

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 a~~ 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 & Mrs Rogers

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 then 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 Clayborne!

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'huu. 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 boarder'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.

③ Vera, Philip Lombard

before you all that my conscience is perfectly clear on the matter. I did my duty and nothing more. I passed sentence on a rightly convicted murderer.

ARMSTRONG. Did you know Seton at all? I mean, personally.

(WARGRAVE looks at him; he hesitates a moment.)

WARGRAVE. I knew nothing of Seton previous to the trial.

(LOMBARD speaks in a low voice to VERA.)

LOMBARD. The old boy's lying. I'll swear he's lying.

MACKENZIE. Fellow's a madman. Absolute madman. Got a bee in his bonnet. Got hold of the wrong end of the stick all round. Best really to leave this sort of thing unanswered. However, feel I ought to say - no truth - no truth whatever in what he said about - er - young Arthur Richmond. Richmond was one of my officers. I sent him on reconnaissance in 1917. He was killed. Also like to say - resent very much - slur on my wife. Been dead a long time. Best woman in the world. Absolutely - Caesar's wife.

MARSTON. I've just been thinking - John and Lucy Combes. Must have been a couple of kids I ran over near Cambridge. Beastly bad luck.

WARGRAVE. (Acidly.) For them or for you?

MARSTON. Well, I was thinking - for me - but, of course, you're right, sir. It was damned bad luck for them too. Of course, it was pure accident. They rushed out of some cottage or other. I had my license suspended for a year. Beastly nuisance.

ARMSTRONG. This speeding's all wrong - all wrong. Young men like you are a danger to the community.

(MARSTON wanders to the window and picks up his glass, which is half-full.)

MARSTON. Well, I couldn't help it. Just an accident.

ROGERS. (Mildly.) I saw your word, sir?

LOMBARD. (Mildly.) I saw your word, sir?

ROGERS. There was a mention, sir, of me and Mrs. Rogers, and of Miss Jennifer Brady. There isn't a word of truth in it. We were with Miss Brady when she died. She was always in poor health, sir, always from the time we came to her. There was a storm, sir, the night she died. The telephone was out of order. We couldn't get the doctor to her. I went for him, sir, on foot. But he got there too late. We'd done everything possible for her, sir. Devoted to her, we were. Anyone will tell you the same. There was never a word said against us. Never a word.

BLORE. Came into a nice little something at her death, I suppose. Didn't you?

ROGERS. (Stiffly.) Miss Brady left us a legacy in recognition of our faithful service. And why not, I'd like to know?

LOMBARD. What about yourself, Mr. Blore?

BLORE. What about me?

LOMBARD. Your name was on the list.

BLORE. I know, I know. Laydor, you mean? That was the London & Commercial Bank robbery.

(WARGRAVE lights his pipe.)

WARGRAVE. I remember the name, though it didn't come before me. Laydor was convicted on your evidence. You were the police officer in charge of the case.

BLORE. I was, Mr. W.

WARGRAVE. Laydor got penal servitude for life and died in Dartmoor a year later. He was a delicate man.

BLORE. He was a crook. It was him put the night watchman out. The case was clear from the start.

WARGRAVE. (Slowly.) You were complimented, I think, on your able handling of the case.

BLORE. I got my promotion. (Pause.) I was only doing my duty.

LOMBARD. Convenient word - duty. What about your Doctor?

⑨ Lombard, Wargrave & Armstrong

~~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.

5 Marston, Blore, Armstrong

LOMBARD. No. Did you dream of convicts on Dartmoor?

BLORE. *(Angrily)* Look here, I don't think that's funny, Captain Lombard.

LOMBARD. Well, you started it, you know. I'm hungry. What about breakfast?

BLORE. The whole domestic staff seems to have gone on strike.

LOMBARD. Oh, well, we can always forage for ourselves.

(VERA is examining the soldier figures.)

VERA. Hullo, that's strange.

LOMBARD. What is?

VERA. You remember we found one of these little fellows smashed last night?

LOMBARD. Yes - that ought to leave nine.

VERA. That ought to leave nine. I'm certain there were ten of them here when we arrived.

LOMBARD. Well?

VERA. There are only eight.

(LOMBARD goes to mantlepiece.)

LOMBARD. So there are.

VERA. I think its queer, don't you?

LOMBARD. Probably only nine to begin with. We assumed there were ten because of the rhyme.

(ARMSTRONG enters from the hall. He is upset, but striving to appear calm. He shuts the door and leans heavily against it.)

Hullo, Armstrong, what's the matter?

ARMSTRONG. Mrs. Rogers is dead.

(WARGRAVE rises.)

BLORE AND VERA. No? How?

ARMSTRONG. Died in her sleep. Rogers thought she was still under the influence of the sleeping draught I gave her and came down without disturbing her. He lit the

kitchen fire and did this room. Then, as she hadn't appeared, he went up, was alarmed by the look of her and went hunting for me. *(Pause.)* She's been dead about five hours, I should say.

BLORE. What was it? Heart?

ARMSTRONG. Impossible to say. It may have been.

BLORE. After all, she had a pretty bad shock last night.

ARMSTRONG. Yes.

WARGRAVE. She might have been poisoned, I suppose, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. It is perfectly possible.

WARGRAVE. With the same stuff as young Marston?

ARMSTRONG. No, not cyanide. It would have to have been some narcotic or hypnotic. One of the barbiturates, or chloral. Something like that.

BLORE. You gave her some sleeping powders last night, didn't you?

ARMSTRONG. Yes, I gave her a mild dose of Luminal.

BLORE. Didn't give her too much, did you?

ARMSTRONG. Certainly not. What do you mean?

BLORE. All right - no offence, no offence. I just thought that perhaps if she'd had a weak heart -

ARMSTRONG. The amount I gave her could not have hurt anyone.

LOMBARD. Then what exactly did happen?

ARMSTRONG. Impossible to say without an autopsy.

WARGRAVE. If, for instance, this death had occurred in the case of one of your private patients, what would have been your procedure?

ARMSTRONG. Without any previous knowledge of the woman's state of health, I could certainly not give a certificate.

~~VERA. She was a very nervous-looking creature. She had a bad night last night. Perhaps it was heart failure.~~

⑥ Blore, Armstrong & Wargrave

(He rises then opens and shuts the hall and the dining room doors.)

I wish I could find Lesley.

VERA. Your wife?

MACKENZIE. Yes. I wish you'd known her. She was so pretty.

So gay -

VERA. Was she?

MACKENZIE. I loved her very much. Of course, I was a lot older than she was. She was only twenty-seven, you know. *(Pause.)* Arthur Richmond was twenty-six. He was my A.D.C. *(Pause.)* Lesley liked him. They used to talk of music and plays together, and she teased him and made fun of him. I was pleased. I thought she took a motherly interest in the boy. Damn fool, wasn't I? No fool like an old fool. *(A long pause.)* Exactly like a book the way I found out. When I was out in France. She wrote to both of us, and she put the letters in the wrong envelope. So I knew -

VERA. Oh, no.

MACKENZIE. It's all right, my dear. It's a long time ago. But you see I loved her very much - and believed in her. I didn't say anything to him - I let it gather inside - here -

(He strikes his chest.)

- a slow, murderous rage - damned young hypocrite - I'd liked the boy - trusted him.

(VERA looks about nervously.)

VERA. I wonder what the others are doing?

MACKENZIE. I sent him to his death.

VERA. Oh -

MACKENZIE. It was quite easy. Mistakes were being made all the time. All anyone could say was that I'd lost my nerve a bit, made a blunder, sacrificed one of my best men. Yes, it was quite easy *(Pause.)* Lesley never knew. I never told her I'd found out. We went on as usual - but somehow nothing was quite real any more. She

died of pneumonia. *(Pause.)* She had a heart-shaped face - and grey eyes - and brown hair that curled.

VERA. Oh, don't.

MACKENZIE. Yes, I suppose in a way - it was murder. Curious, murder - and I've always been such a law-abiding man. It didn't feel like that at the time. "Serves him damn well right!" that's what I thought. But after - *(Pause.)* Well, you know, don't you?

(VERA is at a loss.)

VERA. What do you mean?

(MACKENZIE stares at her as though something puzzles him.)

MACKENZIE. You don't seem to understand - I thought you would. I thought you'd be glad, too, that the end was coming -

(VERA draws back, alarmed, she eyes him warily.)

VERA. I -

(MACKENZIE follows her. VERA looks round for help.)

MACKENZIE. We're all going to die, you know.

VERA. I - I don't know.

MACKENZIE. You're very young - you haven't got to that yet. The relief! The blessed relief when you know that you've done with it all, that you haven't got to carry the burden any longer.

VERA. General -

MACKENZIE. Don't talk to me that way. You don't understand. I want to sit here and wait - wait for Lesley to come for me.

(He goes out onto the balcony, draws up a chair and sits. The back of his head is visible through window. His position does

① Mackenzie & Vera

~~her un-ethically. I'm glad to say that her first husband's behavior~~

→ **VERA.** What happened?

EMILY. (*Self-righteously*) Naturally, I refused to keep her an hour under my roof. No one shall ever say I condoned immorality.

VERA. Did she drown herself?

EMILY. Yes.

VERA. How old was she?

EMILY. Seventeen.

VERA. Only seventeen.

EMILY. Quite old enough to know how to behave. I told her what a low depraved thing she was. I told her that she was beyond the pale and that no decent person would take her into their house. I told her that her child would be the child of sin and would be branded all its life - and that the man would naturally not dream of marrying her. I told her that I felt soiled by ever having her under my roof -

VERA. (*Shuddering*) You told a girl of seventeen all that?

EMILY. Yes. I'm glad to say I broke her down utterly.

VERA. Poor little devil.

EMILY. I've no patience with this indulgence toward sin.

VERA. And then, I suppose, you turned her out of the house?

EMILY. Of course.

VERA. And she didn't dare go home - What did you feel like when you found she'd drowned herself?

EMILY. (*Puzzled*) Feel like?

VERA. Yes. Didn't you blame yourself?

EMILY. Certainly not. I had nothing with which to reproach myself.

VERA. I believe - I believe you really feel like that. That makes it even more horrible. "

~~(VERA goes out onto the balcony. EMILY opens her bag and takes out a small Bible. She begins to read it in a low murmur.)~~

~~**EMILY.** That girl's unbalanced. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made -~~

~~(She stops and nods her head.)~~

~~- In the net which they hid is their own foot taken."~~

~~(ROGERS enters from the dining room. EMILY stops and smiles approvingly.)~~

~~"The Lord is known by the judgment. He executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand."~~

~~(ROGERS looks warily at EMILY.)~~

~~**ROGERS.** Breakfast is ready.~~

~~(EMILY turns to him sharply.)~~

~~**EMILY.** Be quiet. "The wicked shall be turned into hell."~~

~~**ROGERS.** Do you know where the gentlemen are, Miss? Breakfast is ready.~~

~~(VERA enters from the balcony.)~~

~~**VERA.** Sir Lawrence Margrave is sitting out there in the sun. Doctor Armstrong and Mr. Blore are searching the island. I shouldn't bother about them.~~

~~(ROGERS goes out onto the balcony.)~~

~~**EMILY.** "Shall not the isles shake at the sound of the fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?"~~

~~**VERA.** Shall we go in?~~

~~**EMILY.** I don't feel like eating.~~

~~(ROGERS approaches MACKENZIE.)~~

~~**ROGERS.** Breakfast is ready.~~

~~(He exits off the balcony. EMILY is still reading from the Bible.)~~

② Vera & Emily

LOMBARD. I have lost it.

BLORE. That's a likely story!

LOMBARD. What do you think I've done with it? I suggested myself that you should search me.

BLORE. Oh! You haven't got it on you. You're too clever for that. But you know where it is.

LOMBARD. You mean I've cached it ready for the next time?

BLORE. I shouldn't be surprised.

LOMBARD. Why don't you use your brains, Blore? If I'd wanted to, I could have shot the lot of you by this time, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.

(BLORE points to the rigging.)

BLORE. Yes, but that's not the big idea.

LOMBARD. The crazy touch? My God, man, I'm sane enough!

(BLORE looks around at everyone.)

BLORE. The doctor says there are some lunatics you'd never know were lunatics. That's true enough, I'd say.

ARMSTRONG. We - we shouldn't just sit here, doing nothing! There must be something - surely, surely, there is something that we can do? If we hit a bonfire -

BLORE. In this weather?

WARGRAVE. It is, I am afraid, a question of time and patience. The weather will clear. Then we can do something. Light a bonfire, heliograph, signal.

(ARMSTRONG laughs in an unbalanced way.)

ARMSTRONG. A question of time - time? We can't afford time. We shall all be dead.

WARGRAVE. I think the precautions we have now adopted will be adequate.

ARMSTRONG. I tell you - we shall all be dead. All but one - he'll think up something else - he's thinking now -

LOMBARD. Poor Louise - what was her name - Cleese? Was it nerves that made you do her in, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. (Mechanically.) No, drink. I used to be a heavy drinker. God help me, I was drunk when I operated - quite a simple operation. My hand shaking all over the place - I can remember her now - a big, heavy, countrified woman. And I killed her!

(ARMSTRONG buries his face in his hands.)

LOMBARD. So I was right - that's how it was?

ARMSTRONG. Sister knew, of course, but she was loyal to me - or to the hospital. I gave up drink - gave it up altogether. I went in for a study of nervous diseases.

WARGRAVE. Very successfully.

ARMSTRONG. One or two lucky shots. Good results with one or two important women. They talked to their friends. For the last year or two I've been so busy I've hardly known which way to turn. I'd got to the top of the tree.

LOMBARD. Until Mr. Unknown Owen - and down will come cradle and doctor and all.

ARMSTRONG. Will you stop your damnable sneering and joking?

WARGRAVE. Gentlemen, gentlemen, please. We can't afford to quarrel.

LOMBARD. That's okay by me. I apologise.

ARMSTRONG. It's this terrible inactivity that gets on my nerves.

WARGRAVE. We are adopting, I feel convinced, the only measures possible. So long as we remain together, all within sight of each other, a repetition of the tragedies that have occurred is - must be - impossible. We have all submitted to a search. Therefore, we know that no man is armed either with firearms or a knife. Nor has any man got cyanide or any drug about his person. If we remain, as I say, within sight of each other, nothing can happen.

ARMSTRONG. But we can't go on like this - we shall need food - sleep -

BLORE. That's what I say.

Wargrave, Armstrong & Lombard

~~ARMSTRONG. (Nervously.) I wish that boat would come. The sooner we get off this island the better. It's absurd not keeping a boat on the island.~~

~~BLORE. No proper harbor. If the wind comes to blow from the southeast, a boat would get dashed to pieces against the rocks.~~

~~EMILY. But a boat would always be able to make us from the mainland?~~

~~BLORE. No, Miss Brent - that's just what it wouldn't.~~

~~EMILY. Do you mean we should be cut off from the land?~~

~~BLORE. Yes. Condensed milk, ryvita and tinned stuff till the gale has blown itself out. But you needn't worry. The sea's only a bit choppy.~~

~~EMILY. I think the pleasures of living on an island are rather overrated.~~

ARMSTRONG. (Restless.) I wonder if that boat's coming. Annoying the way the house is built slap up against the cliff. You can't see the mainland until you've climbed to the top. Shall we go up there again?

BLORE. (Griming) It's no good. Doctor. A watched pot never boils. There wasn't a sign of a boat putting out when we were up there just now.

ARMSTRONG. What can this man Narracott be doing?

BLORE. (Philosophically.) They're all like that in Devon. Never hurry themselves.

ARMSTRONG. And where's Rogers? He ought to be about.

BLORE. If you ask me, Master Rogers was pretty badly rattled last night.

ARMSTRONG. I know. (Shivers.) Ghastly - the whole thing.

BLORE. Got the wind up properly. I'd take an even bet that he and his wife did do that old lady in.

WARGRAVE. (Incredulous.) You really think so?

BLORE. Well, I never saw a man more scared. Guilty as hell, I should say.

ARMSTRONG. Fantastic - the whole thing - fantastic.

BLORE. I say, suppose he's hopped it?

ARMSTRONG. Who, Rogers? But there isn't any way he could. There's no boat on the island. You've just said so.

BLORE. Yes, but I've been thinking. We've only Rogers' word for that. Suppose there is one and he's nipped off in it the first thing.

MACKENZIE. Oh! No. He wouldn't be allowed to leave the island.

(His tone is so strange they stare at him.)

BLORE. Sleep well, General?

MACKENZIE. I dreamed - yes, I dreamed -

BLORE. I don't wonder at that.

MACKENZIE. I dreamed of Lesley - my wife, you know.

BLORE. (Embarrassed.) Oh - er - yes - I wish Narracott would come.

MACKENZIE. Who is Narracott?

BLORE. The bloke who brought us over yesterday afternoon.

MACKENZIE. Was it only yesterday?

BLORE. (Determinedly cheerful.) Yes, I feel like that, too. Batty gramophone records - suicides - it's about all a man can stand. I shan't be sorry to see the back of Soldier Island, I give you my word.

MACKENZIE. So you don't understand. How strange!

BLORE. What's that, General?

(MACKENZIE nods his head gently. BLORE looks questioningly at ARMSTRONG, then taps his forehead significantly.)

ARMSTRONG. I don't like the look of him.

BLORE. I reckon young Marston's suicide must have been a pretty bad shock to him. He looks years older.

ARMSTRONG. Where is that poor young fellow now?

BLORE. In the study - put him there myself.

~~VERA. Doctor Armstrong, I suppose it was a mistake.~~

~~ARMSTRONG. (Startled.) What else could it be?~~

~~VERA. I don't know. But suicide -~~

⑩ Armstrong, Blore, Mackenzie, Wargrave