

Agatha Christie[®]

And Then There
Were None

by Agatha Christie

SAMUEL FRENCH

Samuel French Acting Edition

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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AND THEN THERE WERE NONE was first presented by Bertie Neyer at the St. James's Theatre, London, on the 17th November 1943. It was directed by Irene Hentschel with sets by Clifford Pember. The cast was as follows:

ROGERS	William Murray
MRS. ROGERS	Hilda Bruce-Potter
FRED NARRACOTT	Reginald Barlow
VERA CLAYTHORNE	Linden Travers
PHILIP LOMBARD	Terence De Marney
ANTHONY MARSTON	Michael Blake
WILLIAM BLORE	Percy Walsh
GENERAL MACKENZIE	Eric Cowley
EMILY BRENT	Henrietta Watson
SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE	Allan Jeayes
DR. ARMSTRONG	Gwyn Nicholls

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE opened at the Broadhurst Theatre in New York City under the title *TEN LITTLE INDIANS* on June 27, 1944. On January 6, 1945, it transferred to the Plymouth Theatre where it ran until June 30, 1945. It was directed by Albert de Courville with sets by Howard Bay. The cast was as follows:

ROGERS	Neil Fitzgerald
MRS. ROGERS	Georgia Harvey
FRED NARRACOTT	Patrick O'Connor
VERA CLAYTHORNE	Claudia Morgan
PHILIP LOMBARD	Michael Whalen
ANTHONY MARSTON	Anthony Kemble Cooper
WILLIAM BLORE	James Patrick O'Malley
GENERAL MACKENZIE	Nicholas Joy
EMILY BRENT	Estelle Winwood
SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE	Halliwell Hobbes
DR. ARMSTRONG	Harry Worth

CHARACTERS

ROGERS

MRS. ROGERS

FRED NARRACOTT

VERA CLAYTHORNE

PHILIP LOMBARD

ANTHONY MARSTON

WILLIAM BLORE

GENERAL MACKENZIE

EMILY BRENT

SIR LAWRENCE WARGRAVE

DR. ARMSTRONG

NOTES ON CASTING

FRED NARRACOTT may double with **ANTHONY MARSTON**.

Minimum number of performers: 10.

SETTING & TIME

The living room of a house on Soldier Island, off the coast of
Devon, England.

ACT I

A summer evening in August.

ACT II

Scene One: The following morning.

Scene Two: The same day. Afternoon.

ACT III

Scene One: The same day. Evening.

Scene Two: The following afternoon.

NOTES ON SENSITIVE TERMINOLOGY

Language used by the author in her stage directions and by her characters to describe religion, gender, sexuality, race and class is of the period in which the play was first performed. We are confident that the author's intention was to be neutral within the stage directions – not to convey anything other than the facts of the characteristics relevant to a character's portrayal. The dialogue, however, is the embodiment of the character speaking and must express his or her intentions at that point in the play. This means that the author will have chosen terminology to be spoken with varying degrees of precision, sensitivity and, possibly, deliberate insensitivity according to the character and the circumstances in which he or she is speaking.

In our published version, therefore, we have applied the following logic:

- In stage directions, we have used terminology which is as neutral and factual as can be conceived, knowing that this will sometimes still fail.
- In dialogue, we have preserved the author's words as originally written.

We license this play on the basis that terms used in dialogue relevant to the religion, gender, sexuality, race and class of these characters may be changed in production to whichever best convey the author's intention for the audience. Sometimes this will be a neutral term, sometimes it will be a term which reflects the character's personality and/or the context in which they are speaking. Which of these applies is for directors and actors to interpret.

NOTE BY MATHEW PRICHARD ABOUT THE ENDING

My grandmother's play has been performed successfully all over the world since its première in 1943 with an ending which is unique to the play and is not that of the novel on which it is based. There is much evidence that this was not her initial intention but was instead the result of what was perceived to be the needs of audiences at a very dark time in history. My grandmother never shied from taking notice of others' input and the success then and since of the play vindicates her approach and their views.

In recent years enterprising producers presenting to, perhaps, more inquiring audiences have experimented with incorporating the novel's ending in the play. This, too, has been well received leading to a controversy as to which is the "real" ending. I have no intention of settling this controversy. Instead, on the 125th anniversary of my grandmother's birth, I wish to make the choice available to all producers and directors to express their view as to the writer's intention by enabling them to choose from the 1943 (play) ending and the 1939 (novel) ending.

Drawing on papers and correspondence at the time of production and on archive material, I have commissioned a dramatic version of the novel's close. Both dramatic endings begin their unraveling with Lombard's line to Vera: "You – young, lovely, and quite, quite mad". After that, readers, producers and directors face the same choice that my grandmother faced.

Torquay, England
September, 2015.

ACT I

*(The scene is the living room of the house on Soldier Island. It is a bright sunlit evening. Nearly the whole of the back of the room is a window looking directly out to sea. French windows open onto a balcony with chairs. It should give the impression of the deck of a liner almost overhanging the sea. The main approach to the house is presumed to be up steps on the side of the balcony. Inside there is a door to the dining room and a door to the study. There is also a door to the hall with a bell pull rope hanging by it. The room is very modern, and luxuriously but sparsely furnished with a sofa, chairs and a cocktail cabinet. There is a fireplace, over which hangs a reproduction of the "Ten Little Soldier Boys" nursery rhyme. On the mantelpiece is a group of ten china soldier boy figures. They are not spaced out, but clustered so that the exact number is not easily seen. Before the fireplace is a big white bearskin rug with a bear's head. **ROGERS** is seen putting the final touches to the room. He is a competent middle-aged manservant. Not a butler, but a house-parlour man. Quick and deft. Just a trifle suspicious and shifty. The noise of seagulls and a motorboat horn is heard off. **MRS. ROGERS** enters from dining room. She is a thin, worried, frightened looking woman. **NARRACOTT** enters from the balcony. He carries a market basket filled with packages.)*

NARRACOTT. First lot to be arriving in Jim's boat. Another lot not far behind.

MRS. ROGERS. Good evening, Fred.

NARRACOTT. Good evening, Mrs. Rogers.

MRS. ROGERS. Is that the boat?

NARRACOTT. Yes.

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, dear, already? Have you remembered everything?

(NARRACOTT gives her the basket.)

NARRACOTT. I think so. Lemons. Slip soles. Cream. Eggs, tomatoes and butter. That's all, wasn't it?

MRS. ROGERS. That's right. So much to do I don't know where to start. No maids till the morning, and all these guests arriving today.

ROGERS. Calm down, Ethel, everything's shipshape now. Looks nice, don't it, Fred?

NARRACOTT. Looks neat enough for me. Kind of bare, but rich folks like places bare, it seems.

MRS. ROGERS. Rich folks is queer.

NARRACOTT. And he was a queer sort of gentleman as built this place. Spent a wicked lot of money on it he did, and then gets tired of it and puts the whole thing up for sale.

MRS. ROGERS. Beats me why the Owens wanted to buy it, living on an island.

ROGERS. Oh, come off it, Ethel, and take all that stuff out into the kitchen. They'll be here any minute now.

MRS. ROGERS. Making that steep climb an excuse for a drink, I suppose. Like some others I know.

(A motorboat horn heard off.)

NARRACOTT. That be young Jim. I'll be getting along. There's two gentlemen arriving by car, I understand.

MRS. ROGERS. I shall want at least five loaves in the morning and eight pints of milk, remember.

NARRACOTT. Right.

(MRS. ROGERS puts basket on the floor then exits to the hall.)

ROGERS. Don't forget the oil for the engine, Fred. I ought to charge up tomorrow, or I'll have the lights running down.

(NARRACOTT goes off towards the balcony.)

NARRACOTT. Twas held up on railway. It's at the station now. I'll bring it across the first thing tomorrow.

ROGERS. And give a hand with the luggage, will you?

NARRACOTT. Right.

(NARRACOTT exits. MRS. ROGERS enters with a list.)

MRS. ROGERS. I forgot to give you the list of guests, Tom.

(ROGERS takes it and looks it over.)

ROGERS. Thanks, old girl. H'mm, doesn't look a very classy lot to me. Miss Claythorne. She'll probably be the secretary.

MRS. ROGERS. I don't hold much with secretaries. Worse than hospital nurses, and them giving themselves airs and graces and looking down on the servants.

ROGERS. Oh, stop grouching, Ethel, and cut along to that lovely up-to-date expensive kitchen of yours.

(MRS. ROGERS picks up the basket and makes for the dining room.)

MRS. ROGERS. Too many new-fangled gadgets for my fancy!

(VERA and LOMBARD are heard outside. ROGERS stands ready to receive them. He is now the well-trained, deferential manservant. VERA and LOMBARD enter onto the balcony. She is a good-looking girl of twenty-five. He is an attractive, lean man of thirty-four, well tanned, with a touch of the adventurer about him. He is already a good deal taken with VERA. He gazes round the room.)

LOMBARD. So this is it!

VERA. How perfectly lovely!

ROGERS. Miss Claythorne!

VERA. You're – Rogers?

ROGERS. Yes. Good evening, Miss.

VERA. Good evening, Rogers. Will you bring up my luggage and Captain Lombard's?

ROGERS. Very good, Miss.

(He exits onto the balcony.)

VERA. You've been here before?

LOMBARD. No – but I've heard a lot about the place.

VERA. From Mr. and Mrs. Owen?

LOMBARD. No, old Johnny Brewer, a pal of mine, built this house – it's a sad and poignant story.

VERA. A love story?

LOMBARD. Yes, ma'am – the saddest of all. He was a wealthy old boy and fell in love with the famous Lily Logan – married her – bought the island and built this place for her.

VERA. Sounds most romantic.

LOMBARD. Poor Johnny! He thought by cutting her off from the rest of the world – without even a telephone as means of communication – he could hold her.

VERA. But of course the fair Lily tired of her ivory tower – and escaped?

LOMBARD. U'huh. Johnny went back to Wall Street, made a few more millions, and the place was sold.

VERA. And here we are. Well, I ought to find Mrs. Owen. The others will be up in a minute.

(VERA makes to the hall door. LOMBARD stops her.)

LOMBARD. It would be very rude to leave me here all by myself.

VERA. Would it? Oh, well, I wonder where she is?

LOMBARD. She'll come along when she's ready. While we're waiting, do you think I could have a drink? I'm very dry.

(LOMBARD goes towards the drinking cabinet and starts preparing drinks.)

VERA. Of course you could.

LOMBARD. It's certainly warm after that steep climb. What's yours?

VERA. No, thanks, not for me – not on duty.

LOMBARD. A good secretary is never off duty.

(VERA looks round the room.)

VERA. Really. This is exciting!

LOMBARD. What?

VERA. All this. The smell of the sea – the gulls – the beach and this lovely house. I am going to enjoy myself.

(LOMBARD makes to VERA, holding up a drink.)

LOMBARD. I think you are. I think we both are. Here's to you – you're very lovely.

(ROGERS enters from the balcony with two suitcases.)

VERA. Where is Mrs. Owen?

ROGERS. Mr. and Mrs. Owen won't be down from London until tomorrow, Miss. I thought you knew.

VERA. Tomorrow – but –

ROGERS. I've got a list here of the guests expected, Miss, if you would like to have it. The second boatload's just arriving.

(VERA takes the list. ROGERS exits to the hall.)

VERA. Thank you. How awful – I say, you will be sweet and help me, won't you?

LOMBARD. I won't move from your side.

VERA. Thank you.

(She reads the list.)

It seems silly to have brought only us in the first boat and all the rest in the second.

LOMBARD. That, I'm afraid, was design, not accident.

VERA. Design? What do you mean?

LOMBARD. I suggested to the boatman that there was no need to wait for any more passengers. That and five shillings soon started up the engine.

VERA. *(Laughing.)* Oh, you shouldn't have done that!

LOMBARD. Well, they're not a very exciting lot, are they?

VERA. I thought the young man was rather nice-looking.

LOMBARD. Callow. Definitely callow. And very, very young.

VERA. I suppose you think a man in his thirties is more attractive.

LOMBARD. I don't think, my darling – I know.

(MARSTON enters from the balcony. He is a good looking young man of twenty-three or so, rich, spoiled and not very intelligent.)

MARSTON. Wizard place you've got here.

(MARSTON greets VERA; they shake hands.)

VERA. I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow.

MARSTON. *(Vaguely.)* Oh, too bad.

VERA. May I introduce Captain Lombard, Mr. – er –

MARSTON. Marston, Anthony Marston.

LOMBARD. Have a drink?

MARSTON. Oh, thank you.

(BLORE comes up onto the balcony. He is a middle-aged, thickset man; wearing rather loud clothes, giving the impression of a gold magnate. His eyes dart about, making notes of everything.)

LOMBARD. What will you have? Gin, whiskey, sherry?

MARSTON. Whiskey, I think.

(LOMBARD and MARSTON go to the drinking cabinet. BLORE makes directly to VERA, seizes her hand and wrings it heartily.)

BLORE. Wonderful place you have here.

VERA. I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow.

LOMBARD. Say when!

MARSTON. Oh, wizard!

(BLORE makes for the cocktail cabinet.)

BLORE. How are you?

LOMBARD. My name's Lombard. Have a drink, Mr. –

BLORE. Davis. Davis is the name.

LOMBARD. Mr. Davis – Mr. Marston!

BLORE. How are you, Mr. Marston? Pleased to meet you. Thanks, Mr. Lombard. I don't mind if I do. Bit of a stiff climb up here. But whew! What a view and what a height! Reminds me of South Africa, this place.

(LOMBARD stares at BLORE.)

LOMBARD. Does it? What part?

BLORE. Oh – er – Natal, Durban, you know.

LOMBARD. Really?

(LOMBARD hands him a drink.)

BLORE. Well, here's to temperance. Do you – er – know South Africa?

LOMBARD. Me? No.

BLORE. *(Confidently.)* That's where I come from. That's my Natal state – ha ha.

LOMBARD. Interesting country. I should think.

BLORE. Finest country in the world, sir. Gold, silver, diamonds, oranges, everything a man could want. Talk about a land flowing with beer and skittles.

(**GENERAL MACKENZIE** arrives on the balcony. He is an upright, soldierly old man with a gentle, tired face.)

MACKENZIE. Er – How do you do?

VERA. General MacKenzie, isn't it? I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid, and won't be down until tomorrow. Can I introduce Captain Lombard – Mr. Marston and Mr. –

(**BLORE** approaches him and shakes hands.)

BLORE. Davis, Davis is the name.

LOMBARD. Whiskey and soda, sir?

MACKENZIE. Er – thanks.

(**MACKENZIE** studies **LOMBARD**.)

You in the service?

LOMBARD. Formerly in the King's African Rifles. Too tame for me in peace time. I chucked it.

MACKENZIE. Pity. When.

(**MISS EMILY BRENT** arrives. She is a tall, thin spinster with a disagreeable, suspicious face. She speaks sharply to **VERA**.)

EMILY. Where is Mrs. Owen?

VERA. Miss Brent, isn't it? I'm Mrs. Owen's secretary. Mrs. Owen has been detained in London, I'm afraid.

LOMBARD AND VERA. And won't be down until tomorrow.

(They trail off, rather embarrassed.)

EMILY. Indeed. Extraordinary. Did she miss the train?

VERA. I expect so. Won't you have something? May I introduce Captain Lombard – General MacKenzie – Mr. Marston. I think you all met on the boat. And Mr. –

BLORE. Davis, Davis is the name. May I take your case?

LOMBARD. Do let me give you a drink? A dry martini? A glass of sherry? Whiskey and soda?

EMILY. (Coldly.) I never touch alcohol.

LOMBARD. You never touched alcohol!

EMILY. I suppose you know, young man, that you left us standing there on the wharf?

VERA. I'm afraid, Miss Brent, I was to blame for that. I wanted to –

EMILY. It seems to me most extraordinary that Mrs. Owen should not be here to receive her guests.

VERA. (*Smiling.*) Perhaps she's the kind of person who just can't help missing trains.

BLORE. (*Laughs.*) That's what I reckon she is.

EMILY. Not at all. Mrs. Owen isn't the least like that.

LOMBARD. (*Lightly.*) Perhaps it was her husband's fault.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) She hasn't got a husband.

(*VERA stares. ROGERS enters from the dining room.*)

I should like to go to my room.

VERA. Of course. I'll take you there.

ROGERS. You'll find Mrs. Rogers upstairs, Miss. She will show you the room.

(*VERA, EMILY, and ROGERS exit to the hall. WARGRAVE enters from the balcony; LOMBARD comes to greet him.*)

LOMBARD. I'm afraid our host and hostess haven't arrived, sir. My name's Lombard.

WARGRAVE. Mine's Wargrave. How do you do?

LOMBARD. How do you do? Have a drink, sir?

WARGRAVE. Yes, please. A whiskey.

BLORE. How are you? Davis, Davis is the name. I say, wonderful place you've got here. Quite unique.

WARGRAVE. As you say – quite unique.

(*LOMBARD prepares Wargrave's drink.*)

BLORE. Your drink, sir.

(WARGRAVE puts his coat on the sofa, takes his drink and sits to watch the proceedings.

MARSTON turns to LOMBARD.)

MARSTON. Old Badger Berkeley rolled up yet?

LOMBARD. Who did you say?

MARSTON. Badger Berkeley. He roped me in for this show. When's he coming?

LOMBARD. I don't think he is coming. Nobody of the name of Berkeley.

MARSTON. *(Flabbergasted.)* The dirty old double-crosser! He's let me down. Well, it's a pretty wizard island. Rather a wizard girl, that secretary. She ought to liven things up a bit. I say, old man, what about dressing for dinner if there's time?

LOMBARD. Let's go and explore.

MARSTON. How wizard!

LOMBARD. Things are a bit at sixes and sevens with the Owens not turning up.

MARSTON. Tricky, what? I say, wizard place for a holiday, what?

(MARSTON and LOMBARD exit to the hall.

BLORE wanders out onto the balcony, looks back sharply into room, then presently exits.

WARGRAVE continues to sit like a Buddha. He observes MACKENZIE, who is standing looking rather lost, absentmindedly pulling his moustache. MACKENZIE is carrying a shooting stick. He looks at it wistfully, half opens and closes it.)

WARGRAVE. Aren't you going to sit down?

MACKENZIE. Well, to tell you the truth, you seem to be in my chair.

WARGRAVE. I am sorry. I didn't realise you were one of the family.

MACKENZIE. Well, it's not that exactly. To tell you the truth, I've never been here before. But you see I live at the

Benton Club – have for the last ten years. And my seat is just about there. Can't get used to sitting anywhere else.

WARGRAVE. It becomes a bit of a habit.

(WARGRAVE rises and MACKENZIE takes his seat.)

MACKENZIE. Yes, it certainly does. Thank you – Well, it's not quite as good as the Club's, but it's a nice chair. To tell you the truth, I was a bit surprised when I got this invitation. Haven't had anything of the kind for well over four years. Very nice of them, I thought.

(ROGERS enters from the hall and picks up Wargrave's coat from the sofa.)

ROGERS. Can I have your keys, sir?

WARGRAVE. Is Lady Constance Culmington expected here, can you tell me?

(WARGRAVE gives him his keys.)

ROGERS. *(Surprised.)* Lady Constance Culmington? I don't think so, sir. Unless she's coming down with Mr. and Mrs. Owen.

WARGRAVE. Oh.

ROGERS. Allow me, sir.

(ROGERS takes MACKENZIE's coat.)

Can I have your keys, sir?

MACKENZIE. No, thanks. I'll unpack for myself.

ROGERS. Dinner is at eight o'clock, sir. Shall I show you to your room?

MACKENZIE. Please.

(ROGERS holds open the hall door for MACKENZIE. WARGRAVE follows looking around room in an unsatisfied fashion. They exit. The sound of seagulls can be heard. DR. ARMSTRONG arrives on the balcony, followed by NARRACOTT carrying his suitcase.)

ARMSTRONG is a fussy, good looking man of forty-four. He looks rather tired.)

NARRACOTT. Here you are, sir. I'll call Rogers.

(NARRACOTT exits to the hall. ARMSTRONG looks round and nods his approval. NARRACOTT returns and ARMSTRONG tips him. He exits to the balcony and ARMSTRONG sits. BLORE comes along the balcony; pausing at the sight of ARMSTRONG.)

BLORE. How are you? Davis. Davis is the name.

ARMSTRONG. Mine's Armstrong.

BLORE. Doctor Armstrong, I believe.

ARMSTRONG. Yes.

BLORE. Thought so. Never forget a face.

ARMSTRONG. Don't tell me I've forgotten one of my patients!

BLORE. No, no, nothing like that, but I once saw you in Court giving expert evidence.

ARMSTRONG. Oh, really? Are you interested in the law?

BLORE. Well, you see, I'm from South Africa. Naturally, legal processes in this country are bound to interest a colonial.

ARMSTRONG. Oh, yes, of course.

BLORE. Have a drink?

ARMSTRONG. No, thanks. I never touch it.

BLORE. Do you mind if I do? Mine's empty.

ARMSTRONG. Not a bit.

(BLORE pours himself a drink.)

BLORE. I've been having a look round the island. It's a wonderful place, isn't it?

ARMSTRONG. Wonderful. I thought as I was coming across the mainland what a haven of peace this was.

(BLORE moves to him, putting his face close to his.)

BLORE. Too peaceful for some, I daresay.

(ARMSTRONG moves away.)

ARMSTRONG. Wonderfully restful. Wonderful for the nerves. I'm a nerve specialist, you know.

BLORE. Yes, I know that. Did you come down by train?

(BLORE approaches him again. ARMSTRONG moves.)

ARMSTRONG. No, I motored down. Dropped in on a patient on the way. Great improvement – wonderful response.

(BLORE follows once more.)

BLORE. Best part of two hundred miles, isn't it? How long did it take you?

(ARMSTRONG moves away again.)

ARMSTRONG. I didn't hurry. I never hurry. Bad for the nerves. Some mannerless young fellow nearly drove me into the ditch near Amesbury. Shot past me at about eighty miles an hour. Disgraceful bit of driving. I'd like to have had his number.

(BLORE moves to him a final time.)

BLORE. Yes, and if only more people would take the numbers of these young road hogs.

ARMSTRONG. Yes. You must excuse me. I must have a word with Mr. Owen.

(ARMSTRONG bustles out to the hall. BLORE follows calling after him.)

BLORE. Oh, but – Mr. Owen isn't coming down –

(BLORE finishes his drink then rings the bell rope by the hall door. ROGERS enters almost immediately.)

ROGERS. You rang, sir?

BLORE. Yes, take my hat, will you?

(BLORE hands him his cap.)

What time's supper?

ROGERS. Dinner is at eight o'clock, sir. (*Pauses.*) In a quarter of an hour. I think tonight dressing will be optional.

BLORE. (*Familiarly.*) Got a good place, here.

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, sir.

BLORE. Been here long?

ROGERS. Just under a week, sir.

BLORE. Is that all? (*Pause.*) So I don't suppose you know much about this crowd that's here?

ROGERS. No, sir.

BLORE. All old friends of the family?

ROGERS. I really couldn't say, sir.

BLORE. Oh, well – Oh, Rogers –

ROGERS. Yes, sir?

BLORE. Rogers, do you think you could put some sandwiches and a bottle of beer in my room at night? I get an 'el of an appetite with this sea air.

ROGERS. I'll see what I can do, sir.

BLORE. Rogers – I'll see you won't lose by it. Where's my room?

ROGERS. I'll show you, sir.

BLORE. Good, I can do with a wash and brush up straightaway.

(BLORE exits to the hall with ROGERS. MRS. ROGERS enters from the dining room. She picks up glasses and tidies. ROGERS quickly enters from the dining room with tray of eight glasses.)

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, there you are, Rogers. You ought to clear these dirty glasses. You're always leaving the dirty work to me.

(MRS. ROGERS takes glasses off the tray and ROGERS puts on the dirty ones.)

Here I am with a four-course dinner on my hands and no one to help me. You might come and give me a hand

with the dishing up. Who was it that you were talking to, by the way?

ROGERS. Davis. South African gentleman. No class if you ask me – and no money either.

MRS. ROGERS. I don't like him – Don't like any of 'em much. More like that bunch we had in the boarding house, I'd say.

ROGERS. Davis gives out he's a millionaire or something. You should see his underwear! Cheap as they make 'em.

MRS. ROGERS. Well, as I said, it's not treating us right. All these visitors arriving today and the maids not coming till tomorrow. What do they think we are?

ROGERS. Now, then – Anyway, the money's good.

MRS. ROGERS. So it ought to be! Catch me going into service again unless the money was good.

ROGERS. Well, it is good, so what are you going on about?

MRS. ROGERS. Well, I can tell you this, Rogers. I'm not staying any place where I'm put upon. Cooking's my business! I'm a good cook –

ROGERS. (*Soothingly.*) First rate, old girl.

MRS. ROGERS. But the kitchen's my place and housework's none of my business. All these guests! I've a good mind to put my hat and coat on and walk out now and go straight back to Plymouth.

ROGERS. (*Grinning.*) You can't do that, old girl,

MRS. ROGERS. (*Belligerently.*) Who says I can't? Why not, I should like to know?

ROGERS. Because you're on an island, old girl. Had you forgotten that?

MRS. ROGERS. Yes, and I don't know as I fancy being on an island.

ROGERS. Don't know that I do, either, come to that. No slipping down to a pub, or going to the pictures. Oh, well, it's double wages on account of the difficulties. And there's plenty of beer in the house.

MRS. ROGERS. That's all you ever think about – beer.

ROGERS. Now, now, stop your nagging. You get back to the kitchen or your dinner will be spoilt.

MRS. ROGERS. It'll be spoilt anyway, I expect. Everybody's going to be late. Wasted on them, anyway. Thank goodness, I didn't make a soufflé.

(VERA enters from the hall.)

Oh, dinner won't be a minute, Miss. Just a question of dishing up.

(MRS. ROGERS exits to the dining room.)

VERA. Is everything all right, Rogers? Can you manage between the two of you?

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, Miss. The Missus talks a lot, but she gets it done.

(ROGERS exits to the dining room as EMILY enters from the hall, having changed.)

VERA. What a lovely evening!

EMILY. Yes, indeed. The weather seems very settled.

VERA. How plainly one can hear the sea.

EMILY. A pleasant sound.

VERA. Hardly a breath of wind – and deliciously warm. Not like England at all.

EMILY. I should have thought you might feel a little uncomfortable in that dress.

(VERA doesn't take the point.)

VERA. Oh, no.

EMILY. *(Nastily.)* It's rather tight, isn't it?

VERA. *(Innocently.)* Oh, I don't think so.

(EMILY sits and takes out her knitting.)

EMILY. You'll excuse me, my dear, but you're a young girl and you've got your living to earn.

VERA. Yes?

EMILY. A well-bred woman doesn't like her secretary to appear flashy. It looks, you know, as though you were trying to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

VERA. And would you say I do attract them?

EMILY. That's beside the point. A girl who deliberately sets out to get the attention of men won't be likely to keep her job long.

VERA. (*Laughing.*) Ah! Surely that depends on who she's working for?

EMILY. Really, Miss Claythorne!

VERA. Aren't you being a little unkind?

EMILY. (*Spitefully.*) Young people nowadays behave in the most disgusting fashion.

VERA. Disgusting?

EMILY. (*Fanatically.*) Yes. Low-backed evening dresses. Lying half naked on beaches. All this so-called sunbathing. An excuse for immodest conduct, nothing more. Familiarity! Christian names – drinking cocktails! And look at the young men nowadays. Decadent! Look at that young Marston. What good is he? And that Captain Lombard!

VERA. What do you object to in Captain Lombard? I should say he was a man who'd led a very varied and interesting life.

EMILY. The man's an adventurer. All this younger generation is no good – no good at all.

VERA. You don't like youth – I see.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

VERA. I was just remarking that you don't like young people.

EMILY. And is there any reason why I should, pray?

VERA. Oh, no – (*Pauses.*) but it seems to me that you must miss an awful lot.

EMILY. You're very impertinent.

VERA. I'm sorry, but that's just what I think.

EMILY. The world will never improve until we stamp out immodesty.

VERA. (*Quietly.*) Quite pathological.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) What did you say?

VERA. Nothing.

(**ARMSTRONG** and **LOMBARD** enter from the hall.)

LOMBARD. What about the old boy –

ARMSTRONG. He looks rather like a tortoise, don't you think so?

LOMBARD. All judges look like tortoises. They have that venomous way of darting their heads in and out. Mr. Justice Wargrave is no exception.

ARMSTRONG. I hadn't realised he was a judge.

LOMBARD. Oh, yes. (*Cheerfully.*) He's probably been responsible for sending more innocent people to their death than anyone in England.

(**WARGRAVE** enters and looks at him. **LOMBARD** turns to **VERA**.)

Hello, you. Do you two know each other? Mr. Armstrong – Miss Claythorne. Armstrong and I have just decided that the old boy –

VERA. Yes, I heard you and so did he, I think.

(**WARGRAVE** moves over to **EMILY** who rises as he approaches.)

EMILY. Oh, Sir Lawrence.

WARGRAVE. Miss Brent, isn't it?

EMILY. There's something I want to ask you. Will you come out here?

(*She indicates she wants to talk on the balcony. WARGRAVE nods his assent.*)

WARGRAVE. A remarkably fine night!

(**MARSTON** enters from the hall with **BLORE**. They are in conversation.)

MARSTON. Absolutely wizard car – a super-charged Sports Varletti Carlotta. You don't see many of them on the road. I can get over a hundred out of her.

(**VERA** *sits.*)

BLORE. Did you come from London?

MARSTON. Yes, two hundred and eight miles and I did it in a bit over four hours.

(**ARMSTRONG** *turns and looks at him.*)

Too many cars on the road, though, to keep it up. Touched ninety going over Salisbury Plain. Not too bad, eh?

ARMSTRONG. I think you passed me on the road.

MARSTON. Oh, yes?

ARMSTRONG. You nearly drove me into the ditch.

MARSTON. (*Unmoved.*) Did I? Sorry.

ARMSTRONG. If I'd seen your number, I'd have reported you.

MARSTON. But you were footling along in the middle of the road.

ARMSTRONG. Footling? Me footling?

(**BLORE** *attempts to relieve the atmosphere.*)

BLORE. Oh, well, what about a drink?

MARSTON. Good idea.

(*They make to the drinks cabinet.*)

Will you have one, Miss Claythorne?

VERA. No, thank you.

(**LOMBARD** *sits beside VERA.*)

LOMBARD. Good evening, Mrs. Owen.

VERA. Why Mrs. Owen?

LOMBARD. You'd make the most attractive wife for any wealthy businessman.

VERA. Do you always flirt so outrageously?

LOMBARD. Always.

VERA. Oh! Well, now we know.

(She turns away, smiling.)

LOMBARD. Tell me, what's old Miss Brent talking to the Judge about? She tried to buttonhole him upstairs.

VERA. I don't know. Funny – she seemed so definite that there wasn't a Mr. Owen.

LOMBARD. You don't think that Mrs. Owen – I mean that there isn't – that they aren't –

VERA. What, married you mean?

(ROGERS enters from the dining room. He switches on the lights, draws the curtains and exits to the study. MARSTON moves to VERA.)

MARSTON. Damn shame we don't know each other. I could have given you a lift down.

VERA. Yes, that would have been grand.

MARSTON. Like to show you what I can do across Salisbury Plain. Tell you what – maybe we can drive back together?

(WARGRAVE and EMILY enter from the balcony. MACKENZIE enters from the hall and sits.)

VERA. *(Surprised.)* But I –

MARSTON. But it seems damn silly. I've got an empty car.

LOMBARD. Yes, but she likes the way she's going back and –

(VERA rises awkwardly and makes to fireplace. MARSTON and LOMBARD scowl at each other.)

VERA. Look! Aren't they sweet? Those ten little china soldiers. Oh, and there's the old nursery rhyme.

LOMBARD. What are you talking about? What figures? What nursery rhyme?

(VERA points at the figures and the rhyme.)

VERA. *(Reading.)* "Ten little soldier boys going out to dine. One choked his little self and then there were nine –"

(**ROGERS** enters from the study. **VERA** continues reading.)

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

BLORE. "Eight little soldier boys travelling in Devon. One got left behind and then there were seven –"

(*Very slowly and clearly a VOICE is heard off.*)

VOICE. Ladies and Gentlemen, silence, please!

(*Everybody stops talking and stares round at each other. As each name is mentioned that person reacts by a sudden movement or gesture.*)

You are charged with these indictments: that you did respectively and at diverse times commit the following: Edward Armstrong, that you did cause the death of Louisa Mary Clees. William Henry Blore, that you brought about the death of James Stephen Landor. Emily Caroline Brent, that you were responsible for the death of Beatrice Taylor. Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, that you killed Peter Ogilvie Hamilton.

(**VERA** sits.)

Philip Lombard, that you were guilty of the deaths of twenty-one men, members of an East African tribe. John Gordon MacKenzie, that you sent your wife's lover, Arthur Richmond, to his death.

(**MACKENZIE** sits.)

Anthony James Marston, that you were guilty of the murder of John and Lucy Combes. Thomas Rogers and Ethel Rogers, that you brought about the death of Jennifer Brady. Lawrence John Wargrave, that you were guilty of the murder of Edward Seton. Prisoners at the bar, have you anything to say in your defence?

(*There is a momentary paralysed silence, then a scream is heard outside the dining room door. LOMBARD springs across the room.*)