know what. And I'm sure someone has told you by now but yes, I did rather blurt out that I hated him and wished he were dead but of course I didn't mean it. One says such horrid things when one is upset, you know. I didn't mean it at all, I was simply so terribly upset.

MCTAVISH

Mrs. Forrester...

SADIE

And I started to make my way home because, you see, we just live down the hill, in the village, we've lived there for more than thirty years, but I turned around and came back because I just refused to run away from this. And so I came back and went to bed and of course...well, that's just it, I just went to bed alone because Ollie was...oh I don't know, Ollie said he was in the sunroom or something, and in the morning, that's when it happened. Or rather, that's when we found him, and-

MCTAVISH

Mrs. Forrester, please. Slow down, calm yourself.

SADIE

I just know how dreadful it looks, I know what you must be thinking, especially since he said he was going to cut us out of his will and sell the house. I just couldn't bear the idea of his selling the house, that's what really upset me. Because if we only had the money I would have offered to buy it from him, I have such wonderful plans for this old stately home, but I suppose you know that too. It's alright, I make no secret of it, I want to open a home for unwed mothers, I think it's the duty of the privileged classes to do what they can for the unfortunates of the world. But he refused, and oh it's just been so hard not having any money to do what's right, and it doesn't help that Marlina and Harrison are forever showing off their baubles and trinkets like that gaudy diamond brooch of hers, even though I know they lost everything in the crash as well and I have absolutely no idea where all their money comes from.

MCTAVISH

(firmly) Mrs. Forrester.

SADIE

(contrite) Sorry. I am sorry, do forgive me. This is all just too ghastly.

MCTAVISH

(sighing through his nose) Alright. As I was saying...your father was in the habit of drinking cocoa every evening, yes?

SADIE

Yes, Hannah would bring him cocoa every night at one a.m. In fact we were discussing it over dinner.

MCTAVISH

Who was discussing it?

SADIE

Roddy and Marlena and I, we were telling Kitty about it. And Harrison, too.

MCTAVISH

Did anyone else hear your conversation?

SADIE

Oh...oh no, I wouldn't say so. I know for a fact that Dulcie was talking to Oliver about cricket, I think. Neither of them would have heard us. No, they wouldn't have heard us. Dulcie and Oliver definitely weren't paying us any mind.

MCTAVISH

Were either of them aware of your father's late night cocoa routine?

SADIE

Oh no, certainly not. No, it was...it was known only to the family. And of course to Kitty and Harrison too, since were talking about it, but it was just a bit of silly conversation, it wasn't anything serious. You really mustn't think anyone else could have overheard us.

MCTAVISH

I'm going to ask you a very pointed question, Mrs. Forrester. Who do you think could have poisoned your father?

SADIE

Oh goodness...what a question...well, I can't imagine anyone in my family doing such a horrible thing. That's what makes this all so wretched, I can't even bear to think that someone in this house is a cold-blooded murderer...but if I had to guess, I'm sorry to say I have serious doubts about Kitty...she's always been a gold-digger, Papa even called her a gold-digger when he said he was going to divorce her. And she isn't blood, you know, she's just a Davidson by marriage. And it's different when you're related by blood, there's a bond there, there's something unbreakable and sturdy about being related by blood. It matters. It really does. So if I had to say, I'd be very suspicious of Kitty, since she did say she was so happy the old bastard finally got what he deserved. Did I not say that before? Maybe I should have said that before. After we found the body she looked ever so pale and like she was going to faint, but then she said she felt wonderful and that finally he had got what he deserved-

MCTAVISH

I see. Thank you Mrs. Forrester.

SADIE

Is that all the questions you have for me? I don't have much of an alibi, but then I suppose none of us do, we were all just here, in the house when it must have happened.

MCTAVISH

It does present a challenge, yes. Tell me, you mentioned something about a brooch that Marlina wears?

SADIE

Yes, it's a horrible, garish, gaudy thing, all encrusted with diamonds, Harrison bought it for her. She wears it just to annoy me, just to show off how well they're doing...even though I know they were bankrupted by the crash and really can't afford anything so dear. But Harrison is always so determined to put on a brave face..although he really doesn't fool any of us. We may not have known his actual name but we always knew he was a Spanish fellow, Marlana met him in Spain after all, and he has that wonderful accent...but-

MCTAVISH

That will be all, Mrs. Forrester, you've been a great help. Might I encourage you go find Miss Higginbotham and allow her to make you some tea...and please send in Mr. Davidson.

SADIE

Of course. But I know Roddy didn't do it, he's a bounder and a bit of a cad but he's harmless, really.

MCTAVISH

I should like to speak to him all the same.

SADIE

Of course. Of course. Oh I do hope this will all be over soon, how perfectly dreadful all of this is..

NARRATOR

Rodney enters the dining room with a casual, if resigned air. He takes a seat opposite McTavish and puts his feet up on the table.

[RODNEY ENTERS]
[SFX SCHLUMP INTO CHAIR, FEET ON TABLE]

MCTAVISH

Good afternoon, Mr. Davidson.

RODNEY

Call me Rodney, everyone does.

MCTAVISH

Very well, Rodney. I just have a couple of questions to ask you, if you don't mind.

RODNEY

Fire away!

MCTAVISH

What can you tell me about the dinner you all attended last evening?

RODNEY

Oh, it was the pits. Anything to do with my father usually is, but this was exceptionally bad. He let loose on everyone, it was dreadful.

MCTAVISH

Were you surprised by what he had to say?

RODNEY

Yes and no. My father elevated self-pity to an art form. It was only a matter of time before he pulled some stunt like this.

MCTAVISH

A stunt? So you don't believe he was serious?

RODNEY

I have no idea. But I do know he had a habit of firing Hannah and then rehiring her, and threatening Kitty with divorce.

MCTAVISH

And how do you know that?

RODNEY

Well I might as well tell you, but do be discreet about it, old chap. It's not something I'd like to have get around but Kitty...well, let me say this, Kitty and I have become rather...*close*. And she often...*confided* in me. Let's just leave it at that.

MCTAVISH

I see. And without being...indelicate...may I ask if you...or she... can provide alibis for each other for last night?

RODNEY

I don't know. I doubt it, though.

MCTAVISH

You don't know?

RODNEY

(buoyantly) No idea. I know that after his outburst I polished off the last of the gin and then went on a hunt for anything else I could find to drink. Dry as a bone. So I took myself off to the pub down in the village.

MCTAVISH

And how long were you there?

RODNEY

That's a bit fuzzy. All I remember is waking up in a hedge outside the pub this morning. No clue how I got there, either.

MCTAVISH

So you weren't even in the house last night?

RODNEY

I remember going to the pub, I remember last call...and that's about it. Maybe I came back up here...but I did end up in that hedge somehow, so it doesn't seem likely. Ask Joe the publican, maybe he knows. It's the Fox and Fiddle, charming little rustic hole-in-the-wall, just off the church laneway. Try the ploughman's lunch if you get the chance, it's a bit of heaven on a plate.

MCTAVISH

I will, thank you. If you don't mind my saying, you seem rather cavalier about this situation.

RODNEY

I'm not the least bit sorry my father is dead, if that's what you mean. He took ill last year just as I was about to leave on a sailing trip to the Argentine, and I cancelled it just so I could be here for him. Did he ever thank me? Of course not. He just *expected* we'd all be here for him, as usual.

MCTAVISH

How ill was he?

RODNEY

Oh, it was dashed awful for a spell. Something to do with his lungs, I don't know. Galloping consumption maybe, or some kind of influenza. Whatever it was, he recovered enough to write me a letter telling me all the ways I'd disappointed him as a son. So you see, I didn't kill the man but I'm rather chuffed someone did.

MCTAVISH

Well I appreciate your candour.

RODNEY

May I go now? I could use a drink. The sun *is* over the yardarm and all that...

MCTAVISH

Just one last question, Mr. Dav-Rodney. Do you have any idea who might want to see your father dead?

RODNEY

(laughing) More like who wouldn't want to see him dead. Everyone hated the old codger, especially the girls' husbands. He has some dirt on them I think, and threatened to use it. But every last one of us could have done it, if that's what you're asking.

MCTAVISH

I see. Thank you Mr. Davidson. Would you please ask Sergeant Roy to join me on your way out.

RODNEY

Glad to.

[RODNEY EXITS]

[SERGEANT ROY ENTERS]

SERGEANT ROY

You wanted to see me, Sir?

MCTAVISH

Yes, Sergeant, do come in and shut the door. I'm perplexed by this case at the moment, I could use your insight.

SERGEANT ROY

Happy to help, Sir.

MCTAVISH

Have you spoken to any of the family?

SERGEANT ROY

That Mrs. Sadie Forrester gave me an earful, going on about cocoa and how we need to speak to the victim's wife.

MCTAVISH

Yes, she's quite agitated. Frankly, I find it all very odd... each of the Davidson children have reacted differently to their father's death, and not one among them has shown any sign of what I would call grief.

SERGEANT ROY

Apparently he delivered some shocking news to all of them over dinner last night, and let every one of them know what he thought of them. That's what Mr. Oliver Forrester told me - that the victim called them all here just to tell them all they were disinherited. Not a very nice thing to do.

MCTAVISH

Still, you'd think that one family argument wouldn't overshadow their father's death. No, there's more here than meets the eye, Sergeant. I don't believe this will be a simple case to crack.

SERGEANT ROY

Should we talk to the housekeeper next? She's the most obvious suspect to my mind, she found the body.

MCTAVISH

Yes, and she brought him the cocoa, knowing he'd drink it. The trouble is, Sergeant, even at this early stage, we've already seen that more than one person in this house had a motive to kill Dr. Davidson, and more than one person is already implicated to some degree.

SERGEANT ROY

That eyelash you mean...do you think it could belong to Mrs. Forrester?

MCTAVISH

No, I don't think it belongs to her...I observed that she is a lady who does not favour heavy *maquillage*. Perhaps this young secretary, Miss Pangiottis. But I am unwilling to assume anything at this point. I will say, though, that discovering the shattered brooch belonging to Mrs. Smythe, and having apprehended Mr. Smythe in the process of trying to flee...well, this is all quite puzzling. I think I need to do some digging around, I need to find out more about the victim before we continue. Let's reconvene here tomorrow and continue the questioning then.

NARRATOR

Already, five suspects have entered the Inspector's mind - was it Dulcie who lost a false eyelash while stealing from the safe? Was it Sadie, who wished her father dead? Perhaps it was Marlana, who dropped her brooch in her haste to flee the scene of the crime? Was it Harrison, who tried to escape after murdering his father-in-law? Or was it Hannah, the person who brought Dr. Davidson the deadly drink? Tune in next time as the investigation continues..

ACT 2 SCENE 4: EXT. MORNING

[SFX: BIRDS, CRUNCHING GRAVEL, TWO PEOPLE WALKING]

NARRATOR

It's the next morning, and Inspector McTavish and Sergeant Roy have returned to Wakefield Manor to continue the investigation into the Death of Dr. Davidson. McTavish has the photographs taken at the scene yesterday, and has done some snooping into the backgrounds of Dr. Davidson, and some of the guests. As Inspector McTavish and Sergeant Roy approach the house..

SERGEANT ROY

I've never seen a case like it, Sir. So far every one of them had a motive for wanting the man dead, and no one has an alibi.

MCTAVISH

Remind me to stop by the Fox and Fiddle down in the village later, Sergeant. I must speak with the publican about Rodney's story.

SERGEANT ROY

Righto. Did you get that list of the safe contents from Mrs. Smythe?

MCTAVISH

Indeed, she telephoned me at the station this morning, I jotted down what she said. You might want to take a look.

SERGEANT ROY

(reading) A marriage licence for Mr. And Mrs. Davidson, his life insurance policy, a gold Patek Phillipe pocket watch, a diamond bracelet, a - oh hello, here's a tidy sum - twenty thousand pounds cash. (whistles) I say, this chap was richer than Croesus. That's got to be a motive for all of them as well, especially if he was threatening to cut them all out of his will. The only thing left behind was the life insurance policy - whoever it was cleared out everything else and is sitting on a pretty penny right about now.

MCTAVISH

Mrs. Smythe knew the combination to the safe, as did Miss Pangiotis. I wonder did anyone else in the house know it.

SERGEANT ROY

I'd imagine that housemaid Hannah could have done with a few bob. I'd be surprised if she didn't know the combination.

MCTAVISH

We shall see...there she is now. (arriving at the bottom of the steps to the manor) Good morning, Miss Higginbotham.

HANNAH

Good morning, gentlemen. May I offer you a cup of tea?

MCTAVISH

Thank you, no, we would like to begin questioning the remaining guests if you don't mind. Would you be so good as to ask Mrs. Davidson to join us in the dining room?

HANNAH

(embarrassed) I'm sorry, Inspector, but Mrs. Davidson has said she won't come downstairs on account of her terrible grief. She asks that you attend her in her room.

MCTAVISH

I see. Very well. Shall we, Sergeant?

[SFX - MOUNTING THE CEMENT STEPS AND GOING INSIDE]

NARRATOR

Inside Kitty's private room, the inspector and the sergeant find her sitting at her dressing table, dressed in a pink chiffon negligee and brushing out her golden hair.

[SFX - 30'S MUSIC PLAYING FAINTLY]

KITTY

Look, I'll be perfectly frank with you, I hated the old bastard, and in many ways I'm relieved he's dead. But I simply wouldn't have killed him.

MCTAVISH

And why is that, Mrs. Davidson?

KITTY

(sigh) Because I know what's in his current will, the one he hadn't changed yet. It was something he insisted on before our marriage eight years ago. He added a codicil that if I divorced him, or he pre-deceased me, within ten years of our marriage, I would receive no part of his estate.

SERGEANT ROY

That's a rather odd thing for a bridegroom to add to his will.

KITTY

He said he did it to appease his children. He wanted them to accept me into the family, and thought if they knew I had nothing to gain from our marriage for at least ten years, they'd be more comfortable welcoming me into the Davidson fold.

MCTAVISH

And did they?

KITTY

Too much, if I'm being honest. They rather think I'm one of them. How dreadfully dull, to be considered one of *them*.

MCTAVISH

Still...you'll forgive me if I confirm this information with Dr. Davidson's solicitor.

KITTY

Be my guest.

SERGEANT ROY

Of course, playing devil's advocate, you could have contested the will. As his wife, you'd stand a good chance in the courts if you challenged that provision.

KITTY

Do you think I would take that chance? That I'd risk it all just for the satisfaction of killing him? Hardly. I've lost eight years of my life to that man, with only two more years to go before I could divorce him, why would I kill him? Or at any rate, why would I kill him *now*? If I were going to kill him, I'd wait another twenty-four months and inherit half his estate free and clear.

MCTAVISH

I see. Well...to be frank, Mrs. Davidson, he did threaten to divorce you last night. Is that not so? And if that was indeed a condition in his will...

KITTY

He had no grounds for divorce, and he knew it. Besides, killing him before he could divorce me...and then taking my chances with probate court, along with the rest of his family? My, you do think me a gambler, don't you Inspector.

MCTAVISH

Perhaps, Mrs. Davidson. Because, as you know, in most cases of homicide...

KITTY

It's almost always the spouse who did it. Yes, I know. (Sighing) Even more reason not to attempt it, don't you think? Surely I'd be your immediate and primary suspect.

SERGEANT ROY

Do you have an opinion as to who could have done it?

KITTY

Any of them. They all hated him as much as I did, I'm simply the only one who will admit it. But I do think that little tart Dulcie was trying to push me out. Even he thought so, ask anyone. He rebuffed her quite savagely last night, and I can see that kind of girl killing him simply out of wounded pride.

MCTAVISH

What do you plan to do now, if I might ask? Now that he has, in fact, pre-deceased you within the specified time frame and your part of the estate is forfeit?

KITTY

I have plans, Inspector. Don't worry about me, I'll be just fine.

MCTAVISH

Of that I have no doubt, Mrs. Davidson. If you will excuse us.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, downstairs, in a quiet hallway...

OLIVER

(whispering)What did the Inspector say to you, Mar? Was it dreadful?

MARLENA

(whispering)Nothing of consequence...but I'm...I'm so terribly worried for you Oliver...you were running about the hallway last night, it looks very bad for you.

OLIVER

Don't worry about me, darling.

MARLENA

But what if the Inspector tries to pin it on you?

OLIVER

Stop fretting, Mar. You'll work yourself up into a lather. I'll talk to the Inspector and make sure he knows what he needs to know.

NARRATOR

A few moments later, in the dining room again, McTavish and Roy greet Dulcie as she enters the room and takes a seat.

MCTAVISH

You look rather familiar, Miss Pangiottis...would I have seen you somewhere before?

DULCINEA

I don't think so.

MCTAVISH

That turn of your head, the way you smile...it is quite familiar.

SERGEANT ROY

Were you an actress before you came to work for Dr. Davidson? You're pretty enough to be in the pictures.

DULCINEA

Thank you, Sergeant. But I've only ever been a typist. I've lived in the village my whole life, and I've never been in the pictures or on the stage.

MCTAVISH

And you were employed by Dr. Davidson as his personal assistant, is that so?

DULCINEA

Yes. I typed up his letters, I helped him box up his old patient files and send them off to other doctors, that sort of thing.

MCTAVISH

I assume you also worked in his surgery? Dealing with the patient files that were once housed there?

DULCINEA

Oh yes, I would spend whole days there, sometimes, organising and cataloguing everything. It was tedious work, but I didn't mind it.

MCTAVISH

And how did you find working with Dr. Davidson himself?

DULCINEA

Well to be honest, he wasn't the most amiable man...

MCTAVISH

I've gathered that. Please, sketch his character for us in more detail. We need to get an idea of him from an outsider, so to speak.

DULCINEA

Well...if you insist. (pause) He was perhaps the most self-centred person I ever met. Every small annoyance was like an affront to him, he viewed even the most benign events as personal slights. He must have told me a thousand times all the ways his colleagues and family mistreated him, abused him, misunderstood him, it was an endless litany of complaints, the same ones over and over again, even when I told him I'd heard the stories already. That's when I realized he wasn't looking for a conversation, if you understand me. He was paying me to sit and listen to him complain.

MCTAVISH

Did you ever do any actual work for him?

DULCINEA

Oh yes, he got a full day's work out of me, certainly... sometimes I typed so many letters my fingers ached all night. Then he'd ring me up at two or three in the morning, all in a tither because he'd had words with Hannah or Kitty, and was feeling palpitations.

SERGEANT ROY

(incredulous) He would telephone you at home? In the middle of the night?

DULCINEA

Not often, but yes. And if I tried to ring off he'd find ways to keep me on the line. I tried every excuse, but the only way I got him to end the call was by complaining about situations in my own life. Petty annoyances, you know, nothing of consequence. But he resented having to be of help to me, you see, or anyone, really. He couldn't put down the telephone fast enough if I started to relate a troubling circumstance of my own.

SERGEANT ROY

He sounds like a right sod.

MCTAVISH

That's enough, Sergeant. If you don't mind, Miss Panglottis, how did you feel when he fired you last night?

DULCINEA

It didn't compare to the news he was delivering to his children. I only worked for him, they're his family. But I admit, I was shocked that he thought I was...that he believed I was using my position to try to...to...

MCTAVISH

Divert his affections away from Mrs. Davidson?

DULCINEA

Yes! It's absurd, I can assure you. I...I can't tell you why...but I would never think of Dr. Davidson that way. It would be so utterly unnatural to me to even consider it. Please, don't ask me more, but trust that I had absolutely no designs on Dr. Davidson.

MCTAVISH

The loss of your employment with Dr. Davidson must present a financial hardship to you, does it not?

DULCINEA

A pretty woman who can type will never want for a job, Inspector.

SERGEANT ROY

That's for sure. There's a job going in the secretarial pool at headquarters, in fac-

DULCINEA

I can assure you, I had no reason to kill Dr. Davidson. No job would be worth killing someone over, you must see that.

MCTAVISH

It does seem a paltry motive, I grant you. But sometimes, one's motive for murder is not what it initially appears to be.

DULCINEA

What other motive could I have? I barely knew the man. For you to accuse me-

MCTAVISH

I am not accusing anyone as of yet, Miss Pangiottis. I am merely gathering the pieces of the puzzle together.

DULCINEA

Well, while you gather your puzzle pieces, may I be excused? Mrs. Forrester is still quite upset and I'd like to bring her some tea.

MCTAVISH

Very thoughtful of you, indeed. Yes, that will be all. Oh...one thing...that perfume you're wearing, it's quite distinctive.

DULCINEA

It's French. It was a gift from...from a friend. Do you like it?

MCTAVISH

Its effects are quite overpowering, yes.

DULCINEA

Now, do excuse me

MCTAVISH

Of course. Thank you, Miss Pangiottis. Would you ask Mr. Forrester to join me, please?

NARRATOR

Was Kitty Davidson lying about the codicil in her husband's will? Does Marlana think Oliver killed Dr. Davidson? Does Oliver think Marlana killed him? And why did Davidson make late night phone calls to Dulcie? All will be revealed soon... stay tune

ACT 2 SCENE 5 : INT. AFTERNOON

NARRATOR

We return to our mystery as Oliver Forrester joins Inspector McTavish in the dining room. Oliver has asked to be interviewed privately, with Inspector McTavish alone. Intrigued, McTavish has agreed and asks Sergeant Roy to remain with the rest of the guests in the drawing room.

MCTAVISH

Mr. Forrester, do sit down, I won't take up too much of your time.

OLIVER

I'm happy to co-operate with the police.

MCTAVISH

(small laugh)

OLIVER

Did I say something funny?

MCTAVISH

No, excuse me. It's just that Mr. Smythe said almost the exact same thing when I questioned him.

OLIVER

Well, in my case you can believe it. In his case...well, I'm sure you know by now what an artful criminal that man is.

MCTAVISH

We are looking into his background, of course. But whatever his past, it does not mean he murdered your father-in-law.

OLIVER

Inspector, may I be blunt?

MCTAVISH

I would welcome it.

OLIVER

You haven't got a hope of solving this case.

MCTAVISH

That is rather blunt, I must say. Go on.

OLIVER

Consider the facts; no one saw Dr. Davidson after about ten pm, and his body was discovered at around eight am the next morning. In the intervening ten hours, there were eight people in this house with motive, means and opportunity...and no alibis. I dare say it would be almost impossible to make a murder charge stick, barring anything short of a full confession.

MCTAVISH

I see. And is this your legal opinion?

OLIVER

I practice corporate law, not criminal. But I know enough to know what a terrifically awful case this would be to bring to trial. I doubt any prosecuting attorney worth his salt would even touch it.

MCTAVISH

Fascinating.

OLIVER

Any good defence attorney, furthermore, would certainly present an alternate theory of the crime. Why, he'd have seven other viable suspects to pin it on. Any one of whom could have just as easily committed the crime as whoever stands accused.

MCTAVISH

Well then. Tell me, what do you propose I do about this sad state of affairs?

OLIVER

(conspiratorially) Why not say you can't charge anyone? Do you have to arrest someone, can you not just leave it unexplained?

MCTAVISH

There is the matter of justice for the victim, Mr. Forrester. As an officer of the law, I am duty bound to bring criminals to justice.

OLIVER

I do understand the need for a satisfactory conclusion in a murder case, or at least something your superiors can give to the newspapers. Personally, I think you couldn't go far wrong with Herrero. Davidson had something on him, and threatened him with it - wouldn't it be easy to say he did it, and then tried to escape? I don't think anyone would fault your logic in arresting him.

MCTAVISH

Just a tidy little arrest, then.

OLIVER

I say give your higher-ups the arrest they're looking for, and give the family the peace of mind of knowing that scoundrel Herrero has been dealt with.

MCTAVISH

Of course, there is the small matter of whether he actually did it.

OLIVER

If you can't prove anyone else did, does it matter?

MCTAVISH

If I had your scruples, Mr. Forrester, my job would be a far sight easier.

OLIVER

I don't care what you think of me, Inspector. I know this family, and I know they were browbeaten, bullied and blackmailed by that man for decades. He was a vile, selfish brute who treated his whole family very badly. He was a devil for dramatic gestures - he should have been on the stage, he certainly craved the limelight enough to have been a performer.

MCTAVISH

It seems to me...if you'll forgive my bluntness...that if I were to put names in a hat to make an arrest for this murder...well, it might as easily be your name I drew. You've been most outspoken about your hatred of the victim, if you see what I mean.

OLIVER

(sighing) I'll come clean, Inspector, because I don't care what happens to me. I'll tell you everything about my dealings with the Davidson family.

MCTAVISH

Please do.

OLIVER

Dr. Davidson was my client, many years ago. I handled many of his personal affairs, and since I was familiar with the New York Stock exchange through some of my other clients, he asked me to advise him about certain investments. I was eager to impress him, because I had met his daughter and fallen in love with her. I wanted to marry her, and I thought if I could provide him with some inside information I had learned from my other clients...

MCTAVISH

He would consent to your marrying Sadie.

OLIVER

(sighing) Not Sadie. Marlina.

MCTAVISH

Indeed...

OLIVER

So I broke the law, *and* violated attorney-client privilege. Davidson was able to sell his stocks before the crash, and was able to buy certain others afterwards that rebounded so well he became astonishingly rich. He didn't seem to mind how he came into such wealth...until one summer when Marlana and I had a bit of a bad break and she went off to Spain to think things over. I guess he thought she and I were through, and so he... forgive me, this is difficult to admit...but you see, I had begun a friendship with Sadie, mostly because I couldn't bear the thought of never seeing Marlana again. I suppose she took it for courtship, because quite suddenly I found myself blackmailed into marrying her. She had always been a high-strung, needy sort of girl, and I can only assume Dr. Davidson wanted her married off and out of his hair. Why she chose me I'll never know, but *I* had no choice, you see...I could either marry her or face disbarment and possibly prison.

MCTAVISH

So that's why Dr. Davidson told everyone he would have you disbarred.

OLIVER

But I didn't kill him, I swear it. It's all water under the bridge now, my career is winding down anyway, and as for the insider trading, under US law, the statute of limitations on that has long run out. So you see, I simply had no motive to kill him.

MCTAVISH

Not for those reasons, perhaps...

OLIVER

What other motive could I have?

MCTAVISH

I'm not privy to the hearts of men, Mr. Forrester, but with an admission such as the one you just made concerning Mrs. Smythe...

OLIVER

All I've ever wanted for Marlana is her happiness and safety. That's all I'll ever want.

MCTAVISH

Forgive me, sir, if this is indelicate, but I rather think there's more to it than that...Mrs. Forrester told me you did not spend the night with her. Were you, perhaps, with Mrs. Smythe?

OLIVER

Absolutely not. I was...well, I admit it, I did go to check on her after that awful dinner. I heard she and Herrero having a terrific row, mostly about money. I saw him storm out of the room in a rage, so I wanted to hang back in the shadows and make sure no harm came to her. But that's all. I had planned to stay all night in the hallway, if I had to, in case he came back and caused trouble. Now I know I my instincts were right. That man can't be trusted. It *must* have been him.

MCTAVISH

There is the matter of your having a key to Dr. Davidson's room. Someone mentioned you locked the door, and I myself saw you unlock it to admit the Sergeant and myself yesterday morning.

OLIVER

(sighing) Alright, I admit that too. I took it off Hannah's key ring. After I checked on Marlana, I had intended to sneak into the study and see if I could find the evidence he had on Herrero. But I heard he and Mar coming down the hall, and so I

OLIVER CONT'D

left. I'm surprised they didn't wake the whole house with their arguing, Herrero was absolute scarlet with rage. At any rate, I took to the sunroom to sleep, not wanting to be too far away from Mar's room in case things took a drastic turn.

MCTAVISH

So you never did enter Dr. Davidson's study.

OLIVER

I swear to you, no.

MCTAVISH

(flipping through his notebook) You recognized the smell of almonds in the cup you found by Dr. Davidson's body...and you identified it as cyanide. How did you know it was cyanide?

OLIVER

Doesn't everyone?

MCTAVISH

No, not everyone is intimately familiar with the smell of deadly poisons, sir.

OLIVER

Well, I remember a case from law school, a woman poisoned her husband by crushing up the pits of bitter almonds and putting them in his morning oatmeal. The smell of almonds was overwhelming, but she thought disguising it with maple syrup would conceal her intent. It worked, he died instantly.

MCTAVISH

So you know quite a bit about the poison.

OLIVER

Did I mention she went to the gallows? I don't fancy myself a genius but I'm not stupid enough to poison someone with something so blasted obvious.

OLIVER

(Long pause) Inspector...are you alright? You've got a strange look in your eye...

MCTAVISH

(musing to himself) It is obvious, isn't it? This manner of death...it's quite unmistakeable that death has occurred by misadventure.

OLIVER

Yes, what of it?

MCTAVISH

I'm beginning, I think, to understand...the killer wanted there to be no doubt that this was not a natural death. In fact, great pains were taken to ensure that the scene, when discovered, pointed directly to a wilful act.

OLIVER

Yes, but what of it? Whoever killed him probably acted in a fit of insanity, and didn't think to smother the old man or push him down the stairs or some such, to make it look accidental. I can tell you, inspector, I should have done something like that if I *had* killed him. I'd have sooner cut the brakes in his Bentley and made it look like he lost control going down to the village than spike his drink with something as quick and painless as cyanide.

MCTAVISH

(sharply) You also happen to know cyanide is quick and painless?

OLIVER

Well of course I don't *know*, but I do know it's rather quick. I should have liked to see that man suffer a bit longer if I *had* gone so far as to murder him, I don't mind admitting that to you.

MCTAVISH

I see...well, thank you for your frankness, Mr. Forrester. It's quite refreshing, I must say. May I be so bold as to be frank with you in return?

OLIVER

Please do.

MCTAVISH

Thank you, sir. I admit I am perplexed by certain aspects of this case. I don't often like to confess to such a thing, but I feel I can be candid with you.

OLIVER

I appreciate your faith in me. What's troubling you about the case?

MCTAVISH

It is simply this - everyone in this house had a reason to kill him, but I am left with the sense that there are only one or two among you who had adequate...shall we say, *verve*? To commit the crime.

OLIVER

By verve you mean the guts to do it, I suppose.

MCTAVISH

Precisely. Taking a life in such a manner...it is not so easy a thing to do as novels would have you believe. Especially when it is one's father, for instance. Or one's husband.

OLIVER

You're absolutely right! And you've rather confirmed my theory about Herrero, that it was done by someone unrelated to Davidson.

MCTAVISH

But then there is the matter of this supposed damning evidence he had on you and Mr. Smythe in particular. We have searched his office and surgery, and found no files of any kind. I placed a telephone call this morning to his solicitor, and the reputable gentleman assured me he had not been charged with the safekeeping of any files or documents for Dr. Davidson. So if there is, in fact, damning evidence that would inspire murder...where is it?

OLIVER

I shouldn't think that would matter. (Thinking quickly) But perhaps it was in the safe, and Herrero found it and destroyed it.

MCTAVISH

And out of an abundance of brotherly love, he also destroyed the evidence against you?

OLIVER

If he was in a hurry, perhaps he simply took everything from the safe and ran. He may not have even looked at what he was stealing.

MCTAVISH

Hmm...perhaps. But you see, without these documents...I'm afraid it would be, as you say, nearly impossible to prove there was sufficient motive for a murderer to strike.

OLIVER

The killer need only have *thought* that the evidence existed, Inspector. And Davidson announced rather stridently that it did, in front of everyone. That would certainly hold up in court, we were all witnesses.

MCTAVISH

(Portentiously) Precisely, Mr. Forrester. (Airily, ending the interview) Well, thank you for your insight, it has been most illuminating.

OLIVER

Have you finished with your interviews?

MCTAVISH

I have only Miss Higginbotham left to interview, in fact.

OLIVER

You've left Hannah for last? But surely she's the prime suspect?

MCTAVISH

It looks that way, yes. That's why I chose to interview her after I had spoken to everyone else. Do be so kind as to show her in.

NARRATOR

Is Oliver trying to cover up his own guilt by implicating Harrison Smythe? Or is he protecting someone else...someone he thinks may have committed the crime? And what will Hannah have to say to the Inspector? Tune in next time to find out...

ACT TWO SCENE 6 INT. AFTERNOON

NARRATOR

Hannah Higginbotham, long-serving housekeeper to the Davidson family, is the last to speak to Inspector McTavish. We join them in the kitchen, where they are seated at the small breakfast table.

MCTAVISH

Miss Higginbotham, may I offer you my handkerchief?

HANNAH

Thanks ever so much, Inspector. I'm sorry, I just can't stop blubbering, I must look a right mess.

MCTAVISH

It must have been very upsetting, discovering the doctor's body.

HANNAH

I screamed my head off. I'll never forget it, I'll go to my grave seeing that horrible scene. And knowing it were the cocoa! With everyone looking at me like I'm the one that done it. I can't make head nor tails of this, Inspector, God as my witness I can't account for it. I swear on my mother's life I didn't kill him. You have to believe I'd never do such a horrible, horrible thing.

MCTAVISH

(Gently) You must have been upset by Dr. Davidson's announcement over dinner last night...

HANNAH

(blowing her nose) Oh...well, yes...naturally. But you must understand, I've known him thirty year or more. I'm used to him by now.

MCTAVISH

Oh? Were these dramatic announcements a common occurrence then?

HANNAH

Not as bad as last night, and not common I wouldn't say. It were only that he'd been so very ill this last year, and his temper often got the better of him. He were a very private, secretive sort of man, I think he were just finally letting his temper out more often than he used to is all.

MCTAVISH

He was ill, you say. Do you know anything about his condition?

HANNAH

(scoffing) Oh, no, he never shared anything like that with me. I just know there were a few appointments to see some specialist or other, and some of those x-ray thingies came by courier for him not long ago, but he didn't seem to be at all ill lately. For all I know they were in aid of someone else altogether. As I said, I never knew a thing about his medical practice.

MCTAVISH

I see...so were you surprised by his decision? To disinherit his family and sell the estate?

HANNAH

Surprised by what he said, certainly. But I do believe...I do believe and make no mistake...as heartless as he seemed, he would never have gone through with it. He was all bluster, he was. He was, in his heart, a very vulnerable sort of man...after his wife died he was never the same. She doted on him, from what I understand, and from what the children said. He just wanted to be loved...and yes, he could be right selfish and cold...but that was just his way. He didn't know how to look beyond himself...if you know what I mean. When I was a girl growing up, there was a young lad in our village that had some sort of...problem, you know, we never wanted to ask and his mother never said nought about it, but it was like he just stopped growing at a certain point, and wasn't ever going to get any bigger. He was only about four foot tall even as a teenager, with a little scrawny body and all. He was a young man in his head but he looked like a little boy. That's how I thought of Dr. Davidson, only the other way around. He looked like a grown man, but in his head, he was just a little boy.

MCTAVISH

And little boys can be petulant, selfish and rude.

HANNAH

But loveable too, mind. In their own way. You can't blame them, can you? They don't know any other way, they just want someone to love them.

MCTAVISH

I see. Tell me, was this the first time he mentioned ending your employment with him?

HANNAH

No...Sometimes he'd get cross and tell me I had to go. But he'd always settle down and try to make amends, even if he were all gruff and grumbly about it. He wouldn't say he was sorry, exactly, he would just...oh it's hard to explain, if you didn't

HANNAH CONT'D

know him as well as I did. He'd go on shouting at me for something and I'd start to cry - I never could stop the waterworks, it's my curse - and I'd go off and sulk and then later he'd come by the kitchen and look all red-faced and uncomfortable and he'd ask all polite like if I wanted to take a day off or go to the pictures, he'd pay for it, or something like that. It were his way of making things right. Nothing were ever said out loud, if you know what I mean. But I understood him. And that's how I know he would have done the same thing with this horrible to-do. He wouldn't have changed his will, he wouldn't have sold the place and thrown me out. I just know he wouldn't have.

MCTAVISH

And you say he was secretive?

HANNAH

Well, as I said, he never liked to say anything directly. Sometimes, for example, he'd leave a draft of letter on his desk, right out in the open, knowing I'd see it when I dusted, and it would be addressed to me and it would say "You are invaluable to this family Hannah, we couldn't live without you." and then that crossed out and a new start with "I hope you know how valued you are in this household" or things like that, and of course the letter never got finished and given to me, because it was just meant for me to stumble upon, you see what I mean? He liked mysteries, and puzzles, he liked things that weren't right out in plain sight...I don't know if I'm explaining it properly. Like...sometimes when he were in a good mood, he'd show me articles about what the spies did in the war, and he'd show me how they concealed messages inside film containers and shaving foam canisters and the like. He'd show me cyphers that were made out of a code from books, you know, check page three hundred of such and such a book, and look down to a certain line, and choose the first letter of the last word, clever tricks like that. He showed me how you could find out what someone had written on a writing tablet by rubbing a pencil across it, the writing would show up from the pressure the pen had made-

MCTAVISH

(snapping his fingers) Yes! Of course! That's it, of course. Excuse me, Miss Higginbotham, I must return to the doctor's study.

HANNAH

(startled) Oh...alright...am I...have I answered all your questions then?

MCTAVISH

And then some, Miss Higginbotham...and then some!

NARRATOR

Sergeant Roy joins Inspector McTavish in the doctor's study a few moments later.

MCTAVISH

That pencil you found in the drawing, and the writing tablet, if you please. Hannah gave me the idea, if we rub the pencil across the surface of this blank page like so (rubbing of pencil)...ah, yes, there we go...indeed. Just as I thought, whatever was written on the top page has made an impression on the paper beneath. Aha! Now we're on the trail! It's clear enough to read what it says...

SERGEANT ROY

What, was he able to scribble down the name of his killer before he knocked off?

MCTAVISH

See for yourself.

SERGEANT ROY

(reading) "I am a man more sinned against than sinning". What the devil is that supposed to mean?

MCTAVISH

The benefit of a classical education can never be overstated, Sergeant. Would you be so good as to hand me that book over there on the floor? The one we assumed he was reading when he was killed?

SERGEANT ROY

King Lear, by William Shakespeare. Not what I'd consider light reading. Here you are, sir.

MCTAVISH

(flipping through pages) If my memory serves, we're looking for...Act three...scene...three is it? No, I tell a lie, it's scene two...aha! Here we are! A little scrap of paper tucked in between the pages...

SERGEANT ROY

Something's written on it.

MCTAVISH

Indeed...it reads 'Get thee glass eyes and like a scurvy politician seem to see things thou dost not.'

SERGEANT ROY

Oh for the love of Pete! What is he talking about now?

MCTAVISH

Fear not, good Sergeant, there is another line. It says "the truth about Messrs...the writing is smudged, but it looks like it says Messrs Forrester and Smythe...is to be found secured in an envelope beneath the desk drawer".

SERGEANT ROY

Well why didn't he just write that in the first place? What's all this hullabaloo with King Lear and pencil rubbings?

MCTAVISH

As Hannah told me, the doctor enjoyed puzzles and games. I suspect this puzzle was not merely for fun, however...help me remove this drawer, Sergeant, it's rather awkward...I suspect this little ruse was meant to conceal the truth from being discovered too soon.

[SFX: DRAWER BEING REMOVED]

SERGEANT ROY

Too soon? How do you mean sir?

MCTAVISH

Ah, look! An envelope taped to the bottom of the drawer, just as the note indicated...let me see if my suspicions are correct (withdraws papers and reads, humming and mumbling as he reads, until finally...)Aha! ...oh what a satisfaction to be right in one's suspicions...and the rare pleasure of being able to prove it.

SERGEANT ROY

You...you know who murdered him? From what's in these files?

MCTAVISH

(Papers rustling, sounds of reading) Astonishing...it's not quite that simple...however...ah, yes, it all begins to make more sense...Give me a few moments, Roy, I must visit the Fox and Fiddle, and then to the Registrar's Office in town to confirm my last suspicion. If you please, gather everyone in the drawing room in exactly two hours.

SERGEANT ROY

Yes sir.

MCTAVISH

Oh, and please bring this machine downstairs with you...I shall have need of it at a particular time, and would like it to be available. But not before then, do you understand?

SERGEANT ROY

This bloody great thing on the desk, here sir?

MCTAVISH

The dictaphone machine, yes sergeant. It will be vital to the conclusion of this case.

SERGEANT ROY

If you say so, sir.

NARRATOR

Has Inspector McTavish solved the case? Tune in next time as he reveals all to the assembled suspects.

ACT 3 SCENE 1: INT. EVENING

NARRATOR

After investigating the death of Dr. Davidson, Inspector McTavish has assembled the suspects in the drawing room of Wakefield Manor.

MCTAVISH

Thank you all for joining me. As you know, I have been tasked with investigating the murder of Dr. James Davidson, and with identifying the guilty party.

OLIVER

Who did it? As if we all didn't already know.

MCTAVISH

I beg your indulgence for a moment, Mr. Forrester. All will become clear shortly. You see, the facts of this case are most extraordinary. Nine people, staying overnight in a house, each of whom had been publicly insulted by Dr. Davidson the evening before. Nine people who discovered that their lives, and their futures, were about to change, and not for the better. Nine people who had reason to wish Dr. Davidson dead, and nine people who had the means and the opportunity to do so.

This presented quite a challenge, as you can imagine. Where does one begin, when everyone is equally suspect?

So I decided to walk through the crime in my head, imagining how it could have been done. It's quite obvious that since Dr. Davidson was killed by poison in his cocoa, that the obvious suspect must be the person who prepares and brings him his cocoa every night...the person who allegedly discovered the body...

HANNAH

I had nothing to do with it, Inspector. I'm that shocked you'd think I would ever do something so vicious, especially to the doctor. I swear I just left it outside his door, I didn't want to disturb him and whoever he was talking to.

MCTAVISH

I will address that in a moment, Miss Higginbotham.

SADIE

Heavens, Inspector, you can't be serious. Hannah wouldn't hurt a fly.

MCTAVISH

And yet she, perhaps, is the person most hurt by the doctor's actions.

RODNEY

She is not, Inspector. Forgive me, Hannah, but you only lost a service position, it's nothing to what the rest of us have lost...or should I say, stood to lose, if he had lived to change his will.

MCTAVISH

It would appear that way, wouldn't it, Mr. Davidson? Except that in Miss Higginbotham's case, it was not merely the loss of her position. It was, ultimately, a rejection from the man she loved.

MARLENA

Good heavens! Hannah in love with Papa?

KITTY

(snorting derisively)

MCTAVISH

Miss Higginbotham was taken on here as a spinster in her thirties, and found herself in the role of helpmate to a widowed man and mother to three bereft children. Yes, I sincerely believe she grew to love all of you, and began to view Dr. Davidson in a...shall we say "marital" light, if not an outright romantic one.

SADIE

Hannah, dear...is this true?

HANNAH

Oh, Sadie...you all needed me so much...and you know, despite his gruffness, I saw how much he truly grieved for your mother. I saw how much he suffered, although he never wanted anyone to know. I guess I just...grew fond of him.

MARLENA

Oh Hannah, how sad for you. Is that why you've stayed on here for so long? Hoping that one day he might return your love?

RODNEY

Papa didn't deserve your love, Hannah. And he never would have loved you back, he didn't love anyone but himself.

HANNAH

I knew he'd never love me back, not really. I fulfilled a role in his life, I was here to serve him, to help him, to be there when he needed help. I came to accept that, in time. And when he married Mrs. Davidson...well, let's just say I had a right good cry and then put it all away, all my silly hopes and dreams. But I never bore him any ill will, that I can promise you all. I just put my energy into caring for you three, mostly. Honestly, (tearing up) you're the children I never had.

SADIE

Inspector, you can't believe this poor woman would have poisoned anyone, least of all Papa.

OLIVER

Well, hell hath no fury, as they say...

HARRISON

It's always the ones you least suspect. A woman neglected for thirty years and passed over for a beautiful young hussy..

KITTY

Go to blazes, Diego. Or whatever your name is.

MCTAVISH

I admit, at first the motive seemed very compelling. She certainly had the opportunity. And by being in charge of the cocoa, I even believed she had the means. But then...

OLIVER

She had the means! Surely she has access to the doctor's surgery where the drugs are kept.

MCTAVISH

Yes, perhaps she does. However...well, let me demonstrate, if I may. There's no need for all of us to traipse down to the doctor's surgery, I have here a photograph taken yesterday by the police photographers and developed early this morning. Please, all of you, take a close look. I would like to draw your attention to the row of dark bottles behind the locked glass cabinet, just there. Miss Higginbotham, please take a look as well. If you would be so kind, would you please point out for us the bottle marked chloroform?

HANNAH

Let me have a look...wait'll I put my glasses on...I don't see it there, Inspector. The labels are all just letters and numbers.

MCTAVISH

Well perhaps an easier one - can you locate atropine among these bottles?

HANNAH

As I said, inspector, they're all just labeled with letters and numbers.

MCTAVISH

Alright, see if you can find one labeled Prussic Acid.

HANNAH

No, sorry sir. There's nought with a P in it anywhere.

MARLENA

You've made your point, Inspector.

HARRISON

I don't understand - what does he mean?

MARLENA

He means that Papa labelled his chemicals by their chemical formulae, not their names. Chloroform is that one there CHCl_3 , atropine is that one, $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{23}\text{NO}_3$. He never labeled dangerous compounds by name.

MCTAVISH

And as you just saw, Miss Higginbotham was unable to locate Prussic Acid just now.

HARRISON

Wait, I thought he was poisoned with cyanide?

MARLENA

That's another name for cyanide. It hardly matters, though, she was looking for something with a P in it - here, hand me the photograph, let me take a look (pause)...of course she can't find it, it isn't even there. It would be labelled HCN, for Hydrogen Cyanide. But there's no such bottle there.

SADIE

How do you know all this, Marlina?

MARLENA

Remember, dear, I worked as a nurse during the war, and I helped Papa in his surgery. It was a long time ago, but I always had a head for chemistry.

OLIVER

Dear God, Mar, stop talking. You're not helping yourself.

MARLENA

It's alright, Ollie. The point is Hannah is a dear and clever soul, but she wouldn't know cyanide from baking soda. Even if she *did* want to kill Papa, she couldn't have done it the way it happened.

MCTAVISH

No, Miss Higginbotham did not kill Dr. Davidson.

SADIE

Much as she had cause to. Oh Hannah, dear, I'm so sorry.

MCTAVISH

So with that avenue exhausted, I then decided to consider who among the rest of you absolutely could *not* have committed this murder. I have to say, in many a previous case I've been presented with a list of air-tight alibis as long as my arm, but in this case...well, I was quite surprised to learn that only one of you has an alibi for the night of the murder.

OLIVER

Who? We all retired to bed after dinner to nurse our wounds.

MCTAVISH

Well, wounds were nursed, but not all of them here in this house. Mr. Davidson, perhaps you'd care to share what you told me during our interview?

RODNEY

You know what a crashing bore Papa is about drink...I finished off the gin, and couldn't find anther drop of hooch in this whole place. So...I took myself down to the village local for a few pints.

MCTAVISH

It ended up being quite a bit more than a few.

RODNEY

I had just been blindsided by Papa, I was in desperate need!

MCTAVISH

And you got so drunk the publican had to toss you out on your ear after last call. He informed me that you promptly passed out in the hedgerow and stayed there until the early hours of the next morning, snoring all night and keeping him and his wife from getting a decent night's sleep.

RODNEY

So you see! Drink isn't all bad!

OLIVER

But Rodney was with us all the next morning, when we found James. He didn't look the worse for wear. He certainly didn't look or act hungover.

SADIE

Or like he'd slept in a shrub all night.

MCTAVISH

Perhaps, Mr and Mrs. Forrester, your lives have not often crossed paths with those whose demons take the form of alcohol. Those in her thrall often learn how to conceal their affliction from others, and rouse themselves to behave normally around others, even when dealing with the aftereffects of indulgence.

MARLENA

How diplomatic. You're saying he's become good at hiding his hangovers.

MCTAVISH

Correct, Mrs. Smythe.

MARLENA

And that he couldn't have killed Papa. Or rather, like Hannah, it's an extreme unlikelihood.

MCTAVISH

Again you share my viewpoint, Madam. Rodney Davidson could not have, and did not, kill Dr. Davidson.

MCTAVISH

So...with only two potential suspects all but ruled out, I decided to look to the crime scene itself, which in turn led to the discovery of the open safe in his study. This puzzled me immensely, I might add. Not only had it been left open for us to discover, but the only item inside the safe was a copy of Dr. Davidson's life insurance policy. Everything else on this inventory of the safe's contents - which Mrs. Smythe was good enough to furnish me this morning - is missing. Of particular note is the matter of twenty thousand pounds.

SADIE

Twenty thousand! Good gracious.

MCTAVISH

There were only two people Dr. Davidson trusted with the combination to his safe...only two people with unfettered access the contents, including the vast sum of cash contained wherein. Is that not so, Miss Pangiottis?

DULCINEA

Me? Well...well, yes, I suppose. But I rarely went into his safe, apart from filing some documents and papers, which I never looked at. I just put them away as he asked and closed the safe, I swear it.

MCTAVISH

And yet some very valuable jewels - and of course the cash - are missing from the safe...

DULCINEA

I...Inspector, I...

MCTAVISH

According to some papers I later discovered in Dr. Davidson's study - It shall be revealed how I discovered these concealed files in a moment - it seems that Mrs. Forrester was responsible for securing your employment with the doctor. Can you tell me why she arranged for you, specifically, to take this position?

SADIE

(interjecting)I...I simply wanted to find her a job. I was doing a good deed for a needy young village girl, that's all.

MCTAVISH

No, Mrs. Forrester, that is not all. You wanted Miss Pangiottis in place for a specific reason. You wanted her to have access to your father's files and steal the deed to Wakefield Manor, so that he could not sell it. Is that not so?

SADIE

I...I...I heard him talking to his solicitor one day about a possible buyer. I thought if I could find the deed...

MCTAVISH

The sale could not go through. Or at the very least, would be substantially delayed, perhaps indefinitely.

SADIE

What of it? This is my family home, do you fault me for not wanting it sold off? Papa wouldn't let me anywhere near his personal papers, I had to have someone in place whom he didn't know. You can't fault me for it, you really can't.

MCTAVISH

No, I can't speak to that, Mrs. Forrester. But the fact remains, the money is missing, and Miss Pangiottis is the only one who had access to it. After having been so abruptly fired last evening, perhaps the temptation of all that money was simply too much for her to resist.

SADIE

No, no, that's not possible!

MCTAVISH

It is possible, Mrs. Forrester. Miss Pangiottis also had access to the doctor's surgery, where his medicines, including Prussic Acid, were kept..

SADIE

Stop this at once!

MCTAVISH

And given that this...one false eyelash...was found near the body..

DULCINEA

(gasps) Good heavens, how did that get there?

SADIE

(leaping to her feet) Alright, I confess! It was me! I did it!
I killed papa!

[GASPS]

MCTAVISH

(gently) No, Mrs. Forrester, you did not.

SADIE

I did, I tell you I did! You mustn't think Dulcie did it, she is blameless. I was...was out of my mind with distress, so I...I...

MCTAVISH

Yes? How precisely did you exact your revenge, Madam?

SADIE

(flustered) The...the cyanide...I mean the Prussian Acid...I...put it in his drink. (Quickly, remembering what Hannah said) The cocoa, It was there in the hall, and on impulse I spiked his drink.

MCTAVISH

On impulse? You just happened to have *Prussic*... it is called *Prussic acid*, Mrs. Forrester, not *Prussian Acid*... on your person?

SADIE

(more flustered) No...I mean...I spied the cocoa and I saw my chance so...so...

OLIVER

Sadie, this is absurd!

MCTAVISH

If it isn't something you typically carry in the pocket of your dressing gown, then where did you obtain the poison, Mrs. Forrester?

SADIE

I...I...I shall leave that for my statement, at the police station. Please take me now, Inspector.

OLIVER

Sadie, what on earth are you doing?

MCTAVISH

(gently, sagely) I cannot, Mrs. Forrester. You did not murder your father. It is a noble gesture, though, attempting to take the blame for Miss Pangiottis and spare her the gallows.

OLIVER

Why would you do such a thing, Sadie? Are you out of your mind?

SADIE

You can't arrest her, you simply can't!

MARLENA

Sadie, pull yourself together! What is this about? Why are you so eager to protect Dulcie of all people?

SADIE

Because...because...oh, it's too wretched, you wouldn't understand. (Crying)

MCTAVISH

Calm yourself, Mrs. Forrester, please. Don't despair for Dulcie...she didn't murder Dr. Davidson either.

MCTAVISH

I believe the false eyelash was left there deliberately to accuse her... It was veritably drenched in her perfume to further incriminate her. Now, I may be a bachelor with little experience in feminine frippery, but even I know you don't put perfume on your eyelashes.

SADIE

Oh, thank God! Thank God in Heaven. What monster would try to frame her for murder?

MCTAVISH

I shall come to that shortly. But for now-

OLIVER

Sadie, answer me! How do you know Dulcie? Why in God's name were you willing to *hang* for her?

SADIE

Leave me alone, Oliver! All of you, leave me alone!

MCTAVISH

Perhaps I can shed some light on Mrs. Forrester's state of mind. What you see in her attempt to save Dulcie is the purest, most fundamental, most ferocious love there is. The love of a woman...for her child.

[GASP]

MARLENA

Sadie! Is...is this true?

MCTAVISH

I noticed a similarity between you and Miss Panglottis when I interviewed her. Something about the way you both laugh. I thought it was just possible you were mother and daughter, given your ages...and then, when I considered your strong feelings on what should be done with Wakefield Manor, I followed a hunch...and just this afternoon paid a call to the local Registrar's Office to have them locate Miss Panglottis' original birth certificate. Which, of course, lists her natural mother's name...

SADIE

It's true. Dulcinea is my daughter. Come here, dearest, sit with me.

DULCINEA

Oh maman...I'm so sorry it had to come out this way.

OLIVER

Dulcinea, you knew about this? Dear God, how did none of us not see it? How did I not put this together?

MARLENA

But...but...when?

SADIE

You went off to Barcelona that summer, Marlena, and Roddy was too young to be any sort of companion to me. I was so desperately lonely without you, I didn't have a soul to talk to, and so...well, I met a young man in the village. His name was Spiro, he visiting his aunt and uncle ...

RODNEY

The Pangiottis family...

SADIE

Yes. It was a foolish, foolish mistake, but I fancied myself in love. I was only seventeen, I didn't know any better...and when he left to go back to Greece that fall...I...I discovered I had fallen pregnant...Oh, it was dreadful, Papa exploded with rage. I dare say he would have killed the boy had he still been here.

OLIVER

But...but...that autumn you and I had started courting...

SADIE

You never wanted me, Oliver, you only paid attention to me because Marlena had abandoned you and run off to Spain. Don't think I didn't know about it. You and she had been having a secret affair, but she broke it off with you and went off to Barcelona for the summer to get over it. Papa made you marry me, even though she was the one you wanted.

OLIVER

I...I...Of course not, Sadie. Don't be ridiculous.

MCTAVISH

It's not ridiculous at all, Mr. Forrester, as well you know. In fact, one of the items recovered in Dr. Davidson's secret hiding place is this letter...detailing his blackmail demand that you marry Sadie and "make an honest woman" of her or he would reveal your misconduct and have you disbarred. Which, despite your protests to me yesterday, were much much a threat to your livelihood and freedom at the time. I presume he told you only that Sadie had lost her virtue...not that she had given birth to a baby girl as well.

OLIVER

No...I had no idea. The wedding was set for the following spring, after she was due back from...from...

SADIE

"A visit to my aunt in the country" (bitter laugh). What a euphemism that is.

MARLENA

So that's why you want to turn this manor into a home for unwed mothers...

SADIE

Yes! So no other girl has to be sent from home, to deliver her baby in a strange place with no comfort, no support, with only the glaring disapproval and ill-treatment of the Sisters of Charity! So other girls could...could...keep their babies...

DULCINEA

You did the best you could for me, maman. The Panglottises are wonderful people, I've had a splendid upbringing.

RODNEY

Good God, I just realized! That makes you my niece! I say, Dulcie, I'm so sorry for pursuing you so lustily, you should have told me!

MARLENA

Not now, Rodney, for pity's sake!

SADIE

My only comfort was placing you with a family so near to Wakefield. At least I was given that small kindness.

OLIVER

So that's why you insisted we stay in the area. It wasn't to look after your father...it was to be closer to Dulcie..

SADIE

Can you blame me? I had been forced into this marriage with you, even though I knew we would never love each other... I had to give up my baby girl...it was the only solace I had.

MARLENA

Oliver...I must know something. You know I only eloped with Harrison because you had announced your engagement to Sadie-

HARRISON

What?

MARLENA

Are you telling me that Papa...*blackmailed* you into marrying Sadie?

OLIVER

We can talk about this later, Mar. All of this, this is family business, it doesn't need to be aired so publicly.

MCTAVISH

Oh I think it all needs to come out right now, Mr. Forrester. You see, this blackmail question is a very important one, for more than just yourself. It seems the good doctor was adept at finding dirt on people, and holding it over them. Isn't that right...Mr. Smythe?

NARRATOR

With Hannah, Rodney, Sadie and Dulcie ruled out as suspects, at whom among the remaining guests will McTavish point the long finger of the law? Who actually killed Dr. Davidson? Tune in next time and find out.

ACT 3 SCENE 2 : INT. EVENING
[SFX: THUNDER AND RAIN]

NARRATOR

Inspector McTavish has gathered the guests together in the drawing room of Wakefield Manor, and has just informed them that Hannah, Rodney, Sadie and Dulcie are ruled out as suspects in the death of Dr. Davidson. He has turned his attention now to Harrison Smythe..

HARRISON

Me? You're accusing *me*?

OLIVER

(Eagerly) Yes! You *were* captured trying to run away. And as I recall you were desperate to 'leave the country'. You were trying to flee the scene of the crime, weren't you?

HARRISON

You...you all heard him. The night before, he told all of you my real name, and that I have...well, that I've had some trouble with the Spanish authorities. The cat got out of the bag, as they say. So I had no reason to kill him after that..

MCTAVISH

He may have revealed your true identity to his family, Mr. Smythe, but it seems he made it clear he was *about to* inform the authorities of your whereabouts. Not that he already *had*. Which is indeed borne out by the files I found in a hiding place in his study, outlining your wrongdoings in great detail.

OLIVER

In other words, you did have reason to want him dead!

MARLENA

This is absurd!

OLIVER

I saw him, in the hallway last night! After your argument, I saw him storm out of your room. And Hannah...Hannah, didn't you say you heard Davidson talking with someone? Isn't that why you left the cocoa outside in the hall?

HANNAH

Well, yes, but I couldn't say who he was talking to.

OLIVER

It must be him. It's obvious! He knew he wasn't going to get any more money out of the old man, and he feared arrest and deportation. He's been lying to all of us all these years, of course he's lying now. I always knew you had married beneath you, Marlena.

HARRISON

I swear you will pay for these insults!

MARLENA

Stop it, both of you! I may have married a complete scoundrel, but I simply refuse to believe he had anything to do with Papa's murder.

MCTAVISH

As it happens, Mrs. Smythe...you're right. Harrison Smythe didn't have anything to do with Dr. Davidson's death.

HARRISON

(triumphant)I told you! I should sue you for slander, you-

MCTAVISH

(interrupting) No, Mr. Smythe's crime was much more financially motivated than bloodthirsty.

MARLENA

What? What crime?

MCTAVISH

The jewels, watch, and the £20,000 he removed from Dr. Davidson's safe before attempting to flee. Isn't that right, Mr. Smythe?

HARRISON

I...I...

MCTAVISH

You were searched when Sergeant Roy returned you to the house, but that Burberry coat of yours...one of the benefits of bespoke clothing is that they often include little details that off-the-rack clothing lacks. Like, for instance, a well-concealed inner compartment in the jacket lining - perfect for securing important documents...like a passport in someone's real name, for example. Or a large sum of cash. Sergeant Roy, would you be so kind?

SERGEANT ROY

Here you are, sir. I looked for a hidden pocket like you suggested, and sure enough, there it was. Twenty thousand pounds sterling in cash, a gold pocket watch, a bracelet...and three passports in different names, one of which being Enrique Herrero.

MCTAVISH

Indeed. Thank you Sergeant. Please see that the money and other items are set aside as evidence. Along with this...the eyelash of Miss Pangiottis' that I suspect...and I admit this is simply a hunch on my part, perhaps you'd be so good as to confirm it, Mr. Smythe...I suspect was planted on the edge of the safe to throw us off Mr. Smythe's trail.

DULCINEA

You did what? How on earth...how did you even get one of my false eyelashes?

HARRISON

(sighing) You're right, Inspector. I'm sorry, Dulcie. It was an impulsive move. I found it on the bathroom floor, and...and...I acted without thinking, I thought if they believed you had taken the money, it would buy me some time. Your perfume was there too, so I used it. It was...I don't know, it was a foolish thing to do, and I'm sorry.

SADIE

She could have been arrested for murder you heartless-

MARLENA

-But she wasn't. Nor would she have been arrested for taking the money; as the inspector said, her eyelash was simply too obviously planted to make her look guilty.

OLIVER

Well this is getting faintly ridiculous, Inspector. So far we've heard nothing but alibis and excuses. If it wasn't Hannah, nor Rodney, nor Sadie, nor Dulcie, nor "Enrique"...

MCTAVISH

Indeed, the pool of possible murderers is shrinking. As always, we must consider who had the strongest motive for killing Dr. Davidson.

RODNEY

We all had motive, inspector. He bankrupted all of us, fired Dulcie and Hannah, broke it off with Kitty-

MCTAVISH

Yes, yes he did. In fact...and you will forgive me if I take the trouble to explain my thinking on this point...from how you described his announcement at dinner...well, frankly, I found the whole affair to be quite...theatrical. Would you not agree?

MARLENA

Papa was like that, especially when he felt aggrieved.

MCTAVISH

Still, did none of you think it odd that he chose to make such grand, excessively harsh changes to his estate, and indeed his personal life...all at once?

SADIE

Well...I suppose...but we were all so shocked by what he was saying to really give it much thought.

MCTAVISH

In my experience, many police investigations into murders and acts of violence tend to overlook the victim when pursuing the perpetrator. In their rush to find the murderer, they ignore the "murderee", as it were. They ignore his character. Perhaps you can speak to that, Mrs. Davidson.

KITTY

He was a selfish, over-emotional, self-important weasel. I admit I married him for his money. Don't you all look at me like that - he married me for my looks. I don't see any of you leaping to condemn *him* for not marrying for love.

OLIVER

So you killed him before he could divorce you!

KITTY

(brittle laugh) Oh for heaven's sake, no. How naive of you. He simply had no grounds for divorce, and I dare say he knew it. But even if he were to pay off a judge and divorce me, I would simply sue for alimony. A lot of it.

MARLENA

No matter what happened, you'd be better off with him still breathing, in other words.

KITTY

Utterly. You must remember that clause he added to his will when we married. If he were to pre-decease me within ten years-

SADIE

So why the crocodile tears when he told you he was divorcing you? You behaved like you were completely distraught.

KITTY

(sighing) Habit, I suppose. I've learned that a few well-timed tears usually cools his flights of rage.

OLIVER

Are you buying this, Inspector?

MCTAVISH

In fact, I am. She's entirely correct in what she says. Mrs. Davidson had every reason in the world to want her husband alive. I confirmed with the solicitor this afternoon that the codicil to Dr. Davidson's will is in fact iron-clad, as they say. *Had* she killed Dr. Davidson, she would have inherited absolutely nothing. And so...she did not.

OLIVER

This is a farce! You mean to tell me you think either Marlana or myself murdered Dr. Davidson? This is too outlandish for words!

MCTAVISH

I understand, Mr. Forrester. If you would but indulge me a moment longer, all will become clear. You see, there is also the small matter of access to the Prussic Acid, as I mentioned to Mrs. Forrester. The culprit not only had to know that such a poison existed within this house, but also where it was kept. And furthermore, since it is such a deadly poison, Dr. Davidson kept it under lock and key...and so the guilty party had to have access to his locked surgery, and his locked medicine cabinet. Someone who might, in fact, have had a master key. Someone who also knew about the nature of Prussic Acid, and how to identify it by its chemical formula alone. Someone like...you, Mrs. Smythe.

OLIVER

That's preposterous! Marlana was a nurse, yes, but that was many years ago! And of course she has a master key, so does Hannah. That means nothing!

MCTAVISH

Perhaps in and of itself, no. However in light of what was discovered just outside your father's study door this morning... I believe this brooch belongs to you, Mrs. Smythe?

MARLENA

Oh my...

MCTAVISH

I trod on it quite by accident...I'm afraid the stones are crushed. My sincerest apologies for my clumsiness.

SADIE

The stones are *crushed*? But that's impossible, those are diamonds.

MCTAVISH

They do look very much *like* diamonds, don't they? Marvellous what they can do these days. No, you see, these are merely paste. Aren't they, Mrs. Smythe?

MARLENA

(clearing her throat)As you see.

MCTAVISH

Now, it is, of course, not my concern if you choose to wear costume jewellery, but it *is* my concern if such jewellery is found near a dead body.

MARLENA

I...I was...

HARRISON

Tell him, Marlena. For both our sakes.

MARLENA

Oh very well...I had an argument with my husband last night. He was trying to persuade me to sell a diamond brooch that he had bought me many years ago. Because we need the money so very badly, you understand. But you see...I...well he was quite unaware of the fact, but I *had* indeed sold the brooch. Two years ago. To pay off some of our creditors. I had replaced it with paste so he would never know.

OLIVER

Marlena...why didn't you ever ask us for help?

HARRISON

Because it's none of your business.

MARLENA

At any rate, I...I didn't want to argue with Harrison further and I was terribly afraid that in his worked-up state he might actually take it from me, and find out the truth. So my *plan* was to put the brooch in papa's safe...

HARRISON

But I followed her to demand she change her mind...that's when she told me the truth. I admit it, I was furious. I threw the brooch on the ground and...I crushed it beneath my heel.

MARLENA

That's the absolute truth, Inspector. We were both so cross we went to separate rooms after that, and I didn't see Harrison again until morning. But I can assure you, neither one of us entered his study, nor had we any reason to. Our acrimony is aimed entirely at each other. You may or may not believe us, but there you have it. I defy you to prove otherwise, for we simply had nothing to do with it.

OLIVER

I saw Marlina go back to her room, I'll swear to it in court.

MCTAVISH

Indeed, Mr. Forrester. Your generosity is admirable. However, it won't be necessary. Mrs. Smythe did not kill Dr. Davidson.

OLIVER

Why then...this is ridiculous...that only leaves...me.

MCTAVISH

It would appear that way. Even if, as you say, you had long given up the fear of being disbarred or reported to the Securities Exchange Commission for insider trading-

SADIE

What? Is that what Papa had on you? Good heavens Oliver.

MCTAVISH

But you had yet another reason to commit the crime. Your love for Mrs. Smythe. Perhaps you had discovered that her mother's trust had been liquidated, as the solicitor told me this afternoon. Perhaps your resentment towards your father-in-law for keeping you from the woman you love, and causing her to marry another man, finally spilled over into rage.

OLIVER

I swear to you, as God as my witness, I did not kill James Davidson. I had every reason to wish him dead, yes, but I did not kill him.

MCTAVISH

You did have every reason to...and you knew about the cyanide. And you admitted to taking Hannah's key to his study.

HANNAH

Goodness me.

MCTAVISH

You were seen by Harrison Smythe in the hallway that evening, and with the cocoa left outside the door-

MARLENA

Ollie! Dear God Ollie, say you didn't murder Papa!

OLIVER

I didn't! Mar, darling, I didn't, I swear to you on my life I didn't!

MCTAVISH

He's right, Mrs. Smythe. He didn't.

HANNAH

Wait a minute, wait a minute. We've gone through everyone, you've ruled all of us out, so who the devil killed Dr. Davidson?

MCTAVISH

I am sorry to say...Dr.Davidson was killed by...*himself*.

[SFX: GASPS, CONFUSION]

MCTAVISH

With the help of a clue you provided, Miss Higginbotham, I was able to locate a cache of secret files that Dr. Davidson had secured beneath the drawer of his desk. In perusing these documents, all of my suspicions were confirmed. Furthermore, there was another very interesting note among the files. It reads "My final words to my family are recorded on the wax cylinder in the recording device on my desk"...

[GASPS] [ALL - THIS IS EXTRAORDINARY, WE'RE GOING TO HEAR PAPA'S VOICE, ETC]

MCTAVISH

Sergeant, would you please bring in the device? I've had Sergeant Roy bring down this contraption...thank you very much, Roy.

[SFX - SOUNDS OF THE MACHINE BEING BROUGHT IN]

DULCINEA

That's his new Dictaphone, he bought that only last week.

MCTAVISH

If you'll allow me, I will let Dr. Davidson himself explain the remaining details of this case.

NARRATOR

What message does Dr. Davidson have from the grave? Tune in next time for the stunning conclusion.

ACT 3 SCENE 3: INT. EVENING
[SFX THUNDER AND RAIN]

NARRATOR

What message does Dr. Davidson have from the grave? Listen closely and find out...

[SFX - SCRATCHY SOUND OF AN OLD RECORDING) (VOCAL TREATMENT TO MATCH]

DAVIDSON

To my family...if you are listening to this recording, then events have transpired much as I expected and rather hoped they would - that I am deceased, and you have discovered this recording and the files I wish to make public. Therefore this recording shall serve as my final will and testament, superceding any previous wills in existence.

(ALL: GASPS)

No doubt you are confused by this turn of events, so allow me to fully explain the circumstances that have brought you here.

It has long been my belief that - to quote King Lear - "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child". I worked to provide an excellent upbringing for my three children, and through shrewd investments and careful economy, I was able to increase my fortune to the point that it became, to my chagrin, a source of enmity amongst my family rather than cause for gratitude.

DR DAVIDSON CONT'D

Instead of raising three bright, capable young people to go out and do good in the world, as I had done, I had the misfortune of witnessing three dissolute and lazy individuals emerge from my care, and the further disgrace of watching their lives disintegrate into the indulgent self-pity which I tried so strenuously to discourage in them.

Before I continue with the distribution of my estate, you must be aware of certain facts. Last winter I became ill with a severe chest infection, or so I thought. After treating it myself, and seeing the symptoms only worsen, I finally consulted one of my former colleagues in Harley Street, who delivered to me the grim diagnosis. Cancer of the lung, and at such an advanced state as to assure me that within the year I would be dead.

I did not share this news with my family, knowing that none of you would likely have cared. It did, however, cause me to start putting my affairs in order, and to start considering how I should like my estate to be divided.

Like King Lear regarding his ungrateful children, I opted to devise a test of sorts, to see which, if any of you, were deserving of my generosity. I carefully considered the facts as they pertain to each of you, and here are my conclusions:

Sadie, you may not be the eldest, but in any inventory of a father's deepest regrets, one must begin with the child who has caused him the most grief. Your thoughtless, immoral behaviour was beyond reprehensible, and forever besmirched the Davidson family name. Perhaps age and maturity have shown you why it was necessary for you to give up your child and marry someone as quickly as possible, but given your misplaced devotion to this 'home for unwed mothers' that you so desperately want, I have little hope that you will ever understand.

SADIE

Oh what a terrible thing to say. Even from the grave he torments me.

DR DAVIDSON

My only regret is that in my shock and dismay, I foolishly rushed to exhort Oliver Forrester to make an honest woman out of you. Forrester was my solicitor for many years, and though it shames me now to admit it, it was his information, garnered from a privileged conversation with another client of his, and then illegally communicated to me, that allowed me to sell my shares ahead of Black Thursday, and thereby prevent the loss of my fortune. He is doubly guilty, of both violating attorney-client privilege and of insider trading, and in my estimation he ought to be disbarred. I should never have allowed such an unscrupulous ne'er-do-well into my family, but Sadie, your situation made me desperate to cover up the secret as quickly and quietly as possible.

OLIVER

He used the information I gave him and grew even richer after the crash, but *I'm* the ne'er-do-well.

DAVIDSON

As for you Marlana. Had I known that your summer holiday to Barcelona would result in a scandalous elopement with one of the most worthless young men I have ever encountered, I should never have let you set foot outside this house. He is an exotic and dashing fellow to be sure, but for many years, my scruples against interfering in a marriage that was, unfortunately, legally done and fêted by our general acquaintance, prevented me from investigating the scoundrel as I should have.

As I told everyone at dinner tonight, your husband is wanted by the Spanish authorities in relation to an elaborate extortion scheme he perpetrated against a minor member of the Spanish royal family. He is a confidence man, plain and simple, and had I investigated him under his real name of Enrique Herrero the moment you revealed it to me, I like to think I could have given you ample evidence for an annulment of your marriage. I do not know the nature of your feelings for this criminal, but I have long suspected he is not the first immoral, untrustworthy and wholly inappropriate character you've thrown your lot in with.

DR DAVIDSON CONT'D

I believe you intended to marry Oliver Forrester before you went to Barcelona, although you both concealed this from me at the time. I shouldn't like to think his marriage to your sister caused you to elope with this Herrero fellow - but if it did, I can take no blame for it. You made your choice in a wilful, emotional way that would have made your mother ashamed of you, and now you must live with the consequences.

MARLENA

And I have...

DAVIDSON

Rodney. You have always been a disappointment to me, being the most dissolute young man and now an entirely dissipated drunkard of more than forty. Either of my daughters equal two of you, and it is my eternal shame that I was unable to produce an heir worthy of carrying on the Davidson name.

RODNEY

(jovially) I say! Don't beat about the bush, father, tell us your true feelings!

DAVIDSON

Regardless, you must be aware that when you came to me last winter, having cancelled your sailing trip, and offered to attend me during my illness, I saw for perhaps the first time a latent maturity and evidence of good breeding in you that I had always dared to hope were bound to emerge. Imagine, then, my dismay upon hearing that the reason for this newfound filial devotion was that you wished to marry a showgirl you had met at a revue show on the Brighton pier.

Having disabused you of that notion, I was not unaware of your resentment towards me. No doubt you thought that by coming to me last month and asking my permission to court my secretary, Miss Panglottis, that you had offered me a potential daughter-

DR DAVIDSON CONT'D

in-law who was a shade more respectable than your previous choice. I was sorry to have to disabuse you of *that* notion as well, but I can now admit that I also held back from you another crucially important and shocking piece of information. It pains me to relate the particulars, but in investigating Miss Pangiottis prior to her employment here, I discovered not only is she poor, and likely a scheming gold-digger, but she is also, I regret to say, the natural daughter of your sister Sadie.

I do not believe she is aware of this connection to our family, or else I doubt she would have been so eager to attempt to sway her grandfather's affections in her direction. But you need to know this truth before you proceed any further with the pursuit of a woman who is, in fact, your niece.

In the spirit of familial obligation I did endeavour to learn her character, and offered her many chances to provide the kind of loving and dedicated support that anyone worthy of being called my granddaughter would have to demonstrate - but alas, like her mother, aunt and yourself, she too failed me.

Every attempt to find solace in her companionship resulted in my having to bolster *her*, rather than the other way around. She quite simply was not a comfort when I needed her, and so my hope is that she will never know of her bloodline, and may never make a claim against my estate.

DULCINEA

I have never been so ashamed to be born into this man's family. I'm sorry, *maman*, but I can't say I'm not grateful to have been raised by the Pangiottis family instead.

DAVIDSON

Finally, you may wonder at my outburst of last evening, and why I chose to publicly berate all of you. It is simply this- I wanted to give my children one last chance to redeem themselves.

DR DAVIDSON CONT'D

If any of you had come to my study after the event and begged my forgiveness, if any of you had pleaded with me for a reconciliation, I would have relented. If my sons-in-law, either of them, had come to me and offered apologies, I would have stayed my hand. In other words, if any of you had shown your father the love and respect he is due, all of this unpleasantness would have been avoided.

I would have revealed the nature of my illness, and I would have been prepared to let the cancer take its natural course. I would have gone to my heavenly reward with my last will and testament in tact, providing for each of you as I had always intended.

If you, Kitty, had tried to come to me as a wife should, I would have forgiven you. But if the threat of divorce and disinheritance weren't motive enough to make you reconsider the error of your ways, then I was and am prepared to adhere to the original conditions of my previous will. Since you and I have not been married ten years as of yet, you are entitled to precisely nothing, and that is what you shall receive.

KITTY

Pfft...that's what you think.

DAVIDSON

The only person in this house who behaved as she ought was Miss Higginbotham, whom I suspect and hope you have to thank for finding this message. Not wanting to leave such important files to be found by either of my two sons-in-law, I had to devise a way to alert the proper authorities to their location. If you are listening to this recording, then my plan was a success.

HANNAH

(murmuring) That's who I heard him talking to, then. Himself. Recording this here message.

DAVIDSON

I did worry that perhaps passages from King Lear were beyond the intellectual abilities of Miss Higginbotham, but I trusted that an intelligent person of my own sex would be present to put the pieces together.

While I am grateful to Miss Higginbotham - whom I can hear outside my door this very moment, delivering me my cocoa as she has done every night for thirty years, the reliable old biddy - I can only express my deep, deep disappointment at this piteous state of affairs; that a simple-minded, dottering old servant of the lower classes should show more loyalty to me than any of my own family.

SADIE

Oh Hannah, how perfectly awful of him to say such things.

DAVIDSON

But as this recording demonstrates - none of you showed the slightest bit of loyalty to one so worthy of it. Not one of you came to me to soothe my anger and repent of your bad behaviour. Not one of you thought for a moment about how you had abused me for so many years. And so, I proceeded with my plan, as I had warned all of you I would.

Therefore...not only does this recording serve as my new last will and testament, bequeathing all my worldly goods and entire estate to The Church of England Temperance Society, but I furthermore make it publicly known that I, Dr. James Robert Davidson of Wakefield Manor, took my own life on the evening of Fourteenth August, nineteen hundred and thirty eight.

You may consult with Dr. Bishop of Harley Street who will confirm that the cancer invading my body had advanced beyond the help of medical science. He has been provided with radiographs to render the diagnosis irrefutable, and will of course confirm my own assessment that had I not taken this course of action this evening, my life would have been prolonged by only a few more months at most.

DR DAVIDSON CONT'D

Suicide, however, negates the remaining life insurance policy that I have left in the safe - which I have left open - so that you may all well and truly know that there is not a single penny left to any of you. The other contents of the safe are, of course, part of my estate, and have been itemised on a notarised document left to the care of my solicitor. Should any of you feel these items are yours for the taking, let me assure you they are not. In the event, I have instructed my solicitor to report their absence to the police as theft.

Lastly, the method I used was the administration of Prussic Acid into my cocoa, the empty vial of which I threw out the window and into the shrubs beneath, where anyone who cares to look may discover it, along with the paper upon which I wrote the King Lear quotation. I describe these facts so as to avoid any possibility of one of you being charged with my murder. Consider this my last gift to you, as undeserving as all of you are, because you will certainly get nothing more from me.

[A PAUSE AS THE RECORDING ENDS]

MCTAVISH

And so there we are.

MARLENA

This is simply unbelievable.

SADIE

I don't know what to say. How...how tragic this is.

OLIVER

He killed *himself*...his last act on earth was perhaps more selfish and cold-hearted than anything he ever did before. Unbelievable.

SADIE

What if you hadn't discovered this recording, Inspector? How on earth *did* you find it, by the way?

MCTAVISH

Dr. Davidson left us some clues, involving a form of secret handwriting and, as he stated, a quote from King Lear. Something Hannah told me about the little games he used to like to play gave me the notion that perhaps he had hidden certain information in a secret location.

HANNAH

You know how your father always liked puzzles and riddles...

HARRISON

King Lear? The Shakespeare play?

MCTAVISH

Yes, Dr. Davidson wrote the line "I am a man more sinned against than sinning" you see...

OLIVER

Oh for God's sake what a petulant man...

MCTAVISH

And in finding that line in the book I found another slip of paper directing me to the hidden files on Mr Harrison and Mr Smythe, and - might I add, Miss Panglottis - the deed to Wakefield Manor, which is why you were unable to locate it throughout your employment here. And of course, this recording.

SADIE

But if you hadn't made all these connections...if you hadn't found this recording, I shudder to think, but you could have very easily arrested any one of us for his murder!

MCTAVISH

Perhaps. Perhaps I might have, indeed.

MARLENA

What a cowardly, vicious thing to do! To make his suicide look like a murder and conceal the truth behind tricks and puzzles.

RODNEY

(Sarcastically) Oh come now, girls! He gave us a gift, remember! He told us he offed himself just so none of us, would be charged! He just happened not to care if the proof of it were ever found.

MCTAVISH

It is, perhaps, the most extraordinary suicide I have ever seen. This recording, however, according to the family solicitor, may be considered his legal last will and testament. I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but it need not have been witnessed by anyone to be considered valid. I'm very sorry to say, you have all been disinherited.

[MURMURS]) (I DON'T CARE IF IT SOUNDS CALLOUS, I'M FURIOUS)
(WHATEVER SHALL WE DO?) (I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GOING TO LOSE THE
MANOR, ETC)

HANNAH

(sighing) Well, I don't know about you lot, but I could use a
cup of tea. I'll just go put the kettle on...excuse me
Inspector, let me just get by you...I must say, I've never seen
one of these Dictaphone things up close before...amazing, isn't
it, how his voice got recorded into all these little grooves
in the wax...how marvellous...and it's such a small cylinder too
and...oh!

(SFX: SOUND OF SOMETHING BEING THROWN ON THE FIRE)

HANNAH

Oh my goodness gracious me! What a clumsy fool I am!

MCTAVISH

Miss Higginbotham!

MARLENA

Hannah! Do be careful, you'll burn yourself!

SADIE

Don't go in after it Hannah!

HANNAH

Oh my heavens...if I could just reach it...oh dear me...look, the wax is all melting away...

EPILOGUE: EXT. EVENING

NARRATOR

Epilogue. That evening, McTavish stands out on the front steps with Hannah, as the guests depart. First to leave are Marlena and Oliver, arm in arm.

[SFX CRICKETS]

OLIVER

Let me shake your hand, Inspector. That was some fantastic detective work you did, discovering the truth.

MARLENA

I can't thank you enough, Inspector.

MCTAVISH

Well, thank you Mrs.... Uh...forgive me, are you and Mr. Forrester...?

OLIVER

We're leaving for a long overdue holiday together in France. And when we come back, we'll both begin divorce proceedings.

MARLENA

So we can finally get married.

MCTAVISH

Oh I see. I...I don't know what to say. Is Mrs. Forrester...

SADIE

(coming outside) - It's perfectly fine with me, Inspector. We three discussed it this evening, and we agreed. It was time we all faced the truth. I never should have married Oliver, no matter what my father said.

OLIVER

And I should have come clean years ago. I'd have been disbarred, and possibly gone to prison for a spell, but I would have married the love of my life

MCTAVISH

And *Mr.* Smythe...?

MARLENA

I'm sure he'll grant me a divorce before he gets deported. Sergeant Roy took him to the station, did he not? We'll stop by and make sure he understands what's expected of him.

MCTAVISH

Well, then, my congratulations to you both. But may I ask, Mrs. Forrester...what will you do now?

DULCINEA

(coming outside)We're going to stay on here. The others have agreed not to sell the manor, and to allow my mother and I to transform it into the home for unwed mothers, like she always wanted.

HANNAH

And they're keeping me on, as well.

SADIE

Not as a servant, Hannah. As a member of the family.

MCTAVISH

That's wonderful news. I'm delighted to hear it. I confess, however, that I'm surprised Mrs. Davidson agreed, all things considered.

MARLENA

Mrs. Davidson is going to end up right where she wants to be. She and Rodney are getting married.

SADIE

(surprised) No!

OLIVER

She'll go from being Mrs. Davidson to...Mrs. Davidson

MARLENA

And with Rodney's share of the estate, as specified in my father's former will, she'll be as rich as she ever was.

MCTAVISH

Indeed.

NARRATOR

The guests depart, and Sadie and Dulcie return indoors, leaving McTavish and Hannah out on the stairs.

MCTAVISH

That was quite a fortunate accident you had, Miss Higginbotham. Destroying the only copy of Davidson's new will.

HANNAH

Oh I know. Funny how fate works, isn't it?

MCTAVISH

One might think...well, let's just say, one would be forgiven for thinking that you intentionally destroyed that cylinder, knowing that without it, the original will would stand, and the family would inherit Dr. Davidson's estate.

HANNAH

(scoffing) Oh come now, Inspector. I'm just a simple-minded dottering old servant from the lower classes...how could I ever have thought of anything half so clever as that...?

NARRATOR

And thus concludes the Death of Dr. Davidson. This production starred the vocal talents of...