

Marreau and the African Moon

A detective comedy in two acts by Rob Farrow

FIRST PERFORMANCE : The Frances Elizabeth Crystal Rooms, Tring : 29th April 1992

**Deposited with The British Library, Manuscripts Department : Playscript No. 6319
All rights reserved.**

Dramatis Personae

Hemlock Marreau	The famous continental detective.
Gwendolyn Bayne	His secretary and assistant.
Simpson	His friend
Viscount Alexander	The host's son.
Lady Theresa	His sister
Captain Ranulph Smith	Her husband.
The Countess Catherine	A wealthy guest
Havelock	The butler.
Mrs. Johnson	The cook.
Parkhurst	The footman.
Rose	The maid.
Doctor Protheroe	The doctor from M & the C.P..
Inspector Farmer	The former Sgt.Farmer

Act I Scene 1

As per Marreau & the Chocolate Policeman : sofa, two armchairs, table, 2 chairs.

Marreau is sitting in an armchair [S.R.] reading a newspaper

Simpson is peering out of the window [S.R.]

Gwendolyn is reading a book about fingerprints, whilst sitting on the sofa.

NOTE: Whilst Simpson still has a dodgy stomach it is not played on so much as in *Chocolate Policeman*

Simpson D'you think it'll rain Marreau ?

Marreau What was that Simpson ?

Simpson Do you think it will rain today Marreau ?

Marreau Well I believe there is a depression over Northern France, with a high to the east of Greenland, add to this the fact that Sumburgh coastal station reports a visibility of only 100 yards, and I would suggest there is a reasonable likelihood of precipitation.

Simpson [*Simpson looks like a startled fish*] Gosh ! So *IS* it going to rain ?

Gwend Probably.

Marreau Indeed my dear Gwendolyn, I think the word "probably" sums up the statistical evidence fairly succinctly.

Simpson I thought it was going to rain yesterday - but then it didn't - but it nearly did.

Marreau No, no, no ! It was obvious that it wouldn't rain yesterday- why on earth did you think it might rain yesterday ?

Simpson I get this funny feeling in my big toe - usually means it's going to rain.

Gwend I'd tell the Met. Office about your toe if I were you, they might want to use it in future

Simpson Oh, really, d'you think so ?

[**Havelock the butler enters**]

Havelock Monsieur Marreau, his lordship would be most grateful if you would have a word with him in the blue drawing room - a rather delicate matter I believe.

Marreau Very well Havelock, if Marreau's unrivalled brainpower is called upon, he will assist in any way he can.

[**Exit Marreau & Havelock**]

Simpson Well Gwenders, that was quite a bash last night wasn't it - Marreau certainly seemed to be enjoying himself.

Gwend Yes, old Hemlock does get into the spirit of these occasions, I must admit. Mind you I thought he was showing off a bit with that mango !

Simpson Yes, he seems to have quite a way with fruit.

Gwend I wonder what this delicate matter is.

Simpson What delicate matter Gwendy ?

Gwend Listen here Simpson, the next time you call me Gwendy, I will do to you what Marreau did to that mango - understand ?

Simpson [*Simpson pulls a slightly horrified expression at the thought*] Sorry - so what's this delicate matter.

Gwend Well I don't know, do I ? That's the whole point !

Simpson I don't understand.

Gwend Simpson - may I suggest that you do not start saying "I don't understand" every time that peanut you call a brain gets somewhat baffled - otherwise there is likely to be a constant murmur from your direction.

Simpson Ah ! Good point - I have to admit all this detection stuff goes right over my head - it always stuns me how Marreau solves these cases.

Gwend Yes well, I think it stuns Marreau half the time.

Simpson I heard him telling Lady Theresa about some of his cases. She was lapping it up. Loved the bit about the hamster - I wish I could talk to girls like that !

Gwend Never mind Simpson - every dog has his day.

Simpson I know - the terrible thing is - I think I might have had mine already and not noticed.

[Lady Theresa enters]

Theresa Hello, mind if I join you ?

Simpson No - no - not at all Lady Theresa, do have a hamster - a chair.

[Simpson proffers the hardest-looking chair in the room]

Gwend I think Lady Theresa might be more comfortable on the sofa, actually Simpson.

Simpson Oh crikey, yes, sorry - here have a sofa.

[As he says this he starts to pull Gwendolyn off it to allow Theresa the whole sofa]

Theresa I don't need all of it, Mr. Simpson, I'll sit next to Gwendolyn.

Simpson Oh, right - yes - of course - I mean it's not as if you're fat and need the whole sofa - ha ha ha.

Gwend Sit down Simpson and take the weight off your brain ! *[They settle]*

Theresa Isn't it terrible about the Countess.

Gwend The Countess ?

Theresa Yes, having all her jewels stolen like that.

Gwend Really ! It's the first we've heard about it.

Simpson No it isn't.

Gwend What ? You know about this ?

Simpson Yes, the footman - what's his name - Parkhurst - that's it - he told me.

Theresa Yes I'm afraid it's all round the house - Daddy was hoping to keep it quiet - but you know what servants are like.

Gwend Why didn't you tell us, Simpson ?

Simpson Parkhurst asked me not to tell anyone.

Gwend Fine. *[turning to Theresa]* So what's she had stolen then ?

Theresa Oh an absolute fortune - a diamond tiara, an emerald neklace, the African Moon brooch

Simpson Good heavens isn't that the one with four enormous rubies around a gigantic piece of amber ?

Theresa No, six enormous sapphires round a gigantic central pearl actually.

Simpson Close.

Gwend Anything else missing ?

Theresa Oh yes, tons of stuff - dozens of rings, brooches, pendants you name it. About a million pounds' worth so they say.

Simpson Good Lord !!

Gwend Quite a haul.

Theresa The countess is taking it all very well, I must say - mind you I suppose they're all insured to the hilt. It's lucky Monsieur Marreau is here, I'm sure he'll get to the bottom of it.

[Parkhurst enters]

Parkhurst Hexcusing me, m'lady, but Captain Ranulph, your husband, requires your presence in the library.

Theresa Oh no, what is it now ?

Parkhurst It seems he's having problems with the crossword m'lady. I tried to help him but he declined my offer using his riding whip, I considered it diplomatic therefore not to press the subject.

Theresa I'm sorry Parkhurst, Ranulph's a devil with that riding whip - how's your back now by the way ?

Parkhurst The scars are healing nicely, thank-you m'lady.

Theresa Jolly good - run along and tell him I'll be there in a minute, would you.

Parkhurst Begging your pardon m'lady, but couldn't you come along himmediately. The captain doesn't take kindly to delays as you know - we had to buy six new billiard cues last time.

Theresa There aren't any billiard cues in the library though are there, Parkhurst.

Parkhurst No m'lady but the Hencyclopaedia Britannica is positioned perilously close to him - and him being such a good discus thrower

Theresa Oh, very well. *[To Gwend & Simpson]* Excuse me won't you, duty calls.

[Parkhurst & Theresa exit]

Gwend Poor Parkhurst; I believe Ranulph mistreats all the staff terribly.
 Simpson He was a bit of a bully in the army too.
 Gwend Really ? You know him then.
 Simpson Only by reputation - stories you know.
 Gwend Do tell.
 Simpson Well in India he was known as Raging Ranulph - I think that came about when he tied a young lieutenant to a field gun and fired 21 salutes.
 Gwend Good grief, what did he do that for ?
 Simpson I believe he found him in bed with his wife.
 Gwend What ! Lady Theresa was unfaithful ?
 Simpson No, no - the Lieutenant found his wife in bed with Ranulph.
 Gwend Well surely it was the lieutenant who should have felt aggrieved then ?
 Simpson Good Lord no - Rank has its privileges you know - no Ranulph had him up on charges of interrupting an officer in the performance of his duties.
 Gwend And he was found guilty ???!!!
 Simpson No - the court martial dismissed the case out of hand - [I'm] not sure why - that's why he took the action himself.

[Viscount Alexander enters]

Alexander Ah, that's where you're hiding ! Hope you enjoyed last night's bash. I thought it all went jolly well.
 Simpson I'll say. Splendid. Shame about this countess business though.
 Alexander [*somewhat more seriously*] Oh, you've heard.
 Gwend Lady Theresa just told us about it.
 Alexander Yes - I was talking to father about it, suggested we asked your friend Marreau if he'd do a spot of poking about, so-to-speak, see if we can get it all cleared up without involving the boys in blue.
 Gwend Any particular reason why you don't want the police involved ?
 Alexander Well you know; size tens thumping about the place, wrecking the herbaceous border and all that. We've had it all before.
 Gwend Oh ?
 Simpson Was that the stolen Rembrandts case ?
 Alexander Indeed it was - *and* they never found the damned things.

[Havelock enters]

Havelock Excuse me m'lord but there's been a bit of a kerfuffle in the library, I wonder if you'd be so good as to calm the Captain down.
 Alexander Oh dear, much damage ?
 Havelock I fear we may need a new Encyclopaedia Britannica m'lord.
 Alexander Anyone hurt ?
 Havelock Only Parkhurst m'lord - and he's getting used to it.
 Alexander [*To Gwend & Simpson*] Sorry about this, I'd better go and sort it out.

[Alexander & Havelock exit]

Simpson Looks like Parkhurst didn't get out in time !
 Gwend No. [*Subject change*] I was surprised you knew about the Rembrandts.
 Simpson Oh, I take a bit of an interest in paintings - tried my hand at it myself at one time.
 Gwend Oh ? Any good ?
 Simpson Not really. Would you like to see my etchings ?
 Gwend Another time, thank-you, Simpson.

[Marreau re-enters]

Marreau A most intriguing case. I shall enjoy solving this little mystery.
 Gwend What did Lord Smedling have to tell you then, Hemlock ?

Marreau I am sworn to secrecy actually Gwendolyn.

Gwend Oh come on Marreau, how am I supposed to solve the case for you if you don't tell me all the details.

Marreau I have told you before about suggesting that you solve my cases, I am the Great Marreau, and you are merely my secretary - please remember that.

Gwend Very well. Let me guess then - the Countess has had a million pounds-worth of jewels stolen and the family wants to have the case solved and the jewels returned without involving the police if at all possible - Correct ?

Marreau What !! How did you know ?!

Gwend Experience my dear Marreau, simply experience - and intelligence of course

Marreau Alright, as you seem to know most of the details, I'll tell you the rest.

Gwend That's so kind of you.

Marreau Well as you know, the countess arrived late last night, after the ball had finished and most of the guests had gone home. This is very fortunate as it narrows down the number of suspects considerably.

Simpson As long as one of the guests didn't pretend to leave and actually stayed behind to carry out the theft.

Gwend Very good Simpson, have you been reading detective novels ?

Marreau I suppose that is a possibility, but the way the robbery was carried out suggests an intimate knowledge of this house, the sort of knowledge not possessed by a casual visitor.

Simpson They could have cased the joint.

Gwend "Cased the joint ?" You *have* been reading detective novels, haven't you.

Simpson Only a few.

Marreau What is this "Casing the joint" ? Some kind of cooking term ? Like Beef Wellington ?

Gwend It's slang Marreau; it means to have a look round the place and plan out methods of entry and exit etcetera.

Marreau What has this to do with a joint ? Do they get into the house pretending to be chefs or something ?

Gwend No it's just part of the saying. Look Marreau, whilst - against my better judgement - I have to admit that what Simpson says is a possibility, let us work on the theory that it was indeed an inside job.

Marreau "Inside job" ? What - you are suggesting that the decorators did it ?!

Gwend Oh God, I could get old explaining this ! An "Inside job" is when the crime was committed by someone who lives or works in the place where the crime took place. I'd've thought you'd have come across that saying Marreau.

Marreau Of course, my dear Gwendolyn ... just testing.

Gwend So Marreau, why must they have known the house so well ?

Marreau Ah, yes, because the jewels were placed inside a safe which was hidden behind a picture in a dressing room adjoining the room in which the Countess slept.

Gwend So we're looking for a safecracker; there shouldn't be too many of them in the house - I'm getting a nasty feeling that Simpson may be right; this sounds like a professional job.

Marreau Do not jump to conclusions Gwendolyn. The safe was not "cracked" as you say but stolen.

Gwend Stolen ?!

Marreau Yes they chipped away at the brickwork and removed the whole safe.

Simpson [*light dawns*] So *that's* what all that banging was last night.

Gwendolyn & Marreau [*Together*] What ?

Simpson Well I believe my room backs onto the countess' room, and I was kept awake last night by this tapping noise - it went on for about half an hour.

Marreau Sacre Bleu ! You did not think something strange was happening ?

Simpson Not really - I thought it was death-watch beetle.

Gwend I'm surprised you could hear it over your brain ticking !

Simpson Then there was a thump, and I heard some-one say "Got it !", so I assumed they'd killed it.

Marreau Killed it ? Killed what ?

Simpson The death-watch beetle.

Gwend Simpson, you are probably the stupidest person in England ! Someone steals a million pounds' worth of jewellery from a room adjoining your own, you hear the theft taking place - and you go to sleep - brilliant.

Simpson [*rather upset*] Well I wasn't to know. I didn't even know the countess had arrived 'till I spoke to Parkhurst this morning and I certainly didn't know she was in the next room or that she'd got all those jewels with her.

Gwend Alright, I suppose I was expecting a bit much. What I can't understand is how they carried the safe away, it must've weighed a ton.

Marreau It was only a little safe. Apparently the man that installed it carried it up the stairs on his own, so it couldn't have been very heavy.

Gwend So it's probably miles away by now; and all they'd have to do is cut it open with a welding torch.

Marreau Ah, now that is where it gets interesting, and why I think it must be what you call an inside job.

Gwend Oh ?

Marreau Yes. Do you remember there was a robbery here a few years ago ?
Gwend [*feigning vague knowledge*] Oh yes, paintings wasn't it ?
Marreau Indeed my dear Gwendolyn, two Raphaels to be precise -
Simpson I think you'll find they were Rembrandts actually.
Marreau Were they - oh well, same sort of thing - well after that they fitted bars to all the windows and very complicated locks on all the doors.
Gwend So it's unlikely anyone broke in.
Marreau Almost impossible I would say.
Gwend And everyone who was present last night is still here this morning.
Marreau Correct.
Simpson Hold on a minute Marreau, as this banging kept me awake, how come the countess didn't wake up.
Marreau An excellent question my friend - and one I intend to ask her presently.

[[**Blackout**]]

Act I Scene 2

Scene - the same.

Gwendolyn is making notes at the table.

Marreau is sitting on the sofa tapping his temple.

Marreau Where's Simpson, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend He's gone for a lie down, said he was feeling tired after being kept awake last night.

Marreau Have you any ideas Gwendolyn - who might have done it ?

Gwend Well, if our supposition is right, then excluding Simpson, yourself and me, there are only seven possible suspects - oh and the countess herself of course.

Marreau The countess would hardly steal her own jewels would she Gwendolyn.

Gwend What about the insurance money - it would be somewhat handy to have the jewels *and* a million pounds, wouldn't it.

Marreau Of course - I hadn't thought of that.

[Havelock enters]

Havelock "The Countess Catherine Augusta Von Hohenhausen of Mecklenberg-Strelitz"

[Marreau & Gwend stand]

[The countess enters] [Marreau is obviously impressed] [Havelock exits]

Marreau Countess Catherine Augusta Von Hohenhausen of Mecklenberg-Strelitz, this is indeed an honour.

[He kisses her hand]

Countess [slight pause] Call me Kitty.

Gwend Thank heavens for that.

[Countess sits on sofa, Marreau sits next to her. Gwend sits on chair S.L.]

Marreau May I say how enchanting you are looking.

Gwend Uh-o !

Countess Why thank you Monsieur Marreau. I am honoured to be in the presence of the great French detective.

Marreau Swiss actually.

Countess [surprised] Swiss ?

Gwend [more surprised] Swiss ?

Marreau [flatly, emphatically] Swiss.

Gwend [fatalistically] Swiss.

Marreau Firstly, I would like to extend my personal condolences on the loss - temporary loss - of your jewellery.

Countess [stoically] I do hope you can help, Monsieur Marreau, it is all I have in the world. Once we were a very rich family, but my late husband lost it all, and then committed suicide !

Marreau *Zut Alors !* How terrible - did he lose it in disastrous business venture ?

Countess No, he just lost it. Put it down somewhere and forgot where he'd put it. He always was very forgetful.

Gwend Well at least you'll be able to collect on the insurance for your lost jewels.

Countess I'm afraid not. I couldn't afford the insurance premium. So if you cannot find my jewels I will be destitute.

Gwend Well that's one theory out the window !

Marreau Now countess, er Kitty; to help me in my investigation, I will need to ask you a few questions.

Are you sitting comfortably ?

Countess Yes thank-you.

Marreau Then we'll begin.

Gwend What's this, children's hour ?

Marreau Before I start, I would like to say once again how wonderful you look...

Gwend *MARREAU !* [She grabs Marreau's arm for a 'quiet word']

[Confidentially but between gritted teeth] Stop chatting her up and just ask the relevant questions !

Marreau Gwendolyn, whatever do you mean ? I am trying to get to the bottom of it.

Gwend I know, that's what I'm worried about !.

Marreau I do not follow. Let me resume my investigation, and I will thank-you not to interrupt.
[Marreau sits next to The Countess again] It would seem that the robbers removed the safe by chipping away at the wall around it; did you not hear anything ?

Countess I am afraid that I was sound asleep, I think someone must have put a sleeping draught in my glass of water, I remember it did taste funny.

Marreau Aha ! The fiends !

Countess The first thing I remember is when the maid woke me about nine this morning, I was still very sleepy, but I couldn't help noticing the door.

Gwend The door ?

Countess Yes the one to the dressing room. It had been ripped off its hinges and was lying against the bottom of the bed.

Marreau And this aroused your suspicions ?

Countess Well I was a little surprised. I mean it was still attached when I went to sleep.

Gwend So what happened next ?

Countess Um, I drew Rose's attention to the door

Marreau Rose ?

Countess Yes, that's the maid's name I believe.

Marreau Oh I see, do go on.

Countess And she said "*Holy Mary, Mother-of-God*" a few times and ran off to get the butler.

Gwend And so was Havelock the next on the scene ?

Countess Yes, he came rushing in with Tubby.

Marreau Tubby ?

Countess I am sorry; Viscount Alexander - his friends call him Tubby.

Marreau I see - what you call a knicker-name.

Gwend Nickname Marreau.

Marreau Indeed, sorry to have interrupted - please continue.

Countess Tubby and Havelock went into the dressing room and I heard them say "Good grief" and similar comments, then they came back into my room and told me the safe had been stolen, and I fainted I'm afraid.

[Simpson enters]

Marreau *[Marreau stands, holding The Countess's hand, she also stands]* Well thank-you for your time.
Simpson I say have I missed anything ?

[On hearing Simpson's voice, Countess wheels round to look at Simpson]

Countess *Simmy !!!*
Simpson *Kitty !!!*

[They rush towards each other, collide, and embrace fondly]

Countess *Simmy !!!*
Simpson Gosh !

Gwend *[stunned]* *[To Marreau]* I think they may know each other, Marreau.
Marreau I was forming the same conclusion myself.
Gwend Er - Simmy (!!) - Sorry to interrupt but

Countess Simmy, it's so long !
Simpson I suppose it is.

Marreau Simpson, please put the countess down.

[The following should be said jauntily, Countess is nearly as stupid as Simpson]

Simpson *[They part]* Good heavens Kitty - *you're* the countess !
Countess Didn't you know dearest, I married Fluffy Hohenhausen
Simpson Of Mecklenberg-Strelitz ?
Countess The same.

Simpson Gosh ! - How is old Fluffy ?
Countess Dead.
Simpson I say, that's a bit of a boo-hoo and all that ! Poor old Fluffy - How d'it happen ?
Countess Suicide
Simpson Ceremonially with the Great Sword of the Hohenhausen's ?
Countess No, he shot himself - up the nose !
Gwend Oh not again !
Simpson He did have rather a big nose didn't he.
Countess Family trait - He was probably aiming for his temple and his nose got in the way
Simpson Sounds like Fluffy - Oh well can't be helped.
Countess Bit of a mess I'm afraid
Simpson I can imagine [*face changes*] - excuse me - [*Dashes behind screen, clutching stomach*]
Marreau Countess, am I right in thinking that you are acquainted with Simpson.
Countess Simmy ? - Why yes - of course - my daddy and his daddy were old friends, we used to play together when we were little.
Gwend And this is the first time you've met since childhood ?
Countess Good heavens no - we had a torrid affair a few years ago !
Marreau You and Simpson ?!
Countess Yes, that's right - didn't we darling ?
Simpson [*Re-emerging from behind screen*] Oh yes, I'd forgotten about that !
Marreau So why did you marry Fluffy - er the count ?
Countess Money really - yes, just the money - oh and the title of course.
Simpson I did wonder where you'd gone to.
Countess Sorry dearest, should have left you a note, I suppose.
Simpson Never mind - I got over it.
Marreau Well, most enlightening as this is, I fear it is getting us no nearer finding your missing jewels.
Gwend I think we ought to talk to Havelock, see if he has any ideas.
Marreau Exactly what I was going to suggest. I will ring for him. [*Pulls bell rope*]
Countess Simmy, would you like to show me round the garden ?
Simpson Oh. Gosh. Yes. Why not !!!

[**Exit Simpson & Countess**]

Gwend Well it seems unlikely that the countess is involved, with the jewels not being insured.
Marreau Indeed my dear Gwendolyn, I think that she is beyond suspicion. Poor woman, fancy losing everything like that. I must find these jewels or as she says she will be prostitute.
Gwend Destitute, Marreau.
Marreau Destitute, prostitute, same thing *n'est-ce pas*
Gwend Not quite, Marreau !

[**Havelock enters**] [**He is very 'superior' in his attitude**]

Havelock You rang sir ?
Marreau Ah, Havelock, I would like to ask you a few questions - do have a seat.
Havelock I would rather stand sir, if it's all the same to you.
Marreau Aha, your English correctness - a sitting butler gathers no moss - yes ?
Havelock Indeed sir, there is probably a saying along those lines.
Gwend Now then Havelock - I wonder if you'd mind giving us your impressions.
Havelock Now madam ?
Gwend Is there a problem ?
Havelock Well no madam, if you insist.
Gwend I do.
Havelock Very well - which would you like first ? Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd or Charlie Chaplain ?
Marreau What ?!!!
Gwend [*laughs*] That isn't quite what I meant.
Marreau [*rattled & confused*] Who are all these people - are there more guests that I have not been told about ? Who is this Busting Chaplain ? Are the clergy involved ? *Sacre Bleu* - what is going on ?!!!
Gwend Calm down Marreau; Havelock got the wrong end of the stick.

Marreau What stick ? [*Pause*][*An idea, albeit the wrong one, dawns*] Ah - Aha - Now I see - A stick of dynamite, So - you intended to blow the safe up, but getting hold of the wrong end of the stick you were forced to remove the whole safe. Now I understand !

Gwend For heaven's sake Marreau - you say I jump to conclusions.

Havelock Shall I clarify the situation madam ?

Gwend Go ahead. - Good luck !

Havelock [*Very calmly*] Monsieur Marreau, the misunderstanding engendered by your misapprehension of the colloquialism employed by your able amanuensis resulted from the prior terminological hybridisation of the word 'impression' to refer not only to perceived conceptions but also to characterisations of the famous by way of mimicry. Unfortunately I misconstrued this initial proposition, understanding the requirement to be for the latter.

Marreau [*Pause (he doesn't realise Havelock has finished)*] I see. [*he patently doesn't*]

Gwend Well I'm glad we've got that sorted out.

Marreau Indeed, we shall come back to the question of the stick later, for the mean time let us concentrate on what happened last night.

Havelock That would seem a most wise avenue of investigation, sir.

Marreau From my assistant's account, it would seem that the burglary took place at about two in the morning - what were you doing at this time.

Havelock I was in bed sir, asleep.

Marreau Alone ?

Havelock Naturally sir, I am unmarried.

Marreau Not having an affair with the cook then, - Ay ?

Havelock Certainly not, and respectfully, I would prefer it if you did not impugn my reputation in that manner sir.

Gwend Yes Marreau, you mustn't assume every butler in England is having an affair with the household's cook, [*slight pause*] - only about eighty per-cent of them are.

Marreau Very well. So you heard nothing and saw nothing - correct ?

Havelock Quite correct, sir.

Marreau So Havelock, have you any ideas who might have stolen the jewels ?

Havelock It is hardly for me to say sir.

Gwend That sounds as though you *do* suspect someone, Havelock.

Havelock Does it madam ? I'm sure that was not my intention.

Gwend It may not have been your intention - but it was the - *dare I use the word* - impression you gave.

Marreau Come on Havelock, out with it, or I will consider you at the very least an accessory and possibly even the culprit.

Havelock With respect sir, you can consider me what you like, you are not a policeman, you are not even British, and therefore have no right to question me, let alone arrest me !

Marreau [*Fuming*] Impudence ! How dare you speak to Marreau the great Belgian detective in this way.

Gwend *Swiss*, Marreau.

Marreau Swiss what ?

Gwend Apparently you're Swiss, Marreau, that's what you said earlier.

Marreau Do not be ridiculous Gwendolyn - all the world knows that I am French why should I pretend to be Swiss.

Gwend [*Gwend gives up this argument with a skyward glance*] I realise you feel that you must be loyal to the family, Havelock, but as it is Lord Smedling himself who has asked Monsieur Marreau to investigate this case, surely your duty is to help in any way you can ?

Havelock [*Slight pause*] Very well, [*Pause*] Please realise this is only an opinion, but from the way the dressing-room door was wrenched off, there are only two people who I believe could have used that sort of strength. [*Pause*]

Gwend Do go on, this sounds promising.

Havelock Well, Captain Ranulph is obviously one of them and Viscount Alexander is the other.

Marreau Aha, the so-called Tubby - we will speak to him shortly.

Gwend What about Lord Smedling himself ?

Havelock Whilst his lordship is remarkable for his age, he is in his seventies and suffers from angina. I am aware of course that the family has fallen on hard times of late, and a million pound's worth of jewellery would be very useful, however I do not believe his lordship could even contemplate robbing a guest.

Gwend But Viscount Alexander might, is that what you're saying ?

Havelock It is precisely what I am *not* saying, madam, if you understand the nuance.

Gwend Very tactful, Mr. Havelock - I think you can go now - unless Monsieur Marreau wishes to ask you any more questions [*Marreau shrugs a 'No'*] - very well, thank-you you've been very helpful.

Havelock Not at all, madam. [*Makes to leave*]

Marreau [*half under his breath, mimicking*] Quite right, not at all !

Gwend Oh Havelock, would you mind asking the cook - what's her name ?

Havelock Mrs. Johnson.

Gwend Yes, would you please ask Mrs. Johnson to come up and have a word with us ?

Havelock Very good, madam. [**Exits**]

Marreau [*waits for Havelock to leave*] What a pompous man - a servant at that.

Gwend A highly intelligent servant - and a very shrewd one too I would say; I wouldn't be at all surprised if he didn't know rather more than he's saying.

Marreau Oh ?

Gwend Just a feeling really, I can't quite put my finger on it.

Marreau What is this thing you wish to press, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend [*baffled look*] I don't want to press anything - what are you talking about Marreau ?

Marreau This thing you wish to put your finger on, presumably it is something which requires pressing, a button or a knob perhaps ?

Gwend I realise Marreau that you come from a foreign country, but sometimes I wonder if you're from the same planet as the rest of us !

Marreau Whatever do you mean ?

[Mrs Johnson enters, Simpson re-enters and sits at table (back of stage)]

MrsJohnson I hope you'll be quick about this, I've got things cookin' that'll spoil if I don't get back and look after them.

Marreau The staff in this household are very impertinent !

MrsJohnson We ain't incontinent, regular as clockwork we are.....

Marreau No, no, no - you misunderstand

MrsJohnson I suppose you're blaming my cooking - well I can't help it if you've got the trots

Marreau *Trots ?*

MrsJohnson If your foreign bowels can't take to good English cooking - well that's your fault for comin' over here.

Marreau What ?

MrsJohnson I suppose you want those horrible slimy snails and those frogs-legs, can't take a bit of good British beef.

Marreau Actually I'm very partial to your British beef.

Simpson Yes you can't beat a bit of best British beef.

MrsJohnson Well that's a good job, 'coz. you're having it tonight - Beef Wellington.

Marreau Aha ! Now we get to it - You are an impostor - making Beef Wellington in order to gain access to the house - just as I suspected !

Gwend Hold on Marreau !

Marreau No ! No holding on - she has admitted it - she has been casing the joint so that the burglars could come and go freely.....

Simpson [*Stands*] Saints alive ! Shall I handcuff her Marreau ?

Gwend Sit down Simpson. [*he sits*] Marreau, you're barking up the wrong tree

MrsJohnson Barking mad more like !

Marreau Barking ? Barking ? Are you suggesting that I am a dog ! Gwendolyn whatever has got into you ?

Gwend There is absolutely no connection whatsoever between Mrs. Johnson cooking Beef Wellington and the burglary. You're confused Marreau

Marreau So what's all this about me being a dog ? It is not very nice to call someone a dog - especially when he is from the aristocracy !

Gwend No-one's calling you a dog, Marreau - it's a saying "Barking up the wrong tree" it means you've jumped to the wrong conclusion.

MrsJohnson Anyway can I get back to my cooking now ?

Marreau We haven't asked you any questions yet

MrsJohnson Well get on with it would you or my jam roolly-polly is going to be ruined.

Simpson I love jam roolly-polly. Are you doing thick custard with it ?

MrsJohnson Of course.

Marreau Jam polly-rolly ? What is this "polly-rolly" ?

Gwend It's a type of sponge pudding, Marreau.

Marreau Yughk - you say we French eat strange things.

Gwend It's rather nice actually, Marreau.

MrsJohnson [*defensively*] It's lovely - my jam roolly polly.

Marreau In France we *wash* with sponges - we do not eat them !

MrsJohnson Is he completely barmy ?

Gwend No, just French ! Hemlock - its not a sea sponge it's --- oh, never mind -

Simpson I thought you were Belgian, Marreau !

Marreau We are straying from the subject. Mrs. Johnson, what were you doing between midnight and three this morning ?

MrsJohnson I was in bed asleep - not that I see that it's any of your business.

Gwend You didn't hear any strange noises or anything ?

MrsJohnson No - only Mr. Havelock snoring - but that's hardly strange - you get used to it after a while.

Marreau Aha - so if you heard Mr. Havelock snoring, you could not have been asleep !

MrsJohnson Well we both went to bed at about midnight, and I suppose Mr. Havelock fell asleep first and me a few minutes later.

Gwend So can you tell us any more ?

MrsJohnson No, not really, I woke at about six this morning, but it wasn't 'till nine when Rose took the countess her tea up that we realised something had happened.

Gwend Who do you think might have done it ?

MrsJohnson Well, I think it was Captain Ranulph, he's such a nasty man, I hope you lock him up for ever ! I can't think why dear Lady Theresa ever married him.

Gwend So what do you base your suspicions on ?

MrsJohnson Well just that he's so nasty really.

Simpson Sounds fair enough to me.

Gwend I don't think it would guarantee a prosecution though, do you Marreau.

Marreau Unfortunately not, I fear we may have to collect a little evidence first.

MrsJohnson Well suit yourselves - but I still think he did it.

Gwend What about Viscount Alexander, d'you think he could have done it ?

MrsJohnson What ? No ! Dear little Alexander ! He wouldn't do a thing like that - he's far too nice.

Gwend Again, hardly a rock solid defence I would venture.

Simpson I say, can I smell burning ?

[They all sniff a few times]

MrsJohnson Me jam roolly-polly **[Exits at speed]**

[[Blackout]]

Act I Scene 3

Scene - the same.

Before the lights go up there is the sound of Simpson counting slowly from about 30 +.

The lights rise. Marreau is sitting on the sofa, musing. Gwendolyn is sitting in armchair perusing her notes [S.L.] Simpson is S.L. between the armchair & sofa, doing press-ups.

Gwend Simpson ?

Simpson 33 - {Gasp}

Gwend Simpson !

Simpson 34 - {Gulp}

Gwend For God's sake Simpson.

Simpson 35 - {Collapses}

Gwend Is there any particular reason why you've suddenly become so active, Simpson.

Simpson No, no, just want to keep in trim.

Gwend Nothing to do with the athletic countess Kitty, perchance.

Simpson [*Breathlessly*] Gosh, how ever did you know that Gwenders ?

Gwend Simpson, ever since you met the countess, you've been either wandering around like a lovesick spaniel or apparently training for a world title fight.

Simpson Oh dear, really, have I ?

Marreau Yes, Simpson, you have - and it is beginning to send me - how you say - pineapple !

Gwend Bananas

Marreau Ah, yes, bananas, thank-you Gwendolyn. Mind you, I think pineapple is just as good - I do not see why the banana has to be singled out.

Simpson Oh no Marreau. I think it has to be a banana - I suppose a mango might be alright but I can't really imagine anyone going grapefruit or blackcurrant, what do you think Gwendolyn ?

Gwend [*she looks at them with incredulity*] If you two insist on having ridiculous conversations about fruit, fair enough - however don't expect me to contribute.

Marreau Very well Gwendolyn - if that is the way you feel - [*pause*] well Simpson, I think aubergine would be quite appropriate.

Simpson But it's not a fruit Marreau, it's a vegetable.

Marreau So - I do not see why even vegetables should be excluded.

Gwend Oh for heaven's sake - are neither of you interested in solving this burglary ?

Marreau Ah yes, of course - Simpson, we shall return to the question of the bananas another time: Who do you think we ought to interview next Gwendolyn ?

Gwend Well I think Ranulph might be worth questioning.

[Parkhurst enters]

Parkhurst Begging your pardons, but his lordship has been taken rather ill and has retired to bed. He was asking how you were getting on with your investigation sir.

Marreau I am sorry to hear of his lordship's ill health, please convey my best wishes and tell him the case is going very well.

Gwend *Is it ?*

Marreau Quiet Gwendolyn.

Parkhurst Thank-you sir, I will inform his lordship. [*turns to go*]

Gwend Oh, Parkhurst - would you ask Captain Ranulph to join us please.

Parkhurst Oh dear, very well. [*Exit*]

Gwend Well the general consensus seems to be that even if Ranulph didn't do it, everyone would like him to go to prison !

Marreau Indeed he does not seem to be very popular.

Simpson Kitty doesn't like him either.

Gwend Oh ?

Simpson Yes, apparently he behaved in a very ungentlemanly way towards her.

Gwend Really - do go on.

Simpson I don't know any more.

Gwend Wouldn't she tell you ?

Simpson I didn't ask actually - but if Kitty says he was ungentlemanly then he must be a cad !

[Parkhurst, stooping, re-enters with Ranulph]

Ranulph Who's a cad [*swipes Parkhurst with riding crop*]

(Parkhurst Aggggh)

Simpson Oh no-one in particular.

Ranulph Damned good job - you know what I'd do to a cad [*swipes Parkhurst*]

(Parkhurst Aggggh)

Simpson Well yes - I can imagine.

Ranulph What are you gawping at Parkhurst [*swipes Parkhurst*]

(Parkhurst Aggggh)

Marreau Why do you hit the footman ? Has he done something wrong ?

Ranulph He was born wasn't he - that was his first mistake - wasn't it Parkhurst ?

Parkhurst Yes sir, whatever you say sir.

Ranulph Grovelling little sycophant [*Swipes Parkhurst*]

(Parkhurst Aggggh)

Gwend I think you can probably go now Parkhurst.

Parkhurst Thank-you madam [**backs out, Exit**]

Gwend Do you think it's right to treat the staff that way ?

Ranulph Of course it's right. It's the only language they understand.

Gwend Well I think you're cruel !

Ranulph Well you're only a woman so you would.

Gwend Only a woman !!! [*During the following Gwend is quietly fuming*]

Marreau I am afraid, Captain Ranulph, that my secretary is one of these new independent type of women - she considers herself to be the equal of any man - myself excepted of course.

Ranulph Does she by gad, well you ought to give her a good whipping every now and then - that'd soon put her in her place.

Simpson I don't think you've quite got the measure of Gwendolyn, actually, Ranulph.

Ranulph Who was asking you ? And if you're addressing me, you little pip-squeak, you will call me Captain.

[Simpson's attitude suddenly changes] [He walks purposefully up to Ranulph]

Simpson Well, in that case Captain - you had better call me *Major* - or Sir !

Gwendolyn & Marreau What !!

Ranulph Oh !

Gwend You're a *Major*, Simpson ?

[Simpson returns to his normal affable character]

Simpson Oh, sorry Gwenders didn't you know ?

Marreau You have never mentioned it before, Simpson.

Simpson Oh - I don't suppose there's been a need - I like my friends calling me Simpson, I don't believe in using titles ...

Ranulph [*To Simpson*] I'm terribly sorry about the little misunderstanding, Major ! [*Pause*]

[*Sudden thought*] Good grief ! You're not Major Simpson of the 35th Hussars are you ?

Simpson Um, that's me.

Marreau You have heard of our friend then ?

Ranulph Heard of him ? He's a legend.

Simpson Oh, I wouldn't go that far !

Gwend A legend ? Simpson ? Are you sure we're talking about the same person ?

Ranulph Well, Major, were you the hero of the siege of Peshwari ?

Simpson Well, you know, I wouldn't say hero exactly.

Ranulph You saved four hundred men that day - I think that's pretty dashed heroic !

Simpson Well it seemed the right thing to do really !

Gwend Simpson !!! That's wonderful [*Gwend goes over to him and kisses him*]

Simpson Oh I say, *Gosh* !!

Marreau This is how you say a revolution.

Gwend I think you mean revelation, actually Marreau, and I couldn't agree more.

Simpson Oh, stop making a fuss everyone. I'm just simple Simon Simpson these days.

Gwend [*With a twinkle*] How am I ever going to be nasty to you again ?

Simpson I'm sure you'll find a way Gwenders !

Marreau Well, astonishing though this is, I think we had better get back to the question of the robbery.

Ranulph Ah, so that's why you wanted to speak to me - see if I've got any ideas.

Marreau Indeed Captain, so - can you help us ?

Ranulph I think it was Havelock and Parkhurst together.

Gwend Oh ? What is your reasoning ?

Ranulph Well, I don't trust either of them. Shifty eyes.

Gwend I'm afraid, Captain, that shifty eyes are not actually illegal.

Ranulph They're always talking together - in whispers - I think they're in cahoots.

Marreau Incahoots ? What is an Incahoot ?

Simpson It's an ancient South American tribe.

Gwend Those are Incas - there is no such thing as an Incahoot - he said that they are in [*slight pause*] cahoots.

Marreau Ah - aha - I see, these cahoots - they are some kind of footwear ?

Gwend What ? No - to be in [*slight pause*] cahoots means to be in league, in partnership.

Marreau Ah - it is becoming clear.

Ranulph And of course Parkhurst is a convicted felon.

All: What ?

Gwend Do you know this for certain ?

Ranulph Oh yes - it's no secret !

Marreau Then why on earth was he employed.

Ranulph He was his lordship's batman in the war; then after the war he got in with some bad types and ended up in prison. On his release, his lordship felt sorry for him and offered him a job.

Gwend I see, and what was he in prison for ?

Ranulph Well this is the interesting bit - Safe-cracking.

Marreau Sacre Bleu ! - Let us apprehend him immediately !

Simpson Hold on Marreau - if he's a safe-cracker, why did he steal the safe - why not simply break into it ?

Marreau That is a good point, Simpson.

Gwend Well not really; if the safe had been cracked it would obviously point to Parkhurst - so he'd be better off stealing it and opening it later.

Ranulph Just what I'd been thinking - your secretary is quite intelligent - for a woman. [*Gwend glowers at him*]

Marreau Thank-you captain, your information is most enlightening.

Ranulph Is that all then ?

Gwend Before you go - just so that we know where everybody was - what were you doing between midnight and three this morning ?

Ranulph [*Whipping the chair*] You're not suggesting I had something to do with this scandal, are you ?

Gwend We are asking everyone where they were.

Ranulph Oh; very well. Well I played cards with Tubby 'til about one, then I went to bed. Theresa was asleep but she woke up when I got into bed, so she can confirm that.

Marreau Did you go straight to sleep.

Ranulph Well not straight to sleep exactly.

Marreau Oh ?

Ranulph Well you know

Marreau No I'm afraid I don't.

Gwend Marreau - I think we can leave it at that.

Marreau Can we ? - I think it might be important to find out why the Captain did not go straight to sleep. Perhaps the banging kept him awake !

[Gwend goes over to Marreau and whispers in his ear]

Marreau Ah, oh, I see. Yes - of course - well that'll be all - thank-you Captain.

Ranulph Shall I go and beat a confession out of Parkhurst ?

Marreau No, no, no !!! You must not go around beating suspects - it is not the way to go about things.

Ranulph Well I think I'll get on old Dasher and go and shoot something then.

Gwend As long as it's not human !

Ranulph What ? Oh yes, I see. [**Exits**]

Marreau What a strange man.
Gwend "*Only a woman*" indeed - Hmph !
Marreau You must not be so touchy Gwendolyn. After all you *are* only a woman !
Gwend That better have been an attempt at a joke Marreau !
Simpson I say, hadn't we better arrest this Parkhurst fellow.
Gwend Well I certainly think it's time we had a word with him.
Marreau Yes, indeed. However before doing so I would like to view the scene of the crime again -

[Havelock appears at door, unseen by all]

Marreau Shall we have a look ?
Havelock Shall we what sir ?
Marreau What ?
Havelock I thought I heard you suggest we did something, sir.
Marreau No, if I want you to do something, I will ask you.
Havelock Very good sir. [*Exits, muttering "Stupid French ..."*]
Gwend Yes, I'd like to have a look myself.
Havelock [*re-appears*] Madam ?
Gwend Yes ?
Havelock I thought - Oh never mind. [**Exits**]
Simpson I say, Havelock's behaving very strangely.
Marreau Quite, I think there may be something in Ranulph's theory. Let us view the scene of the crime.

[Exeunt Omnes]

[[Blackout]]

Act II Scene 1

Scene - the same.

Marreau is seated in armchair [S.L.]

Gwendolyn is sitting on sofa studying her notes.

Simpson is seated in armchair [S.R.]

Marreau Havelock's taking his time finding Parkhurst.

Gwend Yes, if they really are in league I wonder if it was advisable to ask Havelock to find him.

Marreau Sacre Bleu Of course, he may - how you say - dump him the blink !

Gwend Tip him the wink, I think you mean, Marreau.

Marreau I am sorry my dear, my little red cells, they are not functioning very well today.

[Havelock enters, head bowed]

Havelock Grave news ! Lamentable news !

Gwend Whatever's wrong Havelock ?

Havelock His lordship has passed on.

Gwendolyn & Simpson Good heavens.

Marreau His lordship has passed what on ?

Gwend He's dead Marreau.

Marreau Who's dead ?

Gwend His lordship of course, who else ?

Marreau How do you know ?

Gwend Havelock just said so.

Marreau Did he ? I only heard him saying that his lordship had passed something somewhere.

Simpson I think I can help here, Marreau - "Passed on" means he's died.

Marreau You have some very strange sayings in this country !

Gwend What did he die of, Havelock ?

Havelock He just slipped away - the doctor is on his way now - hopefully he will ascertain the cause of death.

[Theresa enters, crying]

Theresa Oh, poor daddy. *[sob]* *[She sits on sofa]*

Simpson *[sits next to Theresa, puts his arm round her]* There, there.

[The Countess enters]

Countess Simmy - how could you !

Simpson What ?

Countess As soon as my back is turned, there you are cuddling with another woman.

Simpson But !

Countess I'm glad I left you for Fluffy. It's all you deserve. **[Exit]**

Simpson But !

[Rose rushes in, distraught][She has a strong Irish accent]

Rose Holy Mary, mother of God !

Havelock Calm down, Rose. Nothing can be done about his lordship now.

Rose It's not his lordship !

Marreau What isn't his lordship ?

Rose It's the Captain.

Marreau Of course the Captain isn't his lordship ! Whatever do you mean ?

Theresa Oh what's Ranulph done now ?

Rose He's lost his head m'lady.

Theresa Well that's nothing new - he's always losing his head over something.

Rose [*Calming down*] No, m'lady, you don't understand - he's really lost it this time.

Gwend Whatever has he done - Oh he's not beaten poor Parkhurst senseless has he.

Rose [*Calm*] No, you're still not following me are you. I can tell y'know by the way you don't seem to be that bothered.

Marreau Well compared to the death of his lordship, this does seem a trifle unimportant.

Rose Alright, I'll try and make it clear. Captain Ranulph is lying on the ground with his horse wandrin' about all over the place, and the Captain's head which, as you know, used to be on his shoulders is some yards away !

Simpson { [*Looks ill and holds stomach*] }

Theresa { [*Wails*] } }

Marreau { Sacre Bleu ! } } [*Simultaneously*]

Gwend { Good grief ! } }

Havelock { What !! [**Exits**] }

Marreau Wait for me ! Do not move anything ! [**Exits**]

Theresa [*Wailing*]

Gwend Rose, take Lady Theresa into the drawing room and make her a strong cup of black coffee.

Rose Right-you-are Miss Bayne, I'll do that.

Simpson Would you get me some bicarb. please Rose.

Rose To be sure.

[**Rose & Theresa exit**] [**Theresa is sobbing**]

Gwend Does Rose remind you of anyone ?

Simpson [*Muses*] Can't say as she does.

Gwend Oh well, never mind.

Simpson I don't think Ranulph's going to be greatly missed !

Gwend No, I think you're right there.

[**Viscount Alexander enters (actually now the Marquess, due to his father's death)**]

Alexander Well this is a rum do !

Gwend Oh, Marquess, I'm so sorry to hear of your father and brother-in-law's deaths.

Simpson Me too.

Alexander I'm not the Marquess, that was (... my father) - oh - I suppose I am now ! Well for Heaven's sake call me Tubby like everyone else. Viscount Alexander was bad enough, but Marquess of Penge is outrageous.

Simpson Just what I was saying, all these titles - silly aren't they.

Alexander To be honest, I'm rather upset about father, but as for old Ranulph, I can't say I'm sorry to see him go and kill himself.

Simpson What ? You mean it was suicide ?

Alexander No, no - Marreau's out there taking measurements all over the place, but it looks like a riding accident to me.

Simpson Good grief ! I've never seen anyone's head come off after a fall, and I've played polo in India.

Alexander No it wasn't a fall, it seems Dasher went out of control and galloped under a low branch !

Gwend Oh, nasty !

Simpson I wish Rose would hurry up with that bicarb.

Gwend I don't think you're the only one who'll not mourn his passing.

Alexander No, not a likeable chap, old Ranulph. Oh well, I suppose one shouldn't speak ill of the dead.

[**Marreau re-enters**]

Marreau Ah, Viscount - or should I say Marquess, I am glad you are here.

Alexander We've been through this once, Monsieur Marreau, please just call me Tubby.

Marreau I cannot call a Marquess "Tubby" - it is disrespectful, it would be like someone calling me "Frenchy"

Gwendolyn & Simpson They do !

Marreau What !

Alexander Well call me Alexander then.

Marreau [*slight pause*] Very well, if you insist. Now then Monsieur Tubby, I think there is no doubt that Captain Ranulph's death was in fact murder.

All: What !!!

Alexander But surely Dasher dashed under the dashed tree and bashed old Ranulph's block off !

Marreau In this you are quite correct.

Gwend This sounds interesting Marreau - how do you make it out to be murder ?

Marreau Two things, my dear Gwendolyn. Firstly there was a massive blow to the back of his head, far more severe than would have happened if his head had simply been knocked off and bounced along the ground for a while.

Simpson [*Dashes towards screen, clutching stomach*]

Gwend Not behind the screen, Simpson !

Simpson Oh ! [*Dashes offstage, clutching stomach*] Rose ! Rose !

Marreau Secondly, there were traces of cord or rope on his riding boots and faint but discernible cord marks on his wrists.

Gwend Good Heavens, Marreau, you've excelled yourself. So Ranulph was coshed on the back of his head, tied onto Dasher, and then presumably the murderer panicked Dasher into charging under the low branch.

Marreau Precisely my dear Gwendolyn. What is more there are marks in the ground where it is obvious that the horse took fright. The murderer then went to the body, removed the cords and Ranulph's body fell to the ground. An apparent accident. Except to the Great Marreau !

Alexander Well I'll eat my hat !

Marreau What is the purpose of eating your hat, Monsieur Tubby ? Does it hide some valuable clue ?

Alexander What on earth do you mean Marreau, it was just an exclamation. Why should I want to hide clues.

Marreau Because Marquess Tubby, you are chief suspect !

Alexander Me ! Great Scott ! Don't be ridiculous !

Marreau Do you deny that you had a violent row with Ranulph shortly before he died ?

Alexander Well, yes - I mean no - I mean I don't deny it, but I didn't murder him. I was just telling him that I was fed up with all the scenes he was making.

Marreau Good, I am glad you have admitted to having the argument. I will give you the benefit of the doubt for now, but you mustn't leave the house.

Alexander No, of course. I tell you I didn't do it though.

Marreau Would you leave us for now, I may want to talk to you later.

Alexander Very well, I suppose I had better call the police.

Marreau Yes, I am afraid we cannot keep this beneath our berets any longer.

Alexander Well - quite. [**Exit**]

Gwend Rotor arms, Marreau ?

Marreau Just so, my dear.

[Simpson re-enters, he is holding a large paper bag behind his back.]

Simpson Sorry about rushing out like that - the old gippy tummy y'know. Old Tubby looked a bit flushed just now.

Gwend Not surprising, Marreau has just informed him that he's chief suspect.

Simpson Oh I say.

Gwend Well I'll pop out and get the rotor arms shall I ?

Simpson No need.

Gwend Oh ? Why ?

Simpson Well I knew you'd want them so I've just whipped round and taken them all out for you.

Gwend Well done Simpson - what on earth's happened to you ? You've suddenly become quite intelligent.

Simpson Have I, oh, Gosh, thank-you Gwendolyn.

Gwend And you called me Gwendolyn, I don't know whether I can take all this in !

Simpson Oh, I couldn't get the top off one of the things.

Marreau One of which things, Simpson ?

Simpson The things that the rotor arm goes round inside.

Gwend That's called the distributor, Simpson.

Simpson Oh, right. Well I couldn't get the top off, so I took the whole thing off.

[Presents them with a complete distributor, which he produces from the paper bag]

Gwend Oh good grief !

Marreau If I am not mistaken, that is the distributor from a 1928 Benz Landau, is it not ?
Simpson Yes, Marreau; well spotted.
Marreau In fact, would I not be right in saying that it is in fact the distributor from *my* 1928 Benz Landau !!!
Simpson Ah, Gosh, yes - I suppose it is !
Gwend Well done Simpson !
Marreau Oh, *Zut Alors* do you not realise that we will now need a mechanic to come out to put it back in correctly.
Simpson Oh, really ? It came out easily enough !
Gwend Don't worry Marreau, I'll put it back and set the timing up for you !
Marreau You can do this, Gwendolyn ?
Gwend Of course; I'm *only a woman* after all !
Simpson Crikey Gwenders, you are clever !
Gwend I know !
Marreau Anyway, as Simpson has made sure that no-one can leave, *particularly me*, I think it is time to resume my investigations, especially as this simple robbery has turned into murder.
Gwend Yes, we were going to find out what Parkhurst has to say for himself, weren't we.
Marreau Indeed my dear Gwendolyn.

[Havelock enters]

Havelock Monsieur Marreau, the doctor would like to have a word with you if that is convenient.
Marreau By all means, show him in.

[Doctor Protheroe enters]

Protheroe Ah, Marreau, we meet again !
Marreau Doctor Protheroe, what are you doing here ?
Protheroe After the hamster business, Jane and I got married and moved out here to be nearer Little Jimmy's borstal.
Marreau Ah, I see, very compassionate.
Gwend How is little Jimmy.
Protheroe Well he's on the run at the moment ! Escaped dressed as a cleaning maid.
Simpson Good heavens !
Marreau When was this ?
Protheroe Oh; a few weeks ago. I should think the police will catch him soon.
Marreau Indeed, let us hope he does not get up to any more mischief while he is out.
Protheroe Quite; little perisher !
Gwend Um!
Marreau What do you mean Um!
Gwend Oh, nothing Marreau, I'll tell you later. So, doctor, what did his lordship die of ?
Protheroe Well, after a brief examination it would appear that his lordship suffered an embolism in the cardiovascular system occasioned by the administration of an arsenical toxin.
All: (Gosh, Sacre Bleu, Zounds etc.)
Marreau Are you sure ?
Protheroe No doubt about it. Until laboratory tests have been carried out, I can't be certain exactly what poison was used, but I'm pretty sure it was arsenic.
Marreau Oh ?
Protheroe Probably white arsenic - that is Arsenic Oxide in fact, obtained from the roasting of arsenic ores
Marreau Thank-you doctor ...
Protheroe Yes, fascinating element, arsenic, it appears in three forms you know ...
Marreau [*Bored already*] Does it really ... ?
Protheroe Yes, Alpha - that's yellow arsenic - is an allotropic modification of arsenic formed by the rapid condensation of arsenic vapour in an inert atmosphere ...
Marreau [*Frustrated*] Fascinating !
Protheroe ... whereas black arsenic, which is far denser than its yellow cousin, with a specific gravity of 3.7 as opposed to 2.0, may be formed by the *slow* condensation of arsenic vapour - [*Pause*] - in an inert atmosphere of course.
Marreau [*Almost asleep*] Most enlightening.

Protheroe However, I tend to think that it was indeed the white variety that dispatched his lordship.
Marreau [*Jumping at the opportunity to speak*] Well, we appear to have two murders on our hands.
Gwend I wonder why anyone would want to kill poor old Lord Smedling.
Protheroe I have no idea. I witnessed the will recently, and apart from some little gifts to the staff, the only people who could possibly gain financially are his children, and I can't imagine either of them murdering their father.
Simpson No I can't see old Tubby doing a thing like that either, let alone Theresa.
Marreau Well thank-you for this important information, Doctor Protheroe. I will not detain you any longer.

[**Protheroe turns to leave**]

Simpson I hope little Jimmy turns up safe and well.
Protheroe Thank-you Mr. Simpson. [*Exit*]

Marreau Well this is a pretty pot of herrings !
Gwend Very picturesque Marreau, the saying is "kettle of fish"
Marreau Aha, nearly right.
Gwend Yes, you're getting better. [*Pause*] Marreau ?
Marreau Yes, my dear.
Gwend Does Rose remind you of anyone.
Marreau [*Thinks*] No, I can't say she does.
Gwend Oh, alright, never mind.

[**Havelock enters**]

Havelock Excusing me, but there has been a rather nasty occurrence.
Marreau Oh ?
Havelock I am afraid Parkhurst has committed suicide !
All: What !
Havelock I fear that he was responsible for the theft and the murders and believing that you were on to him decided to take his own life.
Gwend That is rather a bold supposition, Havelock. How did he kill himself ?
Havelock A twelve-bore shotgun - very messy I'm afraid.
Simpson [*Exits clutching stomach*] Rose ! Rose !
Marreau A twelve-bore shotgun, hey, I did not hear the shot.
Havelock You wouldn't have sir, it happened well out into the estate.
Gwend How do you know it was suicide and not an accident - or murder ?
Havelock There are powder burns on his hands which suggests to me that he shot himself.
Marreau I see. I trust you have left everything undisturbed.
Havelock Naturally sir. As you will see, the gun is a little way from him, probably due to the recoil.
Marreau I think you can leave the deductions to me actually, Havelock.
Havelock As you please, sir.
Marreau By the way - who's gun is it ?
Havelock It is one of late Captain Ranulph's sir. A Grembling's over & under mach 37 b.
Marreau Gwendolyn - I think we should view the scene.

[**Blackout**]]

Act II Scene 2

Scene - the same.

Lights rise on an empty room.

Gwendolyn enters, followed by Marreau.

Gwend So, Marreau, looks like another murder !

Marreau Oh, you do not think Parkhurst took his own life ?

Gwend Come on Marreau - when someone decides to shoot themselves with a twelve-bore shotgun, one shot would seem to be a sufficient number !

Marreau You are saying there were *two* shots, how do you know ? There was an unused cartridge in the lower barrel.

Gwend Precisely, but if you had looked down the barrels you would have seen that they had identical powder residues - they had both been recently fired.

Marreau So why was there an unused cartridge still in the gun ?

Gwend Because the murderer had reloaded the gun to make it look like suicide. I doubt Parkhurst would have been able to reload it !

Marreau Sacre bleu ! Sometimes you can be quite useful, Gwendolyn.

Gwend Just now and then, Marreau.

[Simpson enters]

Simpson All sewn up then is it Marreau ?

Marreau No, my dear friend, the knitting has only just begun.

Simpson So Parkhurst didn't do it ?

Marreau I have just deduced that Parkhurst was murdered.

Gwend *You've* just deduced it ?

Marreau Erm - with a little help from Gwendolyn.

[Rose enters]

Rose Excusing me, but there's a man at the door says that he's policeman - I can't say as he looks like a policeman to me, but that's what he says he is. I mean policeman have dark suits and helmets - and this one

Gwend Alright Rose, thank-you; he'll be a plain-clothed detective - show him in.

Rose Just as you say madam, but don't be surprised if I turn out to be right and he's only pretending to be a policeman.

Gwend We will bear it in mind, Rose - now go and let him in.

Rose Right-you-are. [Exit]

Marreau I'm glad they've sent a detective - do you remember that bumbling idiot who came to Lady Eustace's.

Gwend [Laughs] Sgt. Farmer - there can't be another one like him.

Simpson Oh, I thought he was quite bright !

[Rose re-enters]

Rose Inspector Farmer.

[Ranulph Exits] [Farmer enters]

Farmer By 'eck if it ain't Mr. Marreau again !

Marreau Oh, *nom d'un nom* !!

Farmer So what's this I's been hearin' 'bout a couple o' murders then ?

Simpson Three now !

Farmer Three murders ! By 'eck, Little Snodsbury's not 'ad one afore, not in all the time I' been 'ere.
Gwend Just how long have you been here, Sergeant ?
Farmer Inspector now, miss.
Gwend Sorry - *Inspector*.
Farmer Oh, I've been here 'bout six weeks now !
Simpson I say, congratulations on you promotion.
Farmer Well after that 'amster business, they made me up to Inspector and moved me out 'ere. So I s'pose I've got you to thank Mr. Marreau.
Marreau Don't mention it, Inspector.
Farmer Well, who's been doin' these-'ere murders then ?
Marreau I am still in the process of eliminating suspects.
Farmer Looks like someone's doin' that for you ! [*Chortles*]
Simpson I say, that was rather witty.
Gwendolyn & Marreau *Um.*
Gwend Are you going to inspect the bodies this time, Inspector ?
Farmer That depends.
Marreau What d'you mean, it depends ?
Farmer Well, how did these-here people die ?
Marreau His lordship was poisoned
Gwend Parkhurst was shot
Simpson And Ranulph was decapitated.
Farmer Decapitated [*sic*], what be that then ?
Gwend His head was knocked off !
Farmer By 'eck, we don't get many of them round 'ere. Well, I'll take a look at the poisoning, but I think I'll leave the other two for now, if it's all the same to you.
Gwend Oh good grief, I trust someone will be coming to remove the bodies.
Farmer Oh yes - I'm just the spearhead - as you might say.
Marreau [*Gesturing towards the door*] Well then Inspector, find Rose, and she will show you up to his lordship's room.
Farmer Right you are. [*Going to leave*] I hope this business don't take too long to clear up - I've got three lost cats to find ! [**Exit**]

Gwend [*Musing*] Funnily enough, Farmer just made an astute observation there !
Marreau You are of course joking my dear Gwendolyn.
Gwend No, he said someone was eliminating all the suspects for us.
Simpson Yes, if the murders carry on at this rate, it'll be easy Marreau, the murderer will be the only one still alive.
Marreau Do not be a doubting Simpson, Thomas, [*pause*] Thomas, Simpson, -- Marreau the Magnificent will solve this case before very long.
Gwend So with the field somewhat narrowed, who d'you think did it Marreau ?
Marreau My little red cells, they are formulating an idea
Gwend Go on then Marreau
Marreau I think there is really only one person who - how you say - fits the William.
Gwend Bill, Marreau - fits the bill.
Marreau Just so, and that person is the new Marquess Tubby of Penge.
Simpson Oh no, I can't see Tubby doing a thing like that.
Marreau I think that Monsieur Tubby was eager for the title, but could not afford the death duties and so he stole the jewels, then he killed his father.
Gwend But why kill Ranulph and Parkhurst.
Simpson Well I wouldn't blame anyone killing Ranulph !
Marreau Indeed, and suppose Parkhurst helped him open the safe, and then started blackmailing him.
Gwend Of course, I think you're onto something there, Marreau - I don't know whether you're right about the Marquess, but that definitely makes sense of Parkhurst's murder.
Marreau Well - if it is not Monsieur Tubby - who else could it be ? [*Pause*]
[Intentionally] How you say - "Tubby or not Tubby that is the question !"
Gwend Very droll, Marreau. How about Havelock ?
Marreau Ah, you are thinking the butler did it.
Gwend Well he'd have been strong enough to break the door down, and I would say he is cool and cunning enough to have carried out the murders.

Marreau That's very true, but what motive could he have for the murders ?
Gwend Yes, that *is* the problem. Let's have another word with him. Ring for him would you Marreau.
Marreau Very well my dear. [*Pulls bellcord*]

[**Theresa enters**]

Theresa [*Still somewhat distressed*] Ah, Monsieur Marreau, have you found out who killed poor daddy and Ranny yet ?
Marreau I believe we are nearing a conclusion.
Gwend While you're here, Lady Theresa, would you mind helping us with our investigations.
Theresa Of course I will, anything I can do to help.
Gwend I suppose you realise that your husband wasn't exactly popular.
Theresa Yes, I know; but he had a heart of gold really.
Gwend Um. Was there anyone in particular in this house that you would call his enemy.
Theresa I don't think Parkhurst was too fond of him !
Gwend No, but he's dead. Anyone else ?
Theresa Well, he loathed the countess and I think the feeling was mutual.
Marreau Indeed, why was this ?
Theresa I'm not sure, something years ago, in India.
Simpson Really - I remember Kitty was in India for a while, engaged to a chap called Smethurst, got himself killed in a skirmish. Perhaps she met Ranulph then.
Gwend Curiouser and curiouser.
Marreau How does the countess know your family ?
Theresa Oh, through the Hohenhausens. Daddy was vaguely related to the old count, Buffy.
[*Said quickly*] Fluffy was Buffy's son and Buffy was the brother of the mother of Fifi who was the niece of daddy's cousin, Beatie.
Marreau I see.
Theresa Yes, and when Fluffy went and topped himself, Catherine asked daddy to look after her estate - that's why he wanted to keep the burglary as quiet as possible - though I believe he sent a cable to somewhere in Germany telling them of the theft.
Gwend Ranulph wasn't too fond of Havelock either was he ?
Theresa No, that man has such a superior attitude - it used to infuriate Ranulph.
Marreau Indeed, not to mention the shifting eyes !

[**Havelock enters**]

Havelock You rang, sir ?
Theresa Shall I leave you ?
Gwend Yes, if you don't mind, thank-you for your time. [**Theresa exits**]
Ah, Havelock, when the countess arrived last night who put the jewels in the safe ?
Havelock His lordship did, he was the only person who knew the combination.
Gwend Did the countess go straight to bed then ?
Havelock Well not directly - she made rather a lot of fuss over some flies.
Marreau Flies ?
Havelock Yes sir, flies - she said they were bothering her and she wouldn't be able to get to sleep.
Simpson Yes, dashed nuisance flies can be. Not as bad as mosquitoes though - I remember once in Tangiers
Gwend Yes, Simpson, very interesting. So what was done about the flies ?
Havelock Well as far as I could see there were only a couple of them buzzing around the light but the countess insisted I festooned the place with fly-paper.
Marreau And did you do this ?
Havelock Indeed sir, it is hardly my place to argue with a countess !
Marreau Quite so, but when I investigated the scene of the burglary there was none of this flying-paper about then.
Havelock No sir, it's such offensive sticky stuff, I took it down and put it in the waste-paper basket.
Simpson Yes, nasty stuff fly-paper - much better off with a mosquito net ! Stops you getting Malaria and things like that !
Havelock Just so, Mr. Simpson, Captain Ranulph always used to sleep under a mosquito net - [*slight pause*] even in Luton !

Simpson Can't be too careful with Malaria.
Gwend Marreau, I've got it !
Marreau You have Malaria, Gwendolyn ?!
Simpson Gosh, have you Gwendolyn ? - That's dashed bad luck !
Gwend No, no, no. Not Malaria - *It* !!!
Marreau And what is *it* ?
Gwend The answer Marreau - I know who's responsible !
Marreau Really ! [*Pause*] Of course I was about to say I knew who'd done it too.
Gwend And why they did it ?
Marreau Well, yes of course.
Gwend Right-oh Marreau. Denouement time ! Havelock will you assemble everyone.
Havelock [*Sounds somewhat concerned*] Very good madam - do you really know who's done it ?
Gwend Absolutely, Havelock, there are however a few more questions I need to ask.

[[**Blackout**]]

Act II Scene 3 * Denouement

Scene - the same.

Everyone is assembled.

Marreau is about to hold court (with Gwendolyn's assistance)

Marreau Murder ! Murder most foul - has been committed here not once, not twice, but three times ! First of all, kindly old Lord Smedling is poisoned.

[**Theresa and MrsJohnson** sob]

Then Captain Ranulph is dispatched in a most horrible fashion. [*Theresa sobs loudly*]

And finally poor Parkhurst is shot. [*Theresa & MrsJohnson both wail surprisingly dramatically*]

Countess Don't forget my jewels !

Gwend Do not worry countess - We have not forgotten about your jewels ! [*Slight pause*] Shall I start the ball rolling, Marreau ?

Marreau Indeed my dear, and we have quite a lot of balls don't we Gwendolyn.

Gwend You could say that Marreau. [*Slight pause*] Havelock - shortly after the burglary I believe that his late lordship sent a cable to Germany.

Havelock That is correct.

Gwend Can you tell us where that cable was sent ?

Havelock It was to Schönberg and Blüther in Leipzig.

Gwend Thank-you.: Mrs Johnson, what did his lordship have to eat and drink today.

MrsJohnson Well, he had a couple of nice little kippers this morning for breakfast, and then all he had before 'e died was two cups of tea. [*sniffles*]

Gwend And who took the tea up to him ?

MrsJohnson [*sniffing*] Rose did both times. You're not saying as I poisoned him are you ? I loved his lordship - I'd never do anything to harm 'im.

Marreau No, Mrs Johnson, we do not suspect you.

MrsJohnson Well I'm glad about that, I hope your trots are better, Mr. Marreau !

Marreau Trots, trots ? What are these trots ?

Gwend Never mind, Marreau, I'll explain it to you later - just smile and nod for now ! [*Pause*] Now, Rose

Rose Now hold on here, you're not supposin' that I might a' done anything are you ? A good Catholic girl like me.

Gwend Um, I'll reserve judgement on that !

Rose Whatever do you mean ?

Gwend Never mind - Did you actually take the tea into his lordship ?

Rose Er - no. Lady Theresa took it off me at the door.

Gwend [*Surprised*] Lady Theresa ?

Rose Yes, she and the Viscount were just going in to see his lordship.

Gwend Thank-you Rose.

Marreau Who had most to gain from his lordship's death ? Only two people are mentioned in the will. Viscount - now Marquess - Alexander and Lady Theresa.

Alexander [*Jumping up*] Now hold on a moment:

Marreau No, Marquess Tubby - you hold on. I was about to say that apart from the title and the house there is precious little else to inherit - and so very little motive.

Alexander [*Sitting down again*] Ah, I see. Sorry.

Marreau However, due to the crippling death duties that would ensue from the death of his lordship then you certainly have a motive for stealing the jewels.

Alexander Make your mind up Marreau, do you suspect me or not ?

Marreau Yes, Marquess Tubby - I do suspect you !

Alexander [*Jumping up again*] What !!! This is preposterous

Gwend *Marreau ! [Legs it over to Marreau, whispers in his ear]*

Marreau No, Marquess Tubby - I do not suspect you !

Alexander Oh, Good. Alright then. [*Sits down again*]

Marreau Just my little joke !
Alexander Highly amusing I'm sure !
Marreau The question is - who else needed money and had motive to - how you say - bump off his lordship, Ranulph and Parkhurst ?
Simpson Gosh this is exciting isn't it ?
Gwend Rose, did anyone else go in to see his lordship ?
Havelock I may be able to help here. After the Viscount and Lady Theresa had seen his lordship I went in to inform him that the countess wished to talk over her affairs with him.
Marreau The countess was having an affair with his lordship ?!
Countess Don't be ridiculous !
Havelock You misunderstand sir, business affairs, not *affaires-de-coeur*
Marreau Ah, sorry - I understand - Havelock, I'm sure you would find a million pounds very useful.
Havelock On the contrary sir, I would find a million pounds acutely embarrassing. I think the police might become a little suspicious of a butler who can suddenly afford to buy several castles in Scotland.
Mrs.Johnson You tell'em George.
Gwend Quite right Havelock, however a countess would not be in quite the same predicament would she ?
Countess Are you accusing me of stealing my own jewels ?
Marreau & Gwend [*Simultaneously*] Yes,
Gwend Actually we are !!!
All: What !
Simpson I say ! You don't think little Kitty could have done all this !!!
Countess But that's ridiculous they're not even insured.
Marreau They are not insured in Britain it is true, however I think we will find that Schönberg and Blüther are at this moment contemplating their biggest ever claim.
Countess Damn !
Simpson Kitty !!!
Countess Oh shut-up Simpson !
Simpson Oh, I say !
Countess Alright, I admit the jewels are insured, but you cannot prove I stole them, and I trust you're not accusing me of the murders.
Marreau Yes countess, I'm afraid we are.
Countess But this is preposterous.
Marreau His lordship was the only person who knew that the jewels were insured, and for this reason you felt that you must get rid of him.
Countess Ridiculous.
Gwend You asked Havelock to bring you several strips of fly-paper to get rid of non-existent flies - knowing that fly-paper contains arsenic - the poison that killed Lord Smedling !
Alexander Good heavens !!!
Simpson I say, Kitty -

[**Countess makes a run for it**]

Gwend Grab her Simpson
Simpson Right-ho. [*Simpson & Alexander restrain her*]
Gwend As for why you killed Ranulph - that was vengeance. Ranulph had been in charge of the unit in which your fiancé, Lieutenant Smethurst was killed.
Countess How on earth did you know that.

[**Door bell rings, Havelock exits**]

Marreau And finally - am I right in thinking that you had paid Parkhurst to take the safe, and when he started blackmailing you, you shot him.
Countess You'll never take me alive ! [*Produces gun*]
Gwend Stop her Simpson !
 [*Simpson scuffles with The Countess, the gun goes off into the air. He disarms her*]

[*Production Note: If a blank-firing gun is unavailable, a dagger may be substituted]

Simpson One thing Kitty, why did you stage the robbery, why not just sell some of the jewels ?

Countess Hah ! You think you're so clever don't you - but you missed one important thing - the jewels were fakes - made of paste - I'd sold the real ones secretly years ago.

[**Havelock enters**]

Havelock Inspector Farmer is here again.

Marreau Good, show him in.

[**Farmer enters**]

Marreau Once again, Marreau the Magnificent has solved your case for you, Inspector.

Farmer Well that's very nice of you, thank-you Mr. Marreau.

Marreau Arrest that lady there on three counts of murder !

Farmer Well I'll be an overgrown turnip ! You mean the countess here did it !

***** These lines may be omitted or modified if Rose could not pass for a young boy *****

Gwend Quite so, and Inspector I have one more little surprise for you ! - Rose.

Rose Now what is it you're wanting me for ?

Gwend About you being a "*good Catholic girl*"

Rose Well who's been saying I'm not ?

Gwend Not unless you've changed your temperament, faith and sex, [*pause*] Jimmy !

Rose [*Removes own wig*] Alright I'll come quietly.

Farmer Why if it's not that Little Jimmy - again !

Marreau You cannot fool Marreau the Magnificent !!!

[[**Blackout**]][Curtain]

Marreau returns in : *Marreau and the Curse of Cardiff*