

Marreau and the Sword of Carthage

A detective comedy in two acts by Rob Farrow

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The fifth Marreau adventure 2nd Edition. (as performed) Production Format.

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Hertfordshire.**

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Dramatis Personae

Hemlock Marreau	The famous continental detective
Simpson	His friend
Gwendolyn	His former assistant
Herbert "New" Mexico Smith	Her husband of a few months
Havelock	The Smith's butler
Mrs. Scrimp	Their Housekeeper / Cook
George "Bunny" Hopper	A mutual friend of New Mexico Smith & Simpson
Holly Jenkins	Friend of Bunny Hopper
Polly Cartwright	Friend of Bunny Hopper
Dolly Tindle	Friend of Bunny Hopper
Gerald Harris	An acquaintance of New Mexico Smith
Victor Pemberton	An acquaintance of New Mexico Smith
Deirdre Pemberton	Victor's wife
HRH The Prince of Wales	The future Edward VIII
Dr. Protheroe	The ubiquitous doctor
Inspector Lewis	A detective - (doubled part)
Chief Constable Farmer	The former Chief Superintendent

Act I Scene 1

As per all previous *Marreau* plays: settee, 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.]

Simpson [*Excited*] Great tits !

Marreau *Comment ?*

Simpson Out there in the garden.

[*Marreau hastens to window*]

Marreau [*Peers out of window, pause*] You are imagining things my friend.

Simpson Look; there on the bird table

Marreau Aha ! The little flapping things - and those smaller ones they are the *Bleu* tits, *oui ?*

Simpson Quite right Marreau.

Marreau They have a very pleasant garden here, have they not, Simpson.

Simpson Yes, it's a nice little place altogether really.

Marreau I do not see how you can refer to a fourteen bedroom mansion set in twenty-two acres as a "nice little place"

Simpson Urm, no, I suppose not - but compared to

[*Gwendolyn enters*]

Gwend [*Friendly*] Making yourselves at home ?

Marreau Indeed, my dear, I am so pleased you invited us.

Simpson Yes ! We were just admiring your great - erm - birdlife - in the garden.

Gwend I'm so pleased you could come up - I must admit I do rather miss investigating cases with you ...

Marreau The feeling, my dear, is mutual.

Simpson I'd say - things just aren't the same without you around, Gwenders.

Gwend Gwenders ! [*Laughs*] I haven't been called Gwenders for ages !

Simpson What does Mexi call you then ?

Gwend [*Rather coldly*] That would be telling

[*Mexi enters*]

Mexi Marreau ! Simmo ! Nice to see you ! Gwendy-poos been looking after you alright ?

[*Gwend looks embarrassed, Simpson laughs*]

Marreau Ah, Monsieur Mexi - we were just saying what a charming place you have here.

Mexi Not a bad little-ole homestead - we've got more rooms than we know what to do with.

We've even got a goddam ballroom whatever that's for !

Marreau Er - One holds one's balls in there - or so I believe.

Mexi Really - well I must say you English think of everything !

Marreau I trust you are not including me as one of these "English"

Mexi [*Laughs*] Of course you're French aren't you Marreau ?

Marreau Andorran actually.

Simpson What ?

Gwend Have you been looking at the atlas again Marreau ?

Marreau I do not know what you mean Gwendolyn - I have always been Andorran.

Gwend I thought they spoke Catalan or Basque in Andorra, Marreau.

Marreau Do not be ridiculous my dear

Simpson No, Gwenders; I think you'll find they *wear* basques - it's their National Costume; I think.

Gwend [*Sarcastically*] Of course, silly of me. I'd forgotten that one has to suspend any connection with reality when talking to you two -

Mexi [*Confused*] Surely the men don't wear them too

[Havelock (Havelock) enters]

Havelock Begging your pardons - but Mrs. Scrimp would like to know how many there will be for dinner.

Marreau *Mon Dieu !* Havelock - is it not ?

Havelock Indeed, sir - you have identified me correctly.

Marreau What on earth are you doing here ?

Havelock You recall no doubt, sir, the unfortunate occurrences appertaining to the embezzlement of the African Moon and subsequent heinous homicidal activities...

Marreau Of course ...

Havelock The corollary of which was the inheritance of the Marquessate by his lordship Edward, more commonly known by the soubriquet "Tubby"

Simpson Gosh yes - How is old Tubby ?

Havelock To the best of my knowledge his lordship continues in the effulgent health granted to him by his ferruginous if rather bucolic constitution.

Marreau He has the colic ?

Havelock No sir, *Bucolic* not *the* colic -

Marreau *Sacre Bleu !* He has the Bucolic Plague ?

Havelock You misunderstand sir

Gwend Bucolic, Marreau - it means pastoral - you know - like sheep.

Marreau Like sheep ? His lordship is turning into a sheep ?

Simpson Well he always was a bit woolly ! Ha-ha !

Havelock Suffice it to say his lordship was very well - when I left his employ.

Marreau And why was it that you decided to leave ?

Havelock As I was attempting to explain - On the assumption of the present incumbent to the Marquessate the prevailing ambience of the household insidiously degenerated to a state of egregiousness I was unable to countenance. My position therefore being untenable, I reluctantly and with considerable precogitation tendered my resignation.

Marreau I see.

Gwend And we snapped him up.

Mexi Yes, Gwendy-poo said as what a wunnerful butler he was, and as how we needed someone to buttle for us so I hired him on the spot - did'n'I Havvo.

Havelock [Dignified pause] With respect sir, and notwithstanding the difficulties that you as an American must experience when attempting to formulate discourse in the English vernacular; I would be most grateful if you refrained from alluding to my appointment in this household as being "Hired". It does so put one in mind of a fancy dress costume or of a Hackney Carriage ! Neither of which do I feel I resemble in any way !

Mexi He really is priceless isn't he.

Marreau I suppose so.

Gwend You wanted to know how many for dinner didn't you Havelock ?

Havelock Indeed Madam, that was the original purpose of my interjection.

Gwend Just who you can see - four of us.

Havelock And Mr. Harris ? He will not be dining with you ?

Gwend Harris ?

Mexi Oh. I'd forgotten about him.

Gwend Not that revolting man we met in Eastbourne.

Mexi Sorry, darling - I'd clean forgot that I'd invited him.

Gwend What in heaven's name possessed you to invite that odious man ?

Havelock So it will be five for dinner.

Gwend I suppose so.

Mexi Um, no - I'm afraid it will be seven !

Gwend [*Furious*] What ! Which other of your slimy friends is to descend upon us now Herbert ?

Simpson Herbert ? Who's Herbert ?

Mexi [*To Simpson*] I am - but I must be in the dog-house if she's calling me it.

Gwend Too right you're in the dog house - I have been looking forward to this weekend with my friends for ages - and now we're going to have your pestilential pals for company as well - so come-on who are the other two ?

Havelock Excuse me - I shall retire and return at a more propitious moment.
[*Exits*]

Mexi Um [*Very cautiously*] Old Pemby and his wife.

Gwend Pemby ? PEMBY !!! Do you mean Victor Pemberton ? You do don't you ?

Mexi Urm

Gwend I said I never wanted to be in the same county as that man again - and you've invited him to this house ?

Mexi Oh, come on Gwendy-poos - he's not that bad.

Gwend Not that bad !

Simpson I say - Victor Pemberton - he's not the chap who was had up for shipping slaves a few months back is he ?

Mexi Well yes he did do that

Gwend And he flogged one of his workers senseless for reading *The Daily Mirror*.

Mexi Well you know what he thinks of socialists.

Marreau I must say he does not sound a very pleasant person.
[*Simpson peers out of the window*]

Gwend That, Marreau, is the understatement of the millenium - pleasant he most certainly isn't - a person - well that's open to debate.

Marreau Come, come, Gwendolyn - we have met some pretty unpleasant people in our time - surely he is no worse than some of them - Raging Ranulph for example ?

Gwend The late unlamented Ranulph Smith was a pussy-cat of unusual fluffiness compared to this incarnation of miasma !

Mexi He won't be here till later. I'll keep him out of your way as much as possible.

Simpson I say, there's rather a smashing Bugatti just turned up.

Mexi Yikes !!!

Gwend A Bugatti ? I wouldn't have thought that that oik Harris could run to a Bugatti.

Simpson I know that chap !

Gwend You know Harris, Simpson ?

Simpson No - the chap clambering out of the Bugatti - that's not Harris - it's old Bunny - Bunny Hopper - what's he doing here ?

Mexi I didn't think he'd come this weekend ! [*Going over to window*]

Gwend Oh no ! Not more !

Simpson Oh Gosh - he's got Holly and Polly with him. - And who's that getting out of the boot ?

Mexi Looks like Dolly Tindle.
[*Marreau goes to window*]

Marreau [*To himself*] Dolly Tindle ! [*Over to window*] Mon Dieu ! *Dolly !* Excuse me a moment I must get something from my luggage. [*Exits quite rapidly*]

Gwend Holly, Polly and Dolly - wonderful - collective brain power of a stick insect no doubt.

Simpson Oh I don't know - Polly Cartwright's quite bright really.

Gwend Well I can't say that I've had the dubious pleasure of having met any of them before but if they're anything like Mexi's other friends then they'll be as entertaining as a dose of typhoid.

Mexi Honestly dearest, I didn't expect them to all turn up this weekend.

Gwend Well may I suggest that you look after your friends - and I'll entertain mine - preferably at opposite ends of the house.

[*An irate Mrs. Scrimp enters*]

MrsScrimp [*Sharply*] Excusing me !

Mexi Yes, Mrs. Scrimp ?

MrsScrimp There appears to be a charabanc full of persons outside - are you expecting me to feed them all ?

Mexi Hardly a charabanc, Mrs. Scrimp, it's only a car-load.

MrsScrimp Dinner for four I was told - then five - then seven - now it looks like (h)eleven. I'm not a# magician you know - can't just produce food from nowhere you know - It needs preparation

Mexi I realise that you

MrsScrimp Lots of preparation - you don't realise 'ow 'ard my job is - getting food ready just at the right time and ev'rythink. Takes skill - a(n h)artist that's what I am - a(n h)artist with food

Mexi Of course you are Mrs. Scrimp

MrsScrimp and a(n h)artist needs to know what she's been asked to do. Can't just go magicking food up from nowhere - oh no - takes time doesn't it.

Gwend I'm sure you'll do us proud Mrs. Scrimp.

MrsScrimp It's all very well saying I'll do you proud, but *I* won't be proud - it won't be a proper meal ... not dinner for four spread between (h)eleven - and I'd gone and got Mr. Havelock to get a Swan in specially.

All: SWAN !!!

Mexi We're having Swan ?

Simpson I thought all Swans were the property of the King.

MrsScrimp Most of 'em are - but a few belong to the Worshipful Company of Dyers.

Simpson I don't see how

MrsScrimp One of Mr. Havelock's connections ... he got it for us.

Mexi Well surely a Swan can be stretched to provide enough for eleven people.

MrsScrimp It's alright you saying stretch it - but there's a lot of waste on a Swan - loads of feathers - looked like a snowstorm when I got Millie to pluck it.

Simpson I can imagine

MrsScrimp Course Millie's not exactly a(n h)expert when it comes to pluckin' - specially not Swans - "What's this ?" she said "Bloody big duck this is" she said - Well me and Mr. Havelock we didn't 'arf laarf - laarf and laarf we did

Gwend Yes well, Mrs. Scrimp - do what you can, will you ?

MrsScrimp [*Going to leave*] If you say so madam - but don't blame me if someone just ends up with a bit of beak [*Exit*]

Gwend [*To NMS*] So long as it's Pemberton who gets it I won't mind a bit !

Mexi Sorry about all that - didn't mean to mess up your weekend, dearest.

Gwend I suppose I'll forgive you - [*slight pause*] - given a couple of years.

Simpson Don't worry about us Gwenders - we'll make the most of it.

[Bunny Hopper enters]

Bunny Mexi !!!

Mexi [*Downbeat*] Hello George.

Simpson What-oh, Bunny !

Bunny [*Going over to Simpson*] Well if it's not my old mate Simmo ! Seen my latest toy ?

Simpson Holly, Polly or Dolly ?

Bunny [*Laughs*] No - the Bugatti.

Simpson Oh right - yes, very nice.

Mexi You've not met my wife, have you George.

Gwend [*Coming forward, cooly*] You have now.

Bunny So you're the one that snared old Mexi - pleased to meet you - don't go giving the girls any tips will you - ha, ha.

Gwend [*Aside*] Would that I were so cruel ! [*To Bunny*] What exactly have you done with your entourage ?

Bunny Oh, they're powdering their noses or some such - I'm sure they'll be in in a moment.

Gwend [*Flat as a pancake*] I can scarcely contain my excitement. - Where's Marreau gone ?

Simpson He said he needed to get something out of his luggage.

Gwend Strange. Oh well never mind.

[Havelock re-enters]

Havelock Mr. Simpson, there is a telephone call for you - I think it may be rather important.

Simpson Oh, right [*Exit*]

Gwend Not bad news is it, Havelock.

Havelock I do not think so madam.

Mexi So what's so important.

Havelock Ahem - The call was from His Royal Highness Prince Edward, I believe he would like to come to dinner !

All: WHAT !!!

Bunny Do you mean Prince Edward - as in The Prince of Wales ?

Havelock To the best of my knowledge that is the only Prince Edward currently in circulation - so to speak.

Mexi You're kidding.

Havelock I rarely "kid", as you refer to it, sir - and I assure you that in this instance I most certainly am not - [*dignified pause*] "kidding"

Mexi Well thwack my saddle-straps - fancy a real live royal coming to visit us ! You wait till I tell my pappy about this one !

Gwend I wish you wouldn't refer to your father as "pappy", it's so - well - American !

Mexi But I am American, Gwendy-poos; no point tryin' to change that !

Gwend If only I could --- anyway there must be some mistake - someone having a joke at our expense.

Havelock I think not madam. After all Major Simpson is

[Simpson *re-enters*]

Simpson [*Cuts across Havelock*] Phew that was close.

Havelock [To Simpson] Twelve for dinner sir ?

Simpson [*Breezily*] No, no, no - managed to put him off - took some persuading though.

Gwend WHAT ! Who were you just talking to Simpson ?

Simpson David.

Gwend David ? Not The Prince of Wales then.

Simpson Yep, that's the one.

Gwend And he wanted to come *here* for dinner ?

Simpson That's right - but I told him we'd got a full house.

Gwend I don't believe it ! The Heir Apparent wants to come to *my* house and you tell him not to !

Mexi *Our* house, darling.

Simpson Have I done something wrong Gwenders ? I thought you didn't want any more guests.

Gwend Well I'm sure we can squeeze the future king in somewhere !!!

Simpson Oh, well I'll phone him back if you like.

Gwend [*Excited*] Yes, yes - go on - do it - do it !

Simpson Righty Ho [*Going to exit*]

Havelock Shall I procure a second swan madam.

Gwend Absolutely Havelock.

[Blackout] * End of Act I Scene 1

Act I Scene 2

The same.

Simpson is alone, peering out of the window. After a few moments the girls (Holly, Polly & Dolly) enter

Holly Simmy !!!
Simpson [*Jumps*] Holly ! Polly ! Dolly ! [*Slight pause*] Golly !
Dolly Bunny didn't tell us that *you* were here.
Simpson Well here I am !
Holly [*Gushing*] It's absolutely smashing to see you again Simmy.
Dolly [*Enthusiastic*] Wonderful.
Polly [*Sarcastic*] The highlight of my year !
Simpson Polly - how are you - I haven't seen you since gosh, when was it ?
Polly Four months ago - when you invited me to Henley then didn't turn up, actually.
Simpson [*Embarrassed*] Ah ! Oh Gosh ! Sorry !
Polly No need to apologize - I suppose I should thank you really - after all I bought a lovely new dress and shoes - they've looked wonderful in my wardrobe ever since.
Simpson Crikey, I am sorry ! Didn't you get the message ?
Polly Oh yes, I got the message alright !
Simpson So you know why I didn't make it
Polly Oh I see, I'm now expected to swallow some feeble excuse am I.
Simpson No - no - not at all. I'm totally at fault - I should have come round afterwards and explained - but when you didn't come and visit me, I assumed you were cross and didn't want anything more to do with me.
Polly Visit you ? What d'you mean visit you ? You weren't in prison were you ?
Simpson [*Laughs*] No, no - Ha ha - Prison - that's a wheeze.
Polly Nothing less than asthma I'd say - so what *do* you mean ?
Simpson I was in Hospital.
All: HOSPITAL !!!
Holly What was the matter Simmy ?
Dolly Oh, poor Simmy, were you ill
Simpson No, I wasn't ill exactly - just a few broken bits, that's all - I soon mended.
Polly [*Signs of thawing*] At the risk of being inveigled into a tissue of lies - how had you come to have "a few broken bits" may I ask ?
Simpson Well it was really silly, I'm afraid.
Polly A promising start, I'm beginning to believe it already.
Simpson It was all down to some little ducklings.
Dolly Ducklings ?
Simpson I was a bit late, coming to pick you up, Polly, so I was going pretty smartish in the Bentley when I came round a corner and there was this mother duck leading her little ones across the road
Holly Oh how sweet !
Simpson Precisely - so I swerved to miss them and went through a fence and down a bank. Next thing I knew I was waking up in hospital.
Holly Oh you poor thing.

Dolly Were you badly hurt ?
Simpson No not too bad - broken arm and a few cracked ribs - quite lucky really - poor Betsy didn't make it at all !
Polly Betsy ! And who may I ask is Betsy ?
Simpson My Bentley - been all over the place with me, she had. I was quite upset.
Polly [*Convinced*] I didn't know you were in hospital, Simon.
Simpson Oh dear, I asked Peter to explain to you what had happened.
Polly Peter ? Not Peter Fordham !
Simpson Yes - he was visiting his rather wealthy aunt in hospital when I was brought in - he promised me he'd go and see you.
Polly Oh yes, he came and saw me alright - didn't mention your accident though.
Simpson What ?
Polly Told me you'd stood me up - gone off with some floozy or other !
Simpson The cad !
Polly You can say that again ! I walked out with him for three months after that !
Simpson Great Scott ! The boulder ! I'll have his wotsits for this !
Polly Join the queue !

[*Mexi & Gwend enter*]

Mexi Keeping the girls happy, Simmo ?
Holly Poor Simmy, he's been telling us about his car crash.
Gwend Soft idiot - fancy swerving off the road for the sake of a few ducks !
Dolly Well I think it shows what a kind-hearted lovely person he is !
Holly Me too.
Gwend I suppose so - Where on earth has Marreau got to, Simpson, I haven't seen him for ages ?
Simpson Dashed if I know
Dolly Marreau ? Hemlock Marreau - the Monagasque detective ?
Gwend That'll be him - he really has been looking at the atlas !
Dolly Do you mean he's here in this house ?
Mexi Yes he's here somewhere; Why Dolly - do you know him ?
Dolly I should say so - I've got a few things to say to that particular gentleman.
Simpson What's old Marreau been up to then Dolly ?

[*Havelock enters*]

Havelock Excuse me, but there is a letter for you Mr. Smith, and it is marked urgent and important.
Mexi Well let's have a look Havelock.
Havelock Very good sir [*Hands the letter over*]
Mexi [*Opens letter, reads it quickly, turns it over to see if there is any more*]
[*Concerned*] Do you know who brought this ?
Havelock As you will notice sir, it bears no postmark, I therefore assume that it was delivered by hand, unfortunately however, I do not know by whom.
Mexi Darned strange sort of thing
Simpson What's it say then Mexi.
Mexi It just says "Beware the Sword of Carthage"
Simpson That's it ? Nothing else ?
Mexi Nope. That's all.

Gwend So what's the Sword of Carthage then ?

Mexi Darned if I know - I spent some time digging around in Tunisia, but I can't say I ever heard of any Sword of Carthage.

Gwend Well I can't see that a sword can do you a lot of harm - not without someone wielding it anyway.

Havelock Indeed sir, it is probably some form of hoax being perpetrated upon you.

Mexi But why ?

Havelock It has been my experience sir, that people do the most inexplicable things for the most peculiar of reasons - attempting to discover the intention which effected the action from the action alone is I believe impracticable from a philosophical viewpoint

Mexi Well that's tremendously helpful Havvo - go off and buttle would you.

Havelock Very good sir. *[Exits]*

Gwend No need to be quite so hard on poor old Havelock, Mex, he was only trying to help. Not rattled by this are you ?

Mexi *[He is]* No, no - 'course I'm not rattled - rattled ? Why should I be rattled ?

Holly Well I would be, if I got a letter like that.

Polly Well that's because, to be honest Holly, you're fairly pathetic when all's said and done !

Holly Oh Polly, how could you be so horrid.

Polly Quite easily actually - particularly at the moment - so I wouldn't start snivelling on if I were you or I might just cut you down to size with a bit of well-aimed sarcasm.

Holly It's not my fault if you were duped by Fordham - shows you're not as clever as you think you are.

Polly At least I have the capacity to think - something which seems to have been omitted from your repertoire.

Holly I don't know what you mean.

Polly Precisely.

Holly *[Tearful]* I'm going to my room. *[Flounces out]*

Simpson I do like Polly when she's annoyed !

Gwend *[To Polly]* Yes I must say you make a pleasant change from most of the insipid creatures that pass for friends of Mexi's !

Polly And don't you start patronising me either !

Gwend I wouldn't dream of it.

[There is a yapping noise - a small dog barking][Mexi starts to shake]

Dolly There's no need to bite ev'ryone's heads off, Poll. You know how touchy Holly is.

Polly Oh heck ! I suppose I'd better go and apologize to the silly little minx or she'll be blubbing up there all weekend. *[Exits]*

[Mexi is now shaking violently]

Gwend Whatever's the matter, Mex ? You look dreadful !

Mexi Can't you hear it ?

Gwend What ?

Mexi The damned dog !

Gwend Well yes - but

Mexi It's a terrier !

Simpson I think you're right there, Mexi - one of my cousins has got a Westy - sweet little thing it is - sounds just like that !

Mexi Don't you understand ! It's a dammed terrier !

Gwend Oh come on, Mexi - New Mexico Smith, hero of countless lunatic forrays into parts of the world most people can't even spell - is surely not frightened of a little yapping pooch ?

Mexi It's the terrier of the Smiths ! It's yapping foretells the demise of one of our family in sudden, horrible and highly improbable circumstances !

Dolly Sounds pretty silly to me !

Mexi Silly ! That's what my grandfather thought - within the hour he was trampled to death by a rampaging elephant.

Gwend Well if your half-baked family will insist on visiting such ridiculous places

Mexi But this was on 23rd street in New York !

All: What ?

Mexi It was an escaped circus elephant. [*Slight pause*] Then there was my Uncle Tom

Gwend Nothing involving cabins, I trust.

Mexi Well, sort of - He went to the toilet - lit up a cigarette - and boom - build up of methane gas they said.

Simpson Nasty ! But it must have been a coincidence

Mexi And now *I've* heard it ! [*Melodramatically*] I'm doomed !

Gwend Don't be daft ! It was probably just somebody's pet being taken for a walk.

Simpson Yes, come on Mexi, you must have heard a little terrier yapping before, haven't you ?

Mexi Well yes ...

Simpson And you didn't die on those occasions - [*slight pause*] - did you ?

Mexi [*Somewhat appeased*] Urm - no.

Simpson Well there you are then.

Mexi [*Virtually Reassured*] I suppose so.

[*Havelock re-enters*]

Havelock [*Disapproving*] The Pembertons and Mr. Harris have arrived - where precisely would you like me put them ?

Gwend You'd better ask Mr. Smith, Havelock - if you were to carry out my instructions you'd probably be arrested.

Mexi Oh - stick Pemby and his wife in the Green Room and Harris can have that little room in the East Wing.

Havelock Very good sir. [*Goes towards exit*]

Gwend Oh, Havelock

Havelock [*Stops, turns*] Yes, madam.

Gwend Have they by any chance brought a dog with them ?

Havelock Indeed madam, I fear I did observe a small animal.

Gwend There you go, Mexi, all explained - happy now ?

Mexi [*Grumpily, feeling foolish*] I suppose so.

Dolly What sort of dog is it, Havelock ?

Havelock I did not enquire, miss - neither have I made sufficient study of the canine species to unequivocally identify the breed - however I believe I overheard Mrs. Pemberton referring to the creature as "Tiddles" if that is of any help.

Gwend Tiddles ? What sort of person calls their pet "Tiddles" for Heaven's sake ?

Simpson Urm - I used to have a little cat called "Tiddles"
 Gwend I rest my case.
 Havelock If there is nothing further you require of me - I will continue with the arrangements concomitant with the arrival of His Royal Highness

Gwend Yes, yes Havelock - don't let us delay you. [Havelock exits]
 Dolly I think "Tiddles" is a sweet little name.
 Gwend Provided it doesn't live up to its name, I don't really care !

[There is a kerfuffle outside]

Havelock [O/stage] [Loud] I will introduce you, sir.
 Victor [O/stage] [Louder] Get out of my way you impudent serf !
 Mexi Sounds like Pemby's coming in.
 Havelock [At door] Mr. & Mrs. Pemb... [Cut off by Victor pushing past]
 Victor Smith ! Get your officious lacky off my back or I'll beat his brains out with my shooting stick !
 Mexi That will be all Havelock - thank-you.
 Havelock As you command, sir [Exits]

[Victor enters with Deirdre , making a passing threatening gesture to Havelock]
 [Deirdre cowers throughout]

Victor "Thank-you" ! "Thank-you" ! You don't say "Thank-you" to your vassals, do you Smith ? - thin end of the wedge that is - oh yes - start saying "Thank-you" and you'll be saying "Please" next -

Mexi Nothing wrong with a bit of civility, Pemby.
 Victor Nothing wrong ! What ! There's everything wrong ! You're a fool you are - having servants - and I bet you pay them !
 Mexi It is customary.
 Victor Sack 'em ! Get rid of 'em. That's what I say - get yourself some slaves. Much cheaper. No pay - work 'em till they drop - and just a bit of bread and water. Keeps 'em keen that does ! Do yourself a favour - I can get you some if you want.
 Mexi No its quite alright

Victor Got a few left over from the last shipment - you can have 'em cheap - just say the word and I'll have 'em marched over here fast as you can say "whipping"
 Gwend This is unbelievable ! Slavery's been illegal for years ! You can't seriously be advocating its re-introduction !
 Victor [Stares at Gwend] [After a pause] That's a woman isn't it, Smith ?
 Mexi Gwendolyn, my wife, Pemby - You have met before.
 Victor But she spoke, Smith - without being told to !
 Gwend What ! This my house ! I'll speak whenever

Victor She's doing it again Smith ! You don't speak till you're told to - do you wife ?
 Deirdre [Quietly] No sir.
 Victor What was that ? We didn't hear you. Speak up woman.
 Deirdre [Louder] No sir.
 Victor Quite right. Show 'em where their place is - put 'em there - and keep 'em there.
 Dolly Is this some kind of sick joke ?
 Victor Good God ! There's another one !

Simpson It is a free country, Pemberton, women are allowed to have opinions.
Dolly Thank-you Simmy.
Victor Opinions ! Don't be absurd, man !
Simpson They *have* been given the vote, you know.
Victor [*On the point of explosion*] Just because some libertarian socialist homosexuals [*twitches a few times*] said that they can vote - doesn't mean that they can have opinions as well ! Hell and damnation - what sort of a world would it be if women had opinions ! Good God, go down that particular slope and before you know it the Prime Minister will be a woman.
Simpson [*Laughing*] I think you're going a bit far there, Pemberton - I can't imagine any country electing a female Prime Minister - especially not this one.
Gwend Whyever not, Simpson ?
Simpson Well - it would be - well - silly, really.
Gwend Good grief - you're nearly as bad as him aren't you Simpson ?
Simpson Er - no - I - er
Mexi [*Changing subject*] Is your room alright, Mrs. Pemberton ?
Victor It'll do won't it, woman.
Deirdre Yes, yes it's fine - I like the wall-paper particularly - lovely shade of green - I thought about having one of our bedrooms decorated (in the same colour)
Victor Alright woman, no need to drivel on like a leaking tap - "Yes" would have been quite sufficient.
Gwend [*To victor*] Oh shut up you unutterable bully.
Victor What !!! Are you going to let her talk to me like that, Smith ?
Mexi Urm - Well, yes, I suppose I am really -
Victor Haven't you got a backbone, man ?
Mexi Tell you what, Victor - why don't you and I go and find Harris - get out of the ladies' hair for a bit.
Victor Yes - I suppose we could - Dierdre, go to our room and unpack the bags !
Mexi Havelock will get that done for you, if you ask him.
Victor I'm not having some filthy scullion touching my belongings

Mexi As you wish ...
Deirdre If it's alright with you, I'll stay here, thank-you.
Victor No it's not alright with me - that woman will probably turn you into a socialist or something.
Deirdre But
Victor [*Fuming*] You're not arguing with me are you, woman ? Go to the room !
Deirdre [*Close to tears*] Yes, yes, alright [*Runs out*]
Gwend You really are the most misogynistic sadist in the history of the world, aren't you Pemberton.
Victor Quite possibly - I hope so anyway - come on then Smith
Gwend Don't forget who's coming to dinner Mexi - for Pity's sake make yourself a bit more presentable
Mexi Oh, what ? Oh right yes - I suppose I'd better - um - yes - see you later then.

[*Exits with victor*]

Gwend My God, how can she put with him ?
Dolly I'd've killed him by now.

Gwend You and me both.
Simpson I must say he is a bit of a bully. Not very nice at all.
Dolly [*Petting Simpson*] Not like you - ay - Simmy.
Simpson What ? Oh, I see - gosh - thanks - ha ha.
Gwend So Dolly, now that there's just the three of us, what exactly is your beef with old Marreau ?
Dolly Sorry ? Oh - that. Nothing really.
Gwend It must be something for him to have disappeared like he has
Dolly I think until I've had a chance to speak to him, that it should remain between the two of us.
Simpson Oh come on Dolly, spill the beans - what's he been up to.
Gwend You can tell us - we'll keep it to ourselves, won't we Simpson.
Simpson Yes, yes - of course we will.
Dolly Oh very well, I suppose I may as well tell you. It was about four months ago, just after Marreau had solved some problem at a merchant bank
Simpson Framell & Priggs ?
Dolly That's the one

Gwend Oh yes, I must thank Hemlock when I see him for helping Georgina

Dolly [*Petulant*] Do you want to hear this story or not ?
Gwend Sorry dear, do go on.
Dolly Thank you - well he took a holiday in Suffolk

Simpson That's right - that's when I had my crash

Dolly Will you stop interrupting !
Simpson Sorry Doll-dolls
Gwend Ee-yughk ! Not Doll-dolls ! My stomach can only stand so much, Simpson.
Dolly That's it ! If you're not going to listen, I won't bother telling you !
Gwend No, no, shut up Simpson let "Doll-dolls" tell her tale
Dolly Right, well I met him at a dance being hosted by Lady Barningham

Simpson Gosh I know her - bit of a

[*Withering look from Dolly*]

Simpson Sorry Dolls

Dolly and anyway we got on rather well, I thought he was charming - he told me all about his adventures with hamsters and walking mummies and one about a missing sausage

Simpson He loves trotting that one out !
Gwend So it would seem
Dolly and he invited me out the next day [pause]
Simpson & Gwend [*Together, expectantly*] Yes
Dolly We went out for a picnic - a lovely day it was - sun shining, cows mooing, birds twittering, wind rustling gently through the canopy of the trees

Gwend Alright - enough of the poetic scene setting - get to the nitty gritty !
Dolly He went back to his car for a second bottle of champagne ... and that was the last I saw of him !
Simpson & Gwend [*Together*] WHAT !
Dolly He got in his car and drove off.
Gwend What no - um - no
Dolly No nothing - not a word - just got in his car and off he went

Gwend So no little courgette on the way then !
Dolly Good grief no ! What kind of a girl do you take me for ?
Simpson [*Laughs*] You'd better not ask *me* that had you Doll-dolls - [*laughs again*]
Dolly Simmy ! How dare you ! You promised never to mention that !

Gwend So all he did was leave you in a field - is that right ?

Dolly What do you mean *all* ! I had to walk nearly a mile - till a little man with some cows showed me how to use a telephone box so I could phone up daddy and get him to pick me up - My shoes were ruined.

[Sound of running about and shouting offstage]

Simpson I wonder why Marreau shot off like that - he must have had a reason - he's normally such a gentleman - 'specially where the ladies are concerned.

Dolly Well he certainly wasn't gentlemanly towards me !

Gwend What on earth's going on out there ?

[Havelock enters, somewhat flustered]

Havelock Madame ! Madame ! Terrible news I'm afraid !

Gwend Not Marreau ! Nothing's happened to Marreau has it ?

Havelock No madame - it's the master

Gwend Mexi ! Whatever do you mean ? He's only been gone two minutes.

Havelock He's been found by the ornamental pond ! He's drowned madame. Mr. Smith is dead !

[A terrier is heard yapping]

[Blackout]

Act I Scene 3

The same, a little while later.

Gwendolyn is sitting mid-settee with Holly next to her. Simpson is seated S/L.

Holly I think you should be resting - it must have been a terrible shock.
Gwend [Blankly] I still can't believe it - Mexi - dead.
Simpson Poor old Mexi - after all the wild animals he'd faced in his time
Gwend I know

Simpson Lions, tigers, crocodiles, rampant gorillas,

Gwend It doesn't make sense

Simpson To be killed by a newt.

Holly I still don't understand how anyone could be killed by a newt.

Gwend It was lodged in his windpipe ... he suffocated.

Simpson [Slight pause] [Sadly] The newt died too !

Holly But how did it get there ?

Gwend I don't know precisely - but whoever did it

Holly What d'you mean - "whoever did it" - you're not suggesting he was murdered are you, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend Oh yes he was murdered alright.

Holly [Squeaky] Oh !

Simpson I wish Marreau would turn up.

Gwend Yes, although he'd probably go flying off down the wrong track - it would be useful to have someone moderately intelligent to discuss this with.

Simpson You've got *me*, Gwenders !

Gwend [Smiles at him] [Unusually kindly] Yes; I suppose I have.

Simpson I've called the police. They said they'd be straight round.

Holly How do you know it was murder, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend Several things - not least of which is the bump on the back of his head.

Simpson So you think he was knocked out and the newt was shoved down his throat to suffocate him ?

Gwend Something like that.

Holly But why go to such elaborate lengths ? Why not just hit him a bit harder in the first place ?

Gwend That I don't know - but perhaps they were trying to make it look like drowning - after all that *was* the conclusion that Havelock jumped to.

Holly Oh, that's horrible. Poor Mr. Smith - they're such slimy creatures newts, fancy having one rammed down your throat.

[Gerald Harris enters]

Harris [At doorway] Excuse me dear people - not interrupting am I ?

Gwend Talking of slimy creatures.

Harris [Enters] Oh my poor, poor Mrs. Smith - how can I possibly convey the feelings of utmost sympathy that I feel for you at this terrible time.

Gwend Thank-you Mr. Harris, but (all I want is)

Harris Gerald, Gerald ... Please call me Gerald, Mrs. Smith.

Gwend Very well - thank you Gerald ... I

Harris If there is anything I can do for you ... anything at all ... please don't hesitate to ask; if I can be of any service at all ... anything, no matter how small, I would consider it an honour and a privilege to help.

Gwend That is most kind of you Mr. Harris - but at the moment I

Harris Gerald, don't forget it's Gerald ! Would you like me to get you a cup of tea for instance ?

Gwend No, thank-you I

Harris Or perhaps something a little stronger - brandy ?

Gwend No, no, I'm quite alright thank-you I

Harris You should have something, Mrs. Smith - or may I call you Gwendolyn ?

Gwend Mr. Harris - Gerald - Yes you may call me Gwendolyn if you wish

Harris Oh thank-you

Gwend ... but at the moment, I do not feel a need for any beverage - alcoholic or otherwise - thank-you again though.

Harris Now, now, Gwendolyn, you are in shock - you don't know *what's* best for you ...

Gwend [*Getting ratty*] I may be in shock but I think I can still tell whether I'm thirsty or not !

Harris You're probably not the best judge of that are you my dear ?

Gwend I said you could call me Gwendolyn - simply to be polite I may add - however I am certainly not - nor have I any intention of ever being - "your dear"

Harris Sorry - sorry - oh a thousand apologies - that was so presumptuous of me - please, please forgive me - dear lady !

Gwend [*Staying calm*] Mr. Harris - Please leave.

Harris Not until you forgive my indiscretion

Gwend You're forgiven ! Now if you would be so kind

Harris Yes ? There's something you want me to do ?

Gwend GET OUT !!!

Harris Oh dear - now you're cross - and it's all my fault -

Gwend OUT ! OUT !! OUT !!!

Harris [*To Simpson*] I fear Gwendolyn may be more badly traumatised than we originally thought.

Simpson I don't think so - I think she just finds your obsequiousness rather nauseating actually, Harris !

Harris [*Wounded*] Well if I'm not welcome - I had better leave - It's a pity if one's kindness is shown such contempt - Good day to you all. [*Exits, sharply*]

Gwend Well done Simpson; have you been reading dictionaries with Havelock ?

Simpson Urm [*Hides dictionary*]

[Chf.Const. Farmer *enters*]

Farmer By 'eck !

Holly Good grief !

Gwend Oh No !

Farmer What's this I's been 'earin 'bout a murder then ?

Simpson Well I'm blowed - Chief Superintendant Farmer

Farmer Mr. Simpson ! - and Mrs. - urm - what d'y'call yourself now ?

Gwend Smith. I'm married to - I *was* married to Mr. Herbert Smith.

Farmer Was married ? Not divorced 'im already 'ave you ?

Gwend [*Slowly, calmly*] No, he's dead.

Farmer Oh dear - oh dear, oh dear, oh dear - 'ow did that 'appen then ?

Gwend He was murdered. - About an hour ago.

Farmer No ! Not 'im as well

Gwend [*Slowly*] No, he's the one you've heard about - that's why you're here.

Farmer No, no you're wrong there - this was someone called Old Brazil or something of the like ...

Holly New Mexico.

Farmer Aye, that be right miss - New Mexico.

Gwend Exactly.

Holly Poor Mexi.

Farmer But you said his name was Harold.

Simpson Hubert ...

Gwend Herbert !

Farmer I'm gettin' confused

Gwend "New Mexico" was his nickname - his real name was Herbert.

Farmer Oh I see [*Slight pause*] Could you just explain that again to me ?

Gwend Oh God ... here we go ... My husband, whose real name was "Herbert" but who was always known by the nickname "New Mexico" was murdered this morning by having a newt rammed down his wind pipe - do you understand now Chief Superintendant ?

Farmer No you're wrong there

Gwend NO I AM NOT !!!!

Farmer Oh yes you are - [*Laughs*] I's been promoted again - I's a Chief Constable now !

Gwend Oh my sainted aunt !

Simpson I say ! Top of the shop now, ay, Farmer.

Farmer That's right - nobody to boss me around now there ain't

Gwend As you've risen to such an exalted position - I'm more than a little surprised that you're still involving yourself directly in cases such as this.

Farmer Well it's like this - my lads - nice bunch they are - they've been ever so helpful - telling me the sorts of things Chief Constables should do - me being new to the job and everything ...

Gwend And what sort of things *are* you doing ?

Farmer Oh - lots of cycling round villages, answering the telephone - all sorts of things. I even found a lost tabby the other day - made my week that did.

Holly Do you like cats then, Chief Constable.

Farmer Oh yes - nice little things cats is. Got to be wary with'em though - can give you a nasty scratch if you're not careful.

Gwend I don't suppose there's any chance of you investigating the murder of my husband, is there ?

Farmer Well you know what I'm like with dead bodies - queasy stomach and ev'rything - but it seems the local station's sent down an Inspector - Lewis his name is - I met him on my way in - 'ppears to be a nice sort of chap - So I'll leave the inspecting to him.

Gwend And where is he now, this Inspector ?

Farmer Oh, he's talking to the chap who was coming out of this room

Simpson So Lewis is with Harris

Gwend [*Tongue-in-cheek*] Any sign of Benbecula ?

Farmer Ben Who ?

Gwend [*Flatly*] Never mind, it was a joke.

Simpson I say - you'd better "Mull" it over, Farmer, - what !

Gwend [*Amused*] Very good Simpson - I'm quite surprised you got the joke.

Simpson Oh - I spent quite a bit of time in the Hebrides when I was younger - *Iona* bit of land up there.

Gwend Really ?

Farmer I'm not following this at all !
 Holly You're not the only one.
 Farmer Well - I'd better be off - there's a Ginger Tom gone missing in Little Pimlington - so I'd better go and find it - Nice meeting you all ! [*Exits*]
 Simpson Jolly pleasant to see old Farmer again

Holly You'd never think he was a Chief Constable, more like a village bobby.
 Simpson I seem to remember having this conversation once before !
 Gwend Let's just hope this Inspector Lewis knows what he's doing. Meanwhile, I suppose we ought to do a bit of investigating for ourselves.
 Holly Oh ! D'you think that's safe ?
 Gwend Safe ? What on earth do you mean ?
 Holly Well if there's a murderer about, won't he get upset if we start trying to find out who he is ?
 Simpson Oh gosh - you can't go worrying about things like that

[Inspector Lewis enters - it is Marreau in disguise, he speaks with a very slight accent, far less than Marreau, however as the scene progresses he slips more & more into his old accent]

[Gwend & Simpson vaguely recognize him but do not realise that he's Marreau]

Lewis Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce myself ... I am Inspector Lewis ... am I right in assuming that you are Mrs. Smith ?
 Gwend Yes, indeed; haven't we met before somewhere ?
 Lewis I am afraid I do not recall ever having done so ... may I start by offering you my sympathy at your loss ... I shall endeavour to bring the culprit to justice without delay I believe you are Mr. Simpson, is that correct ?
 Simpson Yep that's me ... it's a pity Marreau's not here -
 Lewis Ah, yes, Monsieur Hemlock Marreau - the world's greatest detective
 Gwend I wouldn't go that far !
 Lewis I have followed his cases with intense interest - he must possess a truly remarkable brain.
 Simpson Certainly does - do you know he can identify 196 different types of gunpowder ?
 Lewis 207 now, I believe - unfortunately, such knowledge would probably be of little use in this particular case !
 Simpson Well, yes, quite - ha - I doubt the newt shot him - what ? ha ha !
 Gwend Simpson, you're talking about my husband
 Simpson Oh, gosh, sorry Gwenders
 Holly Isn't it just horrible - poor Mr. Smith being killed like that ...
 Lewis You are ?
 Holly I'm Holly - Holly Jenkins. Would you like to take down my particulars ?
 Lewis [*A slight pause*] Later perhaps.
 Simpson So where are you going to start, Inspector ?
 Lewis I have already done so - I have spoken to Mr. Harris
 Gwend That must have been riveting
 Lewis He was most willing to help - however his testimony was not terribly useful - he did not see Mr. Smith at all - well not until he was already dead.
 Gwend That *is* quite interesting actually.
 Lewis Oh ?

Gwend Yes, Mexi and that Pemberton creature went out to look for Harris, so presumably they failed to find him.

[Lewis's *accent is getting more French*]

Lewis This is most interesting - so presumably Pemberton was the last person to see him alive - other than the murderer of course.

Simpson I say - perhaps Pemberton *is* the murderer.

Lewis Perhaps.

Gwend Though nothing would please me more than to see Pemberton hang - it would be a bit foolhardy for him to make himself so obvious a suspect.

Holly I don't think it could have been Pemberton

Lewis And why is this ?

Holly I was in my room - it overlooks the patio - I saw Mr. Smith and Pemberton come out of the house, they spoke a few words then Mr. Pemberton pointed at something ...

Lewis Where was he pointing to ?

Holly Towards some trees - I didn't know it then, but apparently that's where the pond is Mr. Smith sounded quite excited about something ...

Gwend Could you hear what he said ?

Holly No, I'm afraid I couldn't, but he started walking quite quickly towards the trees

Lewis And Mr. Pemberton, did he go with him ?

Holly No - that's why I say I don't think it could be him.

Gwend Could you see what Pemberton was pointing at ?

Holly No I couldn't - and I did try to, because they both seemed very interested in whatever it was

Lewis [*Very Marreau-ish*] This is most intriguing.

Simpson I say, Inspector - are you French as well ? [Gwend *twigs who he is*]

Lewis [*Losing accent again*] What ? No - my mother was French Polynesian - occasionally people can detect a slight lilt to my accent.

Gwend So *Inspector*, it would seem that whatever it was they were looking at was low down, such that it could be seen from ground level but not from above.

Lewis *Precisement* ! I mean precisely - this is exactly the conclusion I had come to. Miss Jenkins - this is most important - what happened next ?

Holly Oh, I'm terribly sorry - I didn't see much after that - Polly came to see me to apologize for being so nasty to me earlier - so I looked away - I must admit I'd forgotten all about it until just now.

Lewis And there's nothing more you can tell us ?

Holly I don't know, I feel like there *is* something - but I can't bring it to mind - something that wasn't right - I remember thinking "that's strange" - but I can't remember what it was.

Lewis Try to remember - it may be very important.

Holly [*Thinks*] No - I'm sorry - I'm sure it will come to me in time though.

Lewis Oh well, thank-you anyway - a small piece of the jigsaw falls into place - A few more pieces and I'm sure the overall picture will become obvious.

Holly If you don't mind, I'd like to go and have a lie down now; I'm afraid all this excitement has made me feel quite giddy - and it may help me to remember.

Lewis By all means - be my host. [Simpson *twigs*]

Simpson [*Automatically*] Guest, Marreau. *Marreau*

Lewis : *What !!!!! Where ???!*

Gwend [Covering for Marreau] [Looks sharply at Simpson] Urm - there in the garden look -
 [digs Simpson in the ribs] [Quietly to Simpson] Shhh ! Don't let on
 Simpson [Looking on-stage] Oh gosh ! Yes ! [Looks out of window] Look there he is in the
 garden ! Good old Marreau !
 Holly [Looking out of window] I can't see him.
 Simpson No - he's gone now !
 Lewis [Regaining composure] I look forward to meeting him.
 Gwend That will be an interesting encounter !
 Holly If you'll excuse me then [Exits]

[From now on Lewis ==> Marreau]

Gwend Very good, Hemlock, you even had me fooled for a while.
 Marreau I do not see how I gave myself away.
 Simpson I'd never have known if you hadn't gone and said "be my host"
 Marreau [Sadly] So I am not yet quite ready to play the perfect English gentleman
 Gwend Not bad though - tell me, why do you normally speak with such a heavy accent when you
 can cover it up so well ?
 Marreau It takes so much of my concentration that I find I cannot think of anything else.
 Gwend Well it looks as though our most important witness is going to be the indescribably
 obnoxious Victor Pemberton.
 Marreau Indeed, my dear, this would seem to be the case.
 Simpson Yes, and it was his dog that poor old Mexi heard that gave him such a turn.
 Marreau I'm sorry - I do not follow.
 Gwend Oh, it's nothing - we heard the Pemberton's little dog barking and Mexi said that it was the
 "Terrier of the Smiths" and that he was doomed.
 Simpson ... and he was right !
 Marreau *Sacre Bleu* ! This is most intriguing

Gwend Oh come on - it must just be a coincidence

Simpson And don't forget the letter

Marreau Letter ? What letter ?

Simpson Someone sent Mexi a note telling him to beware of the Sword of Carthage.

Marreau [Dramatically] Not the Sword of Carthage !!!

Gwend You've heard of it ?

Marreau Indeed I have

Simpson What is it then, Marreau ?

Marreau It is a sword !

Simpson Good Heavens !

Gwend Not from Carthage by any chance.

Marreau Precisely.

Gwend Astonishing ! [sarcastic] Well this puts a completely different complexion on the whole
 case doesn't it !

Marreau Indeed it does

Gwend [Baffled] Well do please explain

Marreau The story begins many years ago in Egypt, a break-away sect of the Coptic church were
 led by a great warrior knight who fought on many crusades with fabled success and
 bravery - until in 1199 he was slain at a tremendous battle in the Holy Land

Simpson Gosh - this is exciting

Marreau His body was borne by sea to the ruins of Carthage where he was to be buried according to his wishes - with his sword placed as a cross on his body - as was the tradition of his sect.

Gwend So what went wrong.

Marreau On the eve of his internment, a band of brigands attacked and stole the sword.

Simpson No ! That's terrible.

Marreau And ever since that day the Copts and their descendants have been trying to get the sword back from the thieves and their descendants.

Simpson So it's a case of Copts and Robbers - ha ha !

Gwend Deary-me, Simpson, that was dreadful !

Simpson Sorry, couldn't resist it.

Gwend But what I can't understand is what this has to do with Mexi.

Simpson Especially as he said he'd never heard of it.

Marreau Most strange indeed - I would have thought that an archeologist of Mr. Smith's calibre would certainly have known as much if not more about it than I do.

[Havelock enters, trying not to be ruffled]

Havelock We appear to have the makings of a disaster on our hands madame.

Gwend Disaster ? What's happened Havelock ?

Havelock Miss Holly has collapsed in the hall, Miss Dolly is having a screaming fit in the blue drawing room, Mr Pemberton has beaten Mrs Scrimp unconscious with part of the second swan and His Royal Highness is at this very moment coming up the drive !

Simpson Yep ! Sounds like a disaster to me !

[Blackout] End of Act I

Act II Scene 1

The same, a little while later.

Marreau, Gwendolyn & Simpson are awaiting the arrival of The Prince of Wales (Pr.Wales)
They are talking in side whispers.

[Marreau is oblivious of the following conversation]

Simpson [Aside to Gwend] Whatever happens - make sure the Prince doesn't hear about Mexi being dead -

Gwend [Aside to Simpson] Why ?

Simpson [Aside to Gwend] He has this slight nervous problem - some sort of phobia or something - doesn't like to hear anything about death.

Gwend [Aside to Simpson] Oh good grief - does Havelock know ?

Simpson [Aside to Gwend] Yes, I tipped him off and he said he'd tell everyone else.

Gwend [Aside to Simpson] Well done, Simpson. By the way you still haven't told me how on earth you know the Prince of Wales

Simpson [Aside to Gwend] Oh, I've known him (since we were children - etc. etc.)

[Havelock enters]

Havelock His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

[Pr.Wales enters] [Marreau bows, Gwend curtsies, Simpson holds his hand out]
[Havelock backs out]

Pr.Wales [Shakes Simpson's hand] Simmo !

Simpson What-oh, David !

Pr.Wales Well, what a pleasant day.

Gwend We are honoured to have you visit us, sire.

Pr.Wales Nonsense - I bet I've put you out no end.

Gwend Not at all, sire, please feel welcome to visit at any time.

Pr.Wales Don't bother with the "sire" - not while there aren't any flunkies about anyway - call me David - that's what *you* call me isn't it Simmo ?

Marreau No-no-no, I am sorry - I cannot call the heir to the throne by his first name - it would be discourteous.

Pr.Wales I say - you're that friend of Simmos, aren't you ? Aubergine or something -

Marreau Aubergine ? My name, your Royal Highness, is Marreau - Hemlock Montrachet Etienne Boniface Marreau - and a loyal subject, may I add.

Pr.Wales Subject ? But you're French or Belgian or something aren't you ?

Marreau Er - [Pause, thinks] I have dual nationality.

Pr.Wales Really - that is interesting - [To Gwend] I'm looking forward to chatting to that husband of yours, I've taken a bit of an interest in archaeology, you know.

Marreau I do not think you will have much luck - I am afraid that Monsieur Smith is

Gwend Not feeling very well

Marreau That is certainly one way of putting it

Simpson He's cold - er - I'm mean he's in bed *with* a cold - a nasty cold -

Marreau Nasty cold ? But he's

Gwend Getting better - he should be up and about tomorrow

Marreau I very much doubt it !

Pr.Wales Oh dear - well I'd better steer clear of him then, don't want to go catching anything.

Marreau Gwendolyn, what are you saying, you must come to terms with the fact that your husband is dead !

Simpson to the world ! Dead to the world he is - fast asleep - best not wake him isn't that right Gwenders ?

Gwend Yes, yes - [*Aside to Marreau*] Shut up Hemlock - for Heaven's sake !

Pr.Wales Oh well, never mind, I'll catch him another time.

[*All are front of stage*]

Simpson So, David; fancy shooting a few pheasants later ?

Pr.Wales [*Shudders*] So long as I don't see the poor things once they've been shot. You know the effect dead things have on me ! [*Twitches a few times*]

Marreau [*Light dawns*] Ahhhh, *je comprend* ! Shall I go and see if Monsieur Smith requires anything, Gwendolyn ?

[*At back of stage Bunny and Harris enter carrying stretcher with the dead Mexi on it*]

Gwend I'm sure Havelock is looking after him alright.

Marreau [*Turns, sees Bunny & Harris*] *Mon Dieu* !

[*Makes shooing action with hand to tell Bunny & Harris to withdraw*]

Gwend What on earth's the matter, Marreau ? [*Turns sees Bunny & Harris*] Oh No !

Pr.Wales Something the matter ?

Marreau Nothing, nothing - just a fly [*Wafts again*]

Gwend [*Wafting madly*] Yes ! Get out of here !!!!

Marreau [*To the (non-existant) fly*] Keep away from His Royal Highness you despicable creature.

[*Bunny & Harris get the message and back out again*]

Pr.Wales Oh don't worry about a little fly - I have been in India you know - millions of the perishers there.

Marreau Indeed. It has gone now anyway.

Simpson So what have you got lined up then, David ? Any state visits or anything ?

Pr.Wales Well I'm hopping over to the States in a few weeks time

Gwend Whereabouts ?

Pr.Wales New York, Boston, usual sort of places

Simpson You'll have to look up my cousin Ernest

Pr.Wales Oh ?

Simpson Yes; *he's* a bit boring - but you'll get on famously with his wife, I'm sure.

Pr.Wales [*Gets out notebook*] Right you are, I'll jot their names down - what were they again ?

Simpson Ernest and Wallis Simpson.

Pr.Wales [*Writes*] ... and Wallis Simpson - Wallis ? That's an unusual name for a woman.

Simpson She's an unusual woman.

Pr.Wales What's the address ?

Simpson Not sure exactly where they're living now, but if you phone father, he'll tell you.
Pr.Wales Will do, it's always nice to get away from all the official stuff for a bit.

[Havelock enters]

Havelock If I may deferentially intervene for a moment
Gwend Yes Havelock, what is it ?
Havelock I am afraid that Mrs. Scrimp is acting rather strangely since the incident with the drumstick - so dinner may be a little delayed

Gwend I'm sure we can wait a little
Pr.Wales Give my best wishes to Mr. Smith would you Havelock, how is he ?
Havelock [*Slight pause*] Much the same, your Royal Highness.
Gwend Oh, and how's Miss Jenkins now ?
Havelock She's regained consciousness but is still rather weak I'm afraid - I've have telephoned for the doctor. He should arrive shortly.

[*Mrs Scrimp enters, swaying, drunk*]

MrsScrimp It's not right !
Havelock Come with me Mrs. Scrimp

MrsScrimp You get your 'ands off of me -
Havelock I think you ought to

MrsScrimp Where were you when I was being beaten round the 'ead with that-there bird ?
Gwend Mrs. Scrimp ! Please ! Don't you know who this is ? [*gestures towards Pr.Wales*]
MrsScrimp [*Looks hard*] No ! Can't say as I do - some toffy-nosed friend of the late master's no doubt. God rest 'is soul.

Marreau Actually Mrs. Scrimp, this is the Prince of Wales

MrsScrimp Nahhhh - Gerronwivya
Havelock I'm afraid it is Martha.
Gwend He's right.
Simpson It is.
Pr.Wales I am.
MrsScrimp [*Peers again*] Oh my Gawd - 'scuse me, [*sinks to the floor*] your princesship

Pr.Wales Please forgive a poor working woman

Pr.Wales Don't worry about it, Mrs. Scrimp
Havelock Come along Martha
MrsScrimp I'm coming - Oh my Gawd - what 'ave I done

[*Havelock helps MrsScrimp out of the room*]

Pr.Wales Why did she say "the late master" and "God rest his soul" ?
Gwend She gets confused poor woman she was thinking of the old master ... he's been dead for years. It's probably due to the bang on her head.

Pr.Wales Oh I see, how did she come to be beaten round the head in the first place ?
Gwend I'm afraid one of our guests is a bit volatile -
Pr.Wales Good grief - what sort of man hits a cook over the head ?
Simpson Well his name is Victor Pemberton

[*Farmer bursts in, brandishing a gun*]

Farmer Now don't anybody go and move !
Pr.Wales Good God ! Is that him ? Is that Pemberton ?
Simpson No, no, that's only the Chief Constable.
Pr.Wales Good grief !
Gwend What on earth are you doing, Farmer ?
Simpson You're pointing a gun at the Prince of Wales !
Farmer That's where you're wrong ! He ain't no Prince of anywhere !
Simpson [*Squeaky*] He is !
Pr.Wales [*Disconcerted*] I am !
Marreau For Heaven's sake Farmer, put the gun down !
Farmer Chief Constable to you, Lewis !
Pr.Wales Lewis ? What the Hell is going on ?
Gwend Farmer, you're making an enormous mistake !
Farmer This-'ere imposter is pretending to be the Prince of Wales when in fact he's Harry Grimsditch - international criminal.
All: What ???
Pr.Wales Harry who ?
Farmer Don't you try and deny it - one o' my lads has told me all about it - I knows you're a very dangerous criminal on the run.
Simpson But I know him, Farmer, believe me, he is the Prince of Wales !
Farmer And why should *you* know the Prince of Wales may I ask ?
Gwend Why indeed.
Simpson Well - I do - we've known each other for ages, haven't we, David ?
Pr.Wales [*Totally bemused*] Yes - I -
Farmer You see - even *you* think he's called David when everyone knows that the Prince's name is Edward
Pr.Wales I've got lots of names, David is my last name - but it's what family and friends call me - but it's not on for me to be King David, so as Edward's my first name I'll be Edward the eighth
Farmer [*Pause*] Well what a cock-and-bull story that is - now let's have no more of your nonsense - are you going to come along with me, or do you want me to shoot you ?
Pr.Wales Alright, alright - I'll go - phone Sandringham will you Simmo - tell them what's happened.
Farmer It's got to give you full marks for perseverance ... I reckons I'll get me a medal for this one.

[Exits with Pr.Wales]

[**Blackout**]

Act II Scene 2

The same, some while later.

Marreau & Gwendolyn seated, Simpson enters.

Marreau Did you manage to get through, Simpson ?

Simpson Eventually.

Gwend Any news of the Prince ?

Simpson Farmer's released him - wouldn't let him go 'till the Home Secretary turned up though

Gwend Oh good grief ... Poor old Farmer - I actually feel rather sorry for him.

Marreau I do not think this will get him the medal he was hoping for

Gwend I don't suppose for a minute that the Prince will be returning here.

Simpson No, apparently he's gone straight back to Sandringham.

Gwend Probably just as well. Perhaps now we can find out who killed my husband.

Marreau Indeed my dear - that is why I have asked Havelock to bring Victor Pemberton to us.

Gwend I think I may go and do something in the billiard room, [*Stands*] I'm not sure I can stand to be in his presence again.

Marreau As you wish my dear. [*Gwend exits*]

Simpson You haven't met Pemberton, have you Marreau ?

Marreau Simpson, please remember to call me Inspector Lewis - I do not want Dolly Tindle to recognize me.

Simpson Oh yes - of course.

[*Victor enters*]

Victor You wanted to speak to me ?

Marreau Indeed

Victor Well make it snappy - I don't like to leave my wife alone for too long.

Marreau That is most caring of you.

Victor Caring be damned - Heaven knows what communist ideas she'll pick up in this place.

Simpson I don't think there are too many communists lurking about the house actually Pemberton.

Victor You don't eh - they're all over the damned place - shoot'em that's what I say - shoot'em then draw and quarter'em.

Marreau Charming.

Victor That's what I'd do if I caught a communist - worse than socialists they are and by Gad they're bad enough.

Marreau Well quite - Anyway Mr. Pemberton, would you be so good as to tell us what you and Mr. Smith saw near the ornamental pond ?

Victor What ? How on earth did you know about that ?

Marreau You were observed talking to Mr. Smith and then pointing at something.

Victor Observed ? Spied on more like - damned spies ev'rywhere. Shoot'em.

Marreau I assure you that you were simply observed - not spied upon - so what was it ?

Victor I saw Harris skulking near the pond.

Simpson Harris ?

Victor That's what I said - Harris - and Smith went off to talk to him.

Marreau Are you sure it was Harris ?

Victor Of course I'm damned well sure - I'd recognize him anywhere.

Marreau And is that the last you saw of Mr. Smith ?

Victor Yes - well until after he was dead.

Marreau Is there anything else you think may be important ?
Victor Nothing at all.
Simpson Does the Sword of Carthage mean anything to you ?
Victor The Sword of Carthage ! What do you know about that ?
Simpson That's what I asked you !

Victor What if it does ?
Marreau Do you know where it is ?
Victor Where what is ?
Marreau The sword.
Victor Oh - the actual sword itself you mean
Marreau Well yes - what else ?
Victor I thought you meant I mean no, I don't know where it is - and if you'll excuse me I have better things to do than discuss ancient relics.
Marreau Very well - but do not leave the house - I may need to question you again.
Victor Damned car's stopped working - so I couldn't leave if I wanted to. [*Exit*]
Simpson Strange that -
Marreau Indeed - Harris said he had not seen Monsieur Mexi at all.
Simpson I didn't mean that - I meant it was strange what he said about the Sword of Carthage.
Marreau But he said he didn't know where it was
Simpson Yes, but at first it was like he was talking about something else ... I mean something other than the actual sword.
Marreau I think you are - how you say - barking up a blind alley to nowhere my friend.
Simpson P'raps so - oh well - better interview Harris next.

[Gwend enters]

Gwend Has he gone ?
Simpson Yep ! The coast's clear.
Gwend Thank goodness for that - so can we hang him ?
Marreau Not yet I'm afraid - in fact it seems as though *Harris* is the most likely candidate for the scaffold at the moment.
Gwend Harris ? - I can't imagine that pathetic creature being able to successfully kill a pygmy shrew let alone Mexi.
Marreau We must interview him and find out.

[Doctor Protheroe enters]

Protheroe Inspector Lewis, I wonder if I may have a word with you ?
Marreau [*Slight accent only*] Good Heavens, it is Doctor Protheroe is it not ?
Protheroe You're quite right - but you have the better of me - I'm afraid I don't recall having met you before.
Marreau Of course you have - [*Normal Marreau accent*] how is *Leedle Jimmy* ?
Protheroe Great Scott ! It's Marreau isn't it ? Why was I told your name was Lewis - and what has happened to your accent ?
Marreau It is a long story, but suffice it to say that I would be obliged if you did not give me away.
Protheroe Oh, right - certainly.
Gwend How is Miss Jenkins ?

Protheroe Very poorly, I'm afraid Mrs. Smith - but I'm pretty sure she'll pull through.
Simpson So what's up with her ?
Protheroe She's been poisoned.
All: [*In quick succession*] Poisoned ?
Marreau Are you certain ?
Protheroe Oh yes, no doubt about it - Bismuth I'd say - Possibly Thallium but I'd put my money on Bismuth.
Marreau This is most intriguing.
Protheroe Fascinating element Bismuth - discovered by Valentine around 1450

Marreau [*Bored already*] Really how interesting

Protheroe It has many medicinal uses - but in excess - as with many medicines it is fatal.
Marreau But you don't think it will prove fatal in this case ?
Protheroe No, fortunately I believe that she consumed only a small amount.
Gwend Is Bismuth poisoning quite common ?

Protheroe Funny you should ask that; I've made a bit of a study of heavy metal poisoning ...
Simpson [*Slouching into chair*] [*Depressively*] [*Bored*] Oh God !
Marreau [**Glumly**] Oh dear, I thought you might have
Gwend Just tell us the basics, Doctor.
Protheroe Oh, right - well most cases are caused from contact with paint
Marreau Paint ?
Protheroe Yes the oxychloride is quite a common pigment

Simpson Why would anyone eat paint ?
Protheroe If I may continue

Marreau [*More glumly*] I suppose you'd better
Protheroe I'm fairly confident, however, that Miss Jenkins ingested the raw metal - and that is highly unusual !
Gwend So you're suggesting that the poisoning wasn't accidental - that it was attempted murder ?
Protheroe Quite. Moreover, metallic bismuth is not so easily come by as its salts.
Marreau Oh ?
Protheroe So I think we're looking for a scientist - or at least someone who has worked in a laboratory.
Marreau Thank-you for this most enlightening information, Doctor.
Protheroe Not at all - only too pleased to help.
Gwend Does anyone else know that she's been poisoned, Doctor ?
Protheroe Urm - no - I don't think so.
Gwend Best leave it that way at the moment, if you wouldn't mind.
Protheroe Yes, yes of course, whatever you say - I'd better go and have another look at the patient.
Marreau Of course - [*Protheroe exits*]
Simpson So do you think Holly was poisoned by the same person who killed poor old Mexi ?
Marreau It would seem a reasonable supposition, do you not agree, Gwendolyn.
Gwend I suppose so - but why ? What could possibly connect Mexi and Holly ?
Simpson Perhaps they're worried she'll remember whatever it was she thought was strange.
Marreau *Mon Dieu !* Of course - well done Simpson

I think you have hammered the screw firmly on its top there !
Gwend Or words to that effect.

[*Polly & Dolly enter*] [*Marreau is struck dumb by seeing Dolly, he stares at her*]

Polly [Matter-of-fact] Isn't it dreadful, first poor old Mexi being killed and now Holly being poisoned.

Gwend [Quickly] How did you know she'd been poisoned ?

Polly Oh - well - [pause] - it was pretty obvious really - foaming at the mouth, uncontrollable twitching - just looked like it to me.

Gwend And what makes you an expert on poisoning may I ask ?

Polly I'm not claiming to be an expert - but I have got a degree in Chemistry so I'm reasonably aware of the effects of poisons.

Simpson I think that's *touché* Gwendolyn.

Gwend [Disgruntled] Um - [Perking up] So you're a scientist are you ?

Polly [Sarcastic] Ten out of ten - a brilliant piece of deduction.

Gwend An interesting fact wouldn't you say, Lewis [looks at Marreau]

[Marreau is silent, staring fixedly at Dolly with open mouth]

Gwend Lewis ?

Dolly Why's he staring at me like that ?

Simpson Er

Dolly I've seen him before somewhere.

Simpson No you haven't.

Dolly How do you know whether or not I have ?

Simpson Er ... I ...

Gwend Come on Lewis - say something.

Marreau I [Marreau's mouth opens and shuts but nothing comes out]

Polly Whatever's the matter with him ?

Gwend Shake him into life, Simpson

Simpson Righty ho ... [Shakes Marreau] ... Snap out of it Marreau - I mean Lewis

Dolly Marreau ? MARREAU !!!!

Simpson [Paniccy] It was a slip of the tongue - I meant Lewis

Dolly I knew I recognized him ! [To Marreau] It's you isn't it !

Marreau [Gasps] Sorry Dolly !

Dolly SORRY ! Is that all you can say ?

Marreau It was an accident

Dolly An accident ? How do you accidentally drive off and leave someone in a field ?

Marreau I ... I forgot you were there !

Dolly That's ridiculous - you only went to get a bottle of champagne from the boot - how could you possibly forget about me in two minutes ?

Polly Eminently easily I would have thought !

Marreau I - I - saw someone and chased after him - when I came back you'd gone.

Dolly I waited there an hour for you !

Marreau It was a long chase !

Simpson Who were you after, Marreau ?

Marreau Hearty - I saw that devil Hearty.

Simpson Maurice Hearty - that rogue who got away from us at Framell & Priggs ?

Marreau That's the one - my *bete noir* - Professor Maurice Hearty

Dolly I don't care if you were chasing after the Holy Grail, you shouldn't have just left me there !

Marreau I know, I know - a thousand apologies my dear Miss Tindle. [*Goes to her*]
Dolly [*Backing away*] Keep away from me !
Marreau Please do not think too badly of me ...
Dolly I've a better idea - I won't think of you at all ! [*Storms out*]
Polly [*Amused*] I bet she was fuming when you left her in that field ! I wish I'd been there.
Marreau I am not proud of my behaviour - it was ungentlemanly.
Polly True - but funny all the same !

[*Deirdre rushes in*]

Deirdre Is he here ?
Marreau Is who here ?
Deirdre That husband of mine
Gwend No, you're alright Deirdre, he's not about.
Deirdre Thank Heavens for that ... [*Hushed*] I've got some important information for you.
Marreau Oh ? And what is this ?
Deirdre [*Pause*] I'm pretty sure that my husband killed Mr. Smith.
Gwend What's your reasoning ?
Deirdre I was in our room, unpacking the cases - I saw him struggling with Mr. Smith by the pond.
Marreau But this is not possible Miss Jenkins has already said that she saw them part company ... and that Mr. Smith went towards the pond on his own.
Polly Wait a moment - Holly says she saw them - when ?
Marreau Just before you came to apologize to her.
Polly That's strange - she was lying on her bed when I came in.
Marreau What !!! Can I trust no-one to tell me the truth !
Simpson Why on earth would Holly make up that story, then ?
Deirdre Perhaps she wanted to protect my husband - give him an alibi.
Marreau But why ?
Deirdre Because they are having an affair !
Marreau *Mon Dieu !*

Gwend I find that difficult to believe - he's not exactly the most loving of people is he.
Deirdre He can be - before we were married he was wonderful to me - but its all artifice - inside he's as black as night !
Marreau And so you poisoned her - out of jealousy - *oui !*
Deirdre [*Wry laugh*] Poisoned her ! Jealousy ! You must be joking ! She can have him !

[*There is a mad glint in her eye, she gets steadily more hysterical*]

She can do what she likes with him ! What's more, *you* can do what you like with him ! String him up ! Pluck out his eyeballs ! Run him through with a red-hot poker if you want ! See if I care

Simpson [*Clutching stomach*] Excuse me ! [*Exits at speed*]
Deirdre I don't care what happens to him - as long as its slow, horrific and very, very painful !
Gwend [*Under her breath*] There speaks a loving wife ! [*But Deirdre hears*]

Deirdre Loving ? Loving ? I tried to love him - Lord knows I've tried - and I used to, you know - I used to love him - but he's evil - he's the Devil incarnate ! There's not one scrap of goodness in him - and nothing would please me more than to see him swing from the gallows [*She is gasping for breath, overcome by her outburst*]

[*Simpson re-enters*]

Marreau I see - Well I'm glad we've got that into the open.

Polly Come with me, Deirdre, I think you'd better lie down for a while

Gwend Yes, Deirdre, we all understand how you feel - go with Polly

Deirdre Alright - yes - sorry - sorry for my outburst - it's just that I hate him so much - I wish I had the courage to kill him myself ! [*Going to exit*]

[*She continues to mutter as Polly leads her out*]

I could slit his throat - or chop his head off - or bash his brains in ...

[*ad lib, continue as exiting*]

[*Simpson (clutching stomach again) beats them to the door, Simpson then Deirdre & Polly exit*]

Gwend Well if it was Pemberton who was dead instead of Mexi, I don't think the culprit would be too difficult to find !

Marreau Indeed - and now this case is wrapped up.

Gwend Somehow, I think not.

Marreau But surely - it is obvious that Pemberton murdered your husband

Gwend There's a few problems there Marreau

Marreau Oh ?

[*Simpson re-enters*]

Gwend Firstly, Mrs. Pemberton is hardly a reliable and balanced witness - secondly she is the *only* witness - and a wife cannot testify against her husband

Marreau Sacre Bleu ! What a ridiculous law

Gwend And finally - she's lying through her teeth !

Marreau & Simpson [*Together*] What !!!

Marreau How do you know she is lying ?

Gwend Because I know my house - I know you can't see the pond from any of the windows - she could not have seen a struggle.

Marreau *Nom d'un nom d'un nom* - how can I solve a case when everybody I speak to does not tell me the truth !

[*Bunny & Harris enter*]

Marreau Aha - Monsieur Hopper - and Monsieur Harris too -

Harris Why are you speaking with a French accent, Lewis ?

Marreau It is a long story - but my name is not Lewis, it is Marreau - and I am Belgian, hence the accent.

Bunny I know why, you old cove ! I've spoken to Dolly - she's not very happy with you !

Marreau I realise this.

Gwend [*Changing subject*] I thought you didn't see my husband until after he was dead, Harris.

Harris That's right dear lady - I didn't - and don't forget - please, please call me Gerald.
Simpson Pemberton says Mexi and he saw you at the pond and that Mexi went over to talk to you.
Harris It's not true ! He's lying.
Marreau But why should he lie ?
Harris Dashed if I know - but I tell you - I didn't see him at all. I was with Bunny, here.
Bunny That's right - Gerry was with me - he certainly wasn't by the pond.
Gwend He was with you all the time ?
Bunny Well for a good half an hour immediately before poor old Mexi's body was found he was, weren't you Gerry.
Harris Yes I was - we were playing cards.
Bunny Take my tip - don't ever play cards with him - he memorises the entire deck.
Simpson That's dashed clever
Harris Just a trick I learned - In the army they used to call me urm
Simpson Obsequious ?
Harris No, no, - urm

Simpson Nauseating ?
Harris No - urm
Bunny Memory Man ?
Harris Yes, that's right - Memory Man.
Marreau I do not believe this case - everybody has alibis - someone must have done it.
Bunny Well what about you then Marreau ?
Marreau Whatever do you mean ???
Bunny You were conspicuous by your absence

Marreau But this is ridiculous - you cannot be suggesting
Harris And you've got a motive - haven't you ...
Marreau What do you mean - what motive ?
Harris I believe your little detecting business has been going somewhat downhill since Gwendolyn left you !
Marreau This is slanderous !
Harris The truth isn't slander.
Simpson He's right actually Marreau - truth isn't slander - and it is true that we've only had one case since Gwenders left us

Marreau Silence ! Do you mean that even you suspect me Simpson ?
Simpson No, of course I don't.
Gwend It's not you is it Hemlock ?
Marreau Gwendolyn - how could you ?
Simpson Course it's not Hemlock, Gwenders - no I think it's all wrapped up with this Sword of Carthage.
Bunny [*Shocked*] The sword of Carthage - what do you know about that ?
Harris [*Before Simpson can reply, he starts speaking in a monotone*]
The Sword of Carthage is an underground organisation the aim of which is the destabilisation of Western Europe
Bunny SHUT UP MAN !!!! [*Goes over to Harris*] [*Simpson restrains him*]
Harris ... by means of espionage, assassination and sabotage

Bunny SILENCE ! I COMMAND YOU !
Harris Its chief officer in Britain is [*He clutches his neck*] Aaaaghhhhh !!!
[*He collapses to the floor*] [*They crowd over him, Marreau stands up with thorn in hand*]
Marreau A poisoned dart ! Quickly ! [*Points O/S S/L*] After the murderer

[*They charge off S/L*] **[Blackout]**

Act II Scene 3 - The Denouement

The same, some while later.

Entire surviving cast except Pr.Wales are assembled, including Protheroe & Farmer.

Holly is in a chair with a blanket over her.

Dolly is handcuffed with Farmer standing over her.

Marreau As you are probably all aware, a little while ago Gerald Harris was killed by a poisoned dart - and after a short chase we apprehended Miss Dolly Tindle still in possession of the blowpipe which delivered the fateful missile.

Dolly I'm proud of it ! Betraying our organisation means death to the offender ! Long live the Sword of Carthage !

Farmer Now shut yourself up missy, I think you're in enough trouble already.

Marreau Not only did she dispatch Harris, she also killed poor Gwendolyn's husband in a most gruesome manner involving an innocent newt -

Gwend Hold on Marreau

Marreau and she attempted to murder Miss Jenkins by the administration of Bismuth.

Gwend No, Marreau, she couldn't have

Dolly I did - I admit all the crimes.

Gwend Ignore her she killed Harris but she's not responsible for the others.

Marreau But she has admitted it

Gwend Of course she's admitted it ... she's got nothing to lose

Polly Gwendolyn's right, Marreau - Dolly didn't murder Mr. Smith and she didn't poison Holly.

Marreau Excuse me mademoiselle - but how would you know ?

Polly It is my job to know.

Simpson What do you mean, your job, Polly ?

Polly I work for M.I.2 - Special Scientific Division. [*Shows I.D.*]

All: Gosh ! (*etc.*)

Marreau What is this M.I.2 may I ask ?

Gwend Secret Service, Marreau - I think we're a bit out of our depth here !

MrsScrimp Oh my Gawd ! She's a spy !

Havelock Yes, Martha, but at least she's one of ours !

Bunny Polly ! You're not really a spy are you ?

Polly Not a spy exactly - I am a scientific investigator working for the ministry of intelligence and I know all about you, Bunny !

Bunny What ! What do you know about me - there's nothing to know ?

Marreau Excuse me ! But may I conclude my denouement without any further interruptions ?

Gwend Leave it to Polly, Hemlock.

Polly No, no, not at all - be my guest

Marreau Thank-you. As I was saying Dolly killed Harris - but she did NOT kill Mexi - nor did she poison Miss Jenkins

MrsScrimp That's not what you said before !

Marreau SILENCE !

Victor That's the way - shut the blighters up - by Gad I'm not going to be talked at by some woman. [*Rhetorical*] Am I Dierdre.

Deirdre Drop dead, Victor !

Victor WHAT !!!!

Deirdre I said "Drop dead" - Are you deaf as well as stupid, evil and vindictive ?

Victor [*Twitches*] Hell fire ! She's a communist ! You've turned my wife into a communist !

Marreau [*Shouts*] SILENCE - I WILL BE HEARD !!! [*They fall quiet*] Thank-you. [*Slight pause*] Miss Dolly Tindle is a member of a secret organisation called The Sword of Carthage

Dolly Long live the Sword of Carthage !

Farmer I've told you once - one more peep out of you and I'll - um I'll - well I'll do something you won't like very much.

Marreau Thank you Farmer. The ring leader of this dastardly organisation is none other than Victor Pemberton !

Deirdre [*Jumping up and down*] Kill him ! Kill him ! String him up !

Victor [*To Deirdre*] You're mad woman ! [*To all*] She's mad - and so are you Marreau.

Polly He's not the leader, Marreau - Pemberton's just a small fish.

Marreau And who do you think the leader is then ?

Polly I have been on the track of this organisation for three years - I was working with the American CIA - they'd got their top man on it.

Marreau Oh yes, and who is this top man ?

Polly Well he's dead now, so I suppose I can reveal his name.

Gwend Not Harris ? I can't believe he was a spy !

Polly No, Gwendolyn, the CIA's top man was your husband, Herbert Smith !

Gwend WHAT ! Mexi - A secret agent ? - I don't believe it !

Simpson Didn't you know, Gwenders ?

Gwend Do you mean *you* knew, Simpson ?!

Simpson Oh yes - I knew old Mexi was pretty high up in the CIA !

Gwend And you never told me - And HE never told me !

Simpson The fewer people who know that sort of thing the better, Gwenders !

Gwend But I was his wife !

Holly So who poisoned me - and why ?

Bunny And what's this that you say you know about me, Polly ?

MrsScrimp And why's the house full of secret spies and things ?

Polly If I may continue we received information that several of the most important members of this evil organisation were to meet at this house this weekend

Simpson Gosh

Polly And what's more, we knew that Mr.Big would be meeting them here !

Marreau Monsieur Big ? There is no-one here of that name.

Havelock It is a figurative expression, sir, employed to represent the most important protagonist in an organisation, if you will forgive the tautology.

Marreau Er

Polly And finally he arrived

Simpson So who is it Polls ?

Polly His name is Lewis !

All: [*Not together*] Lewis ?

Marreau [*Shocked*] But I am Lewis ... I mean, I was pretending to be Lewis ... I mean

Farmer Now Monsieur Marreau - what have you been doing - I was prepared to overlook you impersonating a police officer - but if you're in charge of a band of international terrorists I'm afraid I'm going to have to arrest you !

Marreau *Sacre Bleu !* This is ridiculous !

Polly There's no point denying it Marreau - it was you who murdered Mr. Smith - and who poisoned Holly !

All: Gosh ! (*etc.*)

Simpson Marreau, you didn't !

Gwend [*Flumps down*] You're saying my husband was killed by my best friend !

Polly I'm afraid so Gwendolyn. Arrest him Farmer !

Farmer Right you are. Sorry about this Monsieur Marreau.

Marreau Wait ! I will not be accused in my own denouement ! I can prove it is not me - Havelock knew about my little deception - he knew where I was hiding ! Tell them Havelock !

Havelock I am afraid I am at a loss to corroborate your alibi, sir. I knew nothing of your shenanigans - and I certainly will not perjure myself to defend a traitor.

Marreau What are you saying Havelock ? It was mostly your idea - you even suggested the name I should adopt !

Havelock Quite ridiculous ! I did not converse with you at all on the subject.

MrsScrimp That's not quite true is it, Mr. Havelock - I did see you speaking to that Frenchman there.

Havelock You are mistaken, Martha

Simpson Is she ?

Polly You discovered Mr. Smith's body, didn't you Havelock ?

Havelock Indeed, that was my misfortune.

Holly ... and you brought me the food that made me ill

Havelock Purely coincidental - circumstantial - inconclusive

Marreau That is quite enough big words, Havelock, your swan is cooked ... it is you isn't it Havelock - admit it - you are the leader of the Sword of Carthage !

Holly Of course ! I've remembered now ! That was the strange thing ! I saw Havelock peering out of the trees by the pond - that's what I saw !

Marreau And that is why you were poisoned, mademoiselle - in case you remembered !

Havelock Damn your eyes ! That I should be outwitted by such feeble brains !

Victor [*Coming forward with a dagger towards Holly*] Let our beloved leader go or the girl gets it in the neck ! [*Slight pause*] Literally !

All: [*General murmuring*]

Farmer [*Produces gun, shoots Victor*] [*Protheroe goes over to Victor*] Is he dead ?

Protheroe Not quite.

Farmer [*Shoots him again*]

Protheroe He is now.

Simpson Good shot Farmer.

Deirdre [*Ecstatic*] Yipppeeee !!!! He's dead ! He's dead ! A bit quick - but never mind ... he's dead all the same ! Pity he didn't suffer a while first !

Gwend Havelock ! You ! I don't understand !

Havelock Of course you don't ! Good old Havelock - that's what you think - good old trusty Havelock. Well I'm not good old Havelock - I'm bad old Lewis - Yes ! I'm Lewis, the man you've been after for years, Miss Cartwright. And as for you Mrs. Smith - Has it never occurred to you how brilliant I am ! What is a brain like mine doing being employed as flunky to a host of miserable so-called gentry ! I conceived The Sword of Carthage to overthrow the established order - so that intelligence and not wealth would rule !

Simpson Oh gosh ! You misguided old fool ! Crikey - you can't expect our leaders to be intelligent ! That's even dafter than them being women ! Ha ha !

Bunny Alright - that's enough ! Stand back everyone - [*Produces bomb*] one false move and this place goes up like a powder keg !

Holly Bunny - what are you doing ? Don't be mad !

Bunny Let Havelock go - or we all go up together !

Simpson It's a bomb !

Gwend Well spotted, Simpson.

Simpson [Simpson makes a lunge at Bunny] Take that Bunny ! [He attacks Bunny]
[The bomb goes up in the air, everyone ducks except Simpson who catches it (preferably)]
[Farmer restrains Bunny]
Gwend [Pannicy] What do you think you are doing Simpson ?
Simpson [Snips one of the protruding wires as everyone cowers] There you go - all safe now !
Polly That was rather risky wasn't it Simon ?
Simpson Not really - I've done quite a bit of bomb disposal ! This is a type 92 - they're a piece of cake !
Gwend What ?!
Marreau Well done Simpson - The case is solved -
Marreau the Magnificent has saved the world !!!!

[Blackout] [[Curtain]]

Marreau's next adventure is : "*Marreau and the Clouds of Death*"