

Requiem for Marreau

A detective comedy in two acts by Rob Farrow

The seventh Marreau adventure.

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Dramatis Personae

Simpson	Friend of the late Marreau
Gwendolyn Smith	Secretary to the late Marreau
Sprote	Butler to Simpson
James "Wombat" Arbroath	An Australian visitor
Isabel	Mistress of MacTallach Castle
Hamish	Husband of Isabel
Edgar	Uncle of Isabel
Bertie	Brother-in-Law of Isabel
Laura Taft	A friend of Bertie
Mavis Travis	A friend of Laura's
Dr. Protheroe	A doctor, brother-in-law of Isabel.
Mr. Gruttock	Butler to Hamish & Isabel
Mrs. Gruttock	Cook to Hamish & Isabel, wife of the above
Lily	A Maid
Bessie	A mysterious young lady
Inspector Farmer	A policeman

Act I Scene 1

(In front of half-tabs which are closed concealing the later set.)

A country home. There is a sofa & two armchairs (as per usual) Lightly furnished as set must be cleared quickly between first & second scenes.

Simpson is seated in armchair S/R twiddling his thumbs, Gwendolyn is seated in armchair S/L reading a book on the occult or some equivalent superstitious or mystical subject.

Simpson Anything interesting in there, Gwenders ?

Gwend [Not looking up] In where ?

Simpson That book you're reading.

Gwend Oh, yes, [Looking up] It's fascinating, Simon ... there is so much we do not understand.

Simpson You can say that again. I understand hardly anything.

Gwend I mean about *the other side*

Simpson Australia ?

Gwend No not Australia - the Spirit World.

Simpson Oh that - best left well alone if you ask me.

Gwend But don't you find it intriguing ?

Simpson I suppose so - but to be honest I find *this* world puzzling enough without trying to work out what's going on *upstairs* so to speak. [Rises]

Gwend Upstairs ? What a quaint way of thinking of it. The Spirit World is all around us, Simon. It's not up some metaphorical staircase ! It's here, Simon. It's with us. It's in this very room !

Simpson [Looking around] What ? Where ? I can't see it ! [Goes over to window]

Gwend That's because you're not looking. None of us are looking - not in the way we need to.

Simpson I don't think I'll bother if it's all the same to you. [Looks out of window]

Gwend Well - it's your loss, Simon.

Simpson I say Gwenders, what's that on the lawn ?

Gwend [Rests book on lap] Oh what now Simon ?

Simpson There's something funny on the lawn !

Gwend Well get it to tell a joke then !

Simpson What ? No – don't be silly – come and have a look.

Gwend [Resignedly getting up & crossing to window] Oh, very well, if I must.

Simpson [As *Gwend* gets there] There – look !

Gwend Good grief, you're right – that *is* funny.

Simpson What is it ?

Gwend I don't know – looks like a duck-billed platypus to me.

Simpson That's what I thought.

Gwend [Slight pause, thinks] You know what this means don't you Simon !

Simpson Some Australians have moved into the neighbourhood ?

Gwend No – it's a sign, Simon – it's a sign from [stops]

Simpson From whom ?

Gwend [Pause, with emphasis] Marreau !

Simpson Marreau ? It can't be – he's dead, Gwenders – three years now – it can't be – we both saw him plunge down that bottomless well – poor old Marreau.

Gwend That's why I say it's a sign – Marreau's communicating in the only way he can.

Simpson [Looks askance at *Gwend*] [Pause] Via a duck-billed platypus ?

Gwend He knew you'd be gazing out of the window – he knew you'd see it – and he knew you'd comment on it.

Simpson Great Scott ! D'you really think so ?

Gwend I'm certain of it.

Simpson But why a duck-billed platypus ?

Gwend Because it's so unusual – you'd hardly have called me over to see a blackbird, would you ?

Simpson I might've done.

Gwend True, you might – but you wouldn't be able to *resist* a duck-billed platypus, would you ?

Simpson I s'pose not.

[*Sprote* enters S/L and places tea tray etc. on small table S/L]

Sprote [Polite cough] Your tea, sir, madam.

Gwend Ah, *Sprote*, just the chap !

Sprote Madam ?

Gwend What would you say that *that* is – on the lawn ?

Sprote On the lawn madam ?

Gwend Yes - over there - underneath the copper beech.

Sprote [Doesn't move or even look at the window] I wouldn't know madam.

Simpson You haven't even looked yet, *Sprote*.

Sprote That is why I wouldn't know, sir.

Simpson Well have a look then.

Sprote Very good sir [*walks in stately fashion to window S/R, looks out*] The furry thing sir ?

Simpson That's the chappy.

Sprote I fear sir, that it is a duck-billed platypus.

Gwend Have you any idea what it is doing there, Sprote ?

Sprote Well – [*Pause*] – It appears to be just ambling about, in my humble opinion.

Gwend No, Sprote, that isn't what I meant. What I was asking was how we come to have an antipodean monotreme *ambling about* – as you put it - in our garden in the first place.

Sprote I wouldn't like to say madam.

Simpson It's a sign, Sprote.

Sprote Is it sir ? That's – um – [*pause*] – interesting sir.

Simpson Yes, it's a message of some kind.

Sprote Really sir – what does it say – if I may make so bold as to enquire.

Simpson Dashed if I know.

Sprote [*Intentionally flippant*] May I suggest the Royal Mail in future sir, or even the telephone.

Simpson No you don't understand, Sprotey – It's a message from Marreau !

Sprote From Monsieur Marreau, sir ? Your dead friend.

Simpson Yep – that's him.

Sprote I see - Was he particularly partial to duck-billed platypi ?

Simpson I don't know. Quite possibly – I seem to remember that he liked all furry animals.

Sprote I see sir, - would sir like me to shoo it ?

Simpson Certainly not ! It was bad enough having old hatchet-face Guile murdering that poor defenceless little squirrel, without my own butler going around killing duck-billed platypuses.

Sprote "Shoo" sir, not "shoot". As in "shoo it away", sir.

Gwend Where precisely would you shoo it to, Sprote.

Sprote Away, madam.

Gwend No, no, leave it be – I can't see that it can do much damage.

Sprote Very good, madam – will there be anything else ?

Simpson No, Sprote thank-you, we'll ding you if we want anything.

Sprote Very good, sir – [*Going to leave*] oh, I nearly forgot, there is a letter for you sir – it is on the tea tray.

Gwend Thank-you Sprote. [*Sprote bows slightly & exits*]

Simpson [Goes to tray, picks up tea, sips, picks up letter] Probably just a bill. [tosses letter back onto tray]

Gwend [Sighs] Oh dear.

Simpson What's the matter Gwenders ?

Gwend Oh nothing - just that in the old days - when Marreau was still about - a letter arriving like that - it might've been the start of one of our investigations. [Goes to tea tray]

Simpson Yes, we did have some good times didn't we.

Gwend [Smiles wistfully] And some bad ones - but, all in all, something has been missing from my life since old Marreau died ... [Picks up tea cup, sips]

Simpson Well, Marreau for a start.

Gwend Of course - but I mean there's just not the challenge any more. [Idly picks up letter]

Simpson True.

Gwend [Looking at letter] It's from Scotland, Simon ... I doubt it's a bill.

Simpson Could be [slight pause] for my new waders - I've ordered them from MacIntyre, MacIntyre, MacIntyre & - um - [thinks, clicks fingers] MacIntyre.

Gwend In Oban ?

Simpson No, Edinburgh.

Gwend Well, it's not from them then - this is postmarked Oban.

Simpson [Over to Gwend; takes letter from her] Better have a look I suppose. [Opens letter, reads]

Gwend [pause while Simpson reads to himself] Well ? Anything interesting ?

Simpson Good Heavens !

Gwend What is it, Simon ?

Simpson Look - [shows Gwend the headed paper]

Gwend MacTallach Castle ? That rings a bell.

Simpson I should say it does - remember all that business with the hamster - Little Jimmy and all that ?

Gwend Of course ! Yes - it was that awful two-timing woman who inherited MacTallach Castle wasn't it ?

Simpson Isabel - it certainly was - but she wasn't *that* awful ...

Gwend Oh yes - I remember now - you'd had a liaison with her hadn't you ... ?

Simpson Um, well, yes, I suppose so - it was years ago though. [Suddenly lost in Reverie] The moonlight was dancing on the Seine, the sound of violins wafted gently through the still night air

Gwend [Irritated, not at all amused] Yes, yes, yes - I remember all that from the last time ...

Simpson [Contrite] Oh, yes - sorry

Gwend Hmmm - well don't forget you're engaged to be *married* now, Simon.

Simpson [Slightly glumly] How could I forget ?

Gwend Well don't - I'm none too happy about my fiancé receiving billets-doux from former paramours !

Simpson It's hardly a billet-doux, Gwenders.

Gwend Aha ! So you admit she was a paramour !

Simpson I don't even know what a paramour is, Gwenders - I thought they made movies.

Gwend Oh good grief - What's in the letter then ? What does she want ?

Simpson [Lightly] Oh, there's been a murder and she wants us to investigate

Gwend [Suddenly interested] What ???

Simpson Here; I'll read you what she says :

"My dear Simmy ...

Gwend Bloody cheek !

Simpson "My dear Simmy, I was so sorry to hear of Marreau's tragic accident. It must have been dreadful for you to witness. I am writing to you however, because we have had a mysterious death on the estate which we believe to be murder but the police have drawn a complete blank. I do not know if you still investigate cases now that Marreau is no longer alive - but if you do then your help in this matter would be most appreciated. Please let me know of your decision. Should you wish to accept then I would be delighted if you would stay with me at the castle."

Gwend I bet she would ... trollop !

Simpson [Continues reading] I will let you know all the details when you arrive. Does that ... "
[suddenly stops] ... um that's it.

Gwend "Does that - what ?"

Simpson [Flustered] Um - What ? - er - nothing ...

Gwend [Grabs letter, reads]

"Does that snooty cow Gwendolyn still work for you ?"

Simpson I'm sure she doesn't mean it

Gwend "Work for you !" Hmmph ! I'm not sure which is more insulting - being called a "snooty cow" or the suggestion that I work *for* you !"

Simpson Well she obviously hasn't heard that we're engaged - that's for sure.

Gwend [Smiles] No. Obviously. [Pointedly hands the letter back to Simpson]

Simpson Pity we don't do the investigating any more, isn't it ... this one sounds interesting.

Gwend [Slowly] Yes it does [little pause][quicker] - wait a minute - why don't we *do* it ?

Simpson [Surprised look] What - Now ?

Gwend Yes - We could investigate it - why not ?

Simpson Oh, I see, do the case - right - But we can't do it without Marreau !

Gwend Of course we can.

Simpson But ...

Gwend Remember the platypus !

Simpson Platypus ?

Gwend The message from Marreau - that's what it's all about. That was what the platypus meant - It was Marreau's way of telling us to take the case !

Simpson Really ? D'you think so ?

Gwend I'm sure of it.

[*Sprote enters*]

Sprote Excuse me - but there is a - ahem - gentleman to see you ...

[*James "Wombat" Arbroath (J(W)A) enters*]

J(W)A G'day - Me name's Arbroath - Wombat Arbroath ... well it's James Arbroath to be strictly accurate ... but call me *Wombat* - all me cobbers do.

Gwend Um, hello, Mr. Arbroath - how can we help you ?

J(W)A Lost me platypus ... gone walkabout 'e has - little devil ... Yer man here, says you've seen 'im wandrin' about the gairden - that right ?

Simpson Yes - that's right. Nice little fellow isn't he ?

J(W)A Surely is - most surely is. Best mate a bloke could wish for.

Gwend A platypus ?

J(W)A Oh yes, most assuredly - great little pal 'e is. Gotta watch out for his little spurs though ...

Gwend Spurs ?

J(W)A Yeah, poison-tipped spurs on his legs ... not deadly, like, but 'e'll give you a painful jab if you don't watch yerself.

Gwend Will you be able to round him up yourself - or would you like Sprote to help you.

J(W)A Oh well, if you're offerin' .. then yer man here sure could lend a hand ...

Simpson That alright with you, Sprotey ?

Sprote I am here to serve, sir.

J(W)A Well that's jolly decent of you.

Simpson Oh, Sprotey,

Sprote Yes, sir.

Simpson After you've helped Mr. Wombat - would you pop along to the map room and fetch the Ordnance Survey map that covers Oban.

Sprote Certainly sir. [*Exits*]

J(W)A Oban ? Did you say Oban ?

Gwend Yes, why ?

J(W)A Well if that's not the biggest coincidence I've come across since me Uncle Henry turned out to be me father.

Gwend Um - yes - what is ? I mean what's a coincidence ?

J(W)A Well there he was, not only me uncle but also me dad as it turns out - not that he was a real uncle of course - just called 'im that - no, just a family friend - well, just a friend of me *mother* really, if truth be known.

Gwend Oh good grief - that wasn't the coincidence I was talking about - I meant what was coincidental about Oban ?

J(W)A Oh right, yes, Oban - I'd almost forgotten about that - well 'til this mornin' I'd never even *heard* of Oban - then I gets this letter this very mornin' from me cousin - askin' if I'd come up and see her. And guess where she lives -

Simpson [Shrugs] Nope - haven't a clue.

J(W)A That's right ! Oban - well a little village just outside o' the town apparently.

Simpson I say - yes - that *is* a coincidence. Gosh.

Gwend Well, anyway, it's been nice meeting you, Mr. Arbroath ...

Simpson I say - there's another coincidence -

Gwend Oh what now Simpson ?

Simpson His name !

J(W)A Wombat ? What about it ?

Simpson No not wombat - your real name - Arbroath ... that's a town in Scotland too.

J(W)A Yeah, well me family came from Scotland originally like - before one of me ancestors got into a bit o' trouble - and well you know how it was in those days ... off to Australia with 'im.

Gwend You mean he was transported ?

J(W)A No - no - not actually transported ...

Simpson What then ?

J(W)A Well, if you must know, it was me Granddad. He got a local girl in trouble up there in Scotland. Well her father was a bit of a tyrant - not too happy 'bout his little girl getting in the family way like that. So he vowed to stop me Grandfather doin' anything like that again ... was gonna use some farming implements on 'im - if you get me drift.

Simpson [Wince] Yes I think I get the picture.

J(W)A Yeah, things looked pretty bleak for me Granddad, so he scarpered off to Oz. before the old man could get his sheep shears a-workin' on 'im ... so that's how our bit of the family ended up as Aussies.

Simpson Gosh - how interesting.

J(W)A Anyway, mustn't go takin' up any more of your time - I'll go and find that man of yours see if we can't get me little platty back where he belongs. [Leaving] Nice meeting you - and thanks again [Exits]

Simpson He seemed a nice sort of chap.

Gwend Yes - funny enough, he rather reminded me of Mexi .

Simpson Poor old Mexi.

Gwend [Wistfully] I've not had a lot of luck have I Simon ? I mean my husband being killed with that newt - and Marreau dropping down a well ... [Over to Simpson] you'd better look after yourself Simon, or I'll ... well, just look after yourself, alright ?

Simpson Course I will, Gwenders. No need to worry about me.

Gwend [Cheering up] So - anyway - what are we going to do about the charming Lady Isabel and her mysterious corpse ?

Simpson Well I suppose we'd better get up to MacTallach castle and have a poke around - see what we can turn up.

Gwend [Smiles] That's the spirit Simon - we'd best get Sprote to pack our bags and prepare for the journey - [Muses] Our first case in years - I hope we haven't lost the knack.

Simpson If you remember, Gwenders, I never had the knack in the first place.

Gwend True.

[Blackout]

Act I Scene 2

Set in front of ½-tabs cleared.

Half tabs open to reveal :

MacTallach Castle : A baronial hall.

Uncle Edgar is asleep in a chair at rear.

There is no-one else on stage.

A figure in white (Bessie) enters front S/L glides across stage & exits front S/R

Lily (a maid) enters and starts tidying things.

A moment later voices are heard, Isabel, Simpson, Gwendolyn and Gruttock enter S/R (rear)

Isabel [As they enter] So that's the quick tour [Now in room] [To Gruttock] Will you make sure that Mr. Simpson's gentleman is looked after in the servant's hall please Gruttock.

Gruttock That I will madam - may I enquire as to his name ?

Simpson What Old Sprotey d'you mean ?

Gruttock Ah Sprotey is it sir ? Very good.

Simpson Er yes - well it's Sprote to be precise.

Gruttock Not Sprotey then ? Just Sprote is that right sir ?

Simpson Yes, just Sprote.

Gruttock Very good sir, I will make Mr. Sprote as welcome as our humble quarters will allow sir.

Simpson Jolly D - It'll be a nice break for someone to look after him for a change.

Gruttock Oh, madam, your brother-in-law and the ladies have arrived back from stalkin' the moor -

Isabel Thank-you Gruttock

Gruttock Will there be anything else ?

Isabel No thank-you Gruttock - you may leave us ...

Gruttock [To Lily] Lily, stop that now and come and help with Mr. Bertie and his guests

Lily Whatever you say Mr. Gruttock - shall I pour Mr. Edgar another glass of whisky before I go ?

Gruttock Is he conscious ?

Lily [Goes over to Edgar, hits his knee with a spoon] Not at the moment Mr. Gruttock

Gruttock Well just top up his present glass then -

Lily Right you are, Mr. Gruttock.[She tops up the glass and both she and Gruttock exit]

Isabel [Effusive to Simpson] I can't get over the fact that you came ... I'm really am *delighted* you decided to come, Simon.

Simpson It's a pleasure, Isabel ...

Isabel And you too, Gwendolyn ... so lovely to see you again.

Gwend Yes - [pause][witheringly] I did *read* the letter, Isabel !

Isabel [Embarrassed] Oh - yes - right - I see. [pause] Look - please, please forgive me - if you remember we didn't exactly hit it off last time we met, did we ?

Gwend [Curtly] An understatement, I think.

Isabel Look - I'm sorry - I certainly shouldn't have called you a snooty cow in that letter - it was unforgivable of me. Do you think we could bury the hatchet as they say - see if we can't try to get along.

Gwend [Considers for a moment] Alright - I don't see why not - I think you're probably right - there's nothing to be gained by being unpleasant to each other is there ?

Isabel Oh I'm so pleased ... so much better if we can all be friends ...

Simpson Absolutely ... I bet we'll get on like a house on fire now.

Gwend No need to get carried away, Simon.

Isabel Anyway - I must introduce you to my husband ...

Gwend Husband ! ?

Simpson You've remarried, Isabel ?

Isabel Well don't sound quite so surprised, Simon. I'm not over the hill just yet ...

Simpson Oh no - gosh - of course - I wasn't suggesting that ...

Isabel Hamish and I got married just over a year ago ...

Gwend Hamish - He's Scottish at a wild guess then ?

Isabel Um, yes - I suppose he is - but to be fair you'd never tell it from his accent - he's travelled so much you see. You'll see what I mean when you meet him.

Gwend Well you have my congratulations, Isabel - [half aside] perhaps being friends is not going to be so difficult after all.

Simpson Mine too, Isabel - that's wonderful news. In fact we've got some news of

Gwend [Cutting in] ... So, Isabel when will we meet him ?

Isabel Oh any minute I hope - he's around somewhere. You'll like Hamish, I'm sure. In fact it was his idea that I write to you in the first place.

Gwend Really ?

Simpson How did he know about us ?

Isabel Oh - it seems he was quite a fan of your friend Marreau - used to follow his cases avidly apparently. He knew every detail of *our* case of course - Little Jimmy - the hamster - everything.

Simpson That's amazing !

Gwend Every detail, Isabel ?

Isabel [Embarrassed] [Nervous laugh] Every *pertinent* detail let's say. No need for all my little secrets to come out was there ! [Another nervous laugh] You won't tell him, will you ?

Simpson Of course not - Isabel - your secrets are safe with us, aren't they Gwenders ?

Gwend [Smiles] My lips are sealed ...

Simpson What about me, Isabel ?

Isabel You - Simon ? What do you mean ?

Simpson Does he know about our little flingette - years ago - In Paris - The moonlight dancing on the Seine ...

Isabel Oh that - well no I suppose he doesn't - but I wouldn't think he'd mind too much - I'm sure he has a past of his own of some sort too - but he never talks about it - so I've never asked.

[**Hamish enters**]

Ah - here he is now

Note: Hamish has a completely unidentifiable accent - basically Scottish but which swings wildly and erratically to any other conceivable dialect.

Hamish Izzy my dear - our guests, they are arrived - splendid.

Isabel Yes - come and meet them ...

Hamish Och - there is not the need for introductions - I feel as if I know you already !

Mrs Smith, Mr. Simpson - it's an honour to meet the companions of the late great Marreau.

Simpson Please, call me Simon

Gwend And Gwendolyn

Hamish That would be an honour - and I am Hamish - as I have no doubt Isabel has already told you.

Gwend Just so - congratulations on your marriage.

Isabel We're so happy together aren't we Hamish ?

Hamish Indeed we are. I have never been happier. But I must say this murder has put a bit of a dark cloud over things around here of late.

Simpson Which is why *we're* here - see if we can clear it all up for you.

Hamish Just like Marreau the Marvellous would have done. Admirable. Admirable.

Gwend Actually Hamish, he used to call himself Marreau the Magnificent - not Marreau the Marvellous

Hamish Oh thank-you for telling me.

Gwend So what can you tell us about the death - I notice now that you say it was murder - is that certain now ?

Hamish It seems pretty certain - though it was not so at first.

Simpson Oh ?

Isabel Yes everyone just assumed he'd drowned to start with.

Gwend And he hadn't ?

Hamish [A light laugh] Well yes - he had - but ... well rather than continue this cataclysm [(sic for catechism)], why do I not just tell you the facts as far as we know them to date.

Gwend Sounds like an excellent idea.

Hamish Two weeks ago a body was washed up on Ardroch Bay, which forms part of this estate. We were all shocked to learn that it was Donald MacAlium a relation of Isabel's as it happens.

Gwend Really ? Did he live with you, here at the castle ?

Isabel No, no - he was just a cousin of my father - which I think makes him my second cousin - he lived in the next village. We were well acquainted and met occasionally on business but we didn't really consider him to be *family* - if you know what I mean.

Gwend: Business ? What business did you do with him ?

Isabel: Oh, he was a local builder and surveyor - he was helping me with my plans for the redevelopment of the estate. Damned nuisance actually, I had to find someone to replace him.

Hamish Yes, he was very well known locally. Not surprisingly it was assumed that he had either fallen off a boat or from the cliffs and had subsequently drowned at sea.

Isabel That's what *everyone* thought wasn't it, Hamish - except you.

Hamish Indeed - the policemen they were quite happy to leave it at that - but there was something about the death that just seemed strange to me.

Gwend What was that ?

Hamish Well - if he had fallen from the cliffs one would have expected severe damage to his body - broken bones, confusions [sic] etcetera - but apparently there were none. If he'd fallen off a boat then if he was with companions - why was this not reported. If he was on his own - which seems highly unlikely in the first place - then whatever 'appened to his boat.

Simpson Perhaps he'd been swimming and had got into difficulties.

Hamish [Smiling] Mr. Simpson, the Firth of Lorn is no place to go swimming in February my friend - and certainly not fully clothed !

Simpson Ahh - good point.

Gwend But surely he could have toppled in from a low enough height not to break any bones.

Hamish Yes - yes of course - this was a possibility - but it just seemed unlikely enough for me to be able to persuade the police to perform a Post Mortem [*slight pause*] and that is when they discovered the clinching evidence for murder. [*he pronounces this "mair-dair"*]

Gwend [After a sideways glance at Hamish] And what *was* the evidence ?

Hamish The man had most certainly drowned - but in *fresh* water - not salt water.

Simpson I see !

Gwend Just a thought - but perhaps he'd fallen into a local river. Drowned in the river and been washed out to sea

Hamish Oh Heavens ! [Pause] Great Scott ! I had not thought of that !

Isabel Of course, Hamish - so that's how poor Donald must've died.

Hamish Oh dear - so I have dragged you all the way up here under false pretences ...

Gwend Well wait a minute - my suggestion was only one possibility - I mean I don't *know* that's how he died - it's just one way of explaining the fresh water in his lungs.

Hamish Yes, but how can we prove it one way or the other ?

Gwend Hmm ... do you know whether Mr. MacAlium was a strong swimmer or not ?

Isabel I have no idea - have you darling ?

Hamish No. But his friends would know, I would have thought.

Simpson And when was he last seen alive ?

Hamish Ah, now that I *do* know. The last person to see him - as far as we can ascertain - was Ian Campbell - he is a crofter over at Mallach Point just a mile or so south of here - he saw him two days before his body turned up.

Gwend Do they have any idea how long he'd been in the water ?

Hamish Well yes - about two days - so he must've died not long after Campbell saw him.

Gwend And what was he doing - when he was seen by Mr. Campbell ?

Hamish Just walking along the track that passes by Campbell's croft apparently ...

Simpson Would you be able to show us where that is on this map ? [Produces OS map]

Hamish Yes, yes of course. [Simpson spreads map out] ... let me have a look ... ah, yes ... there we are [points to place on the map] [Gwend & Simpson both peer at the map]

Gwend Mmmm, interesting.

Isabel What is it, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend I think my river theory is rather scuppered - look - there are no rivers for miles. I mean of course it's possible that he got to either this one or ... this one [*pointing to places on the map*] but they are quite a trek. There are no roads to them - it would've taken him hours.

Hamish Oh good - so he *was* murdered ! ["*mair-daired*"] - Excellent !

Isabel *Hamish* !

Hamish Oh, I do apologize, that was heartless - I just meant it looks like I *was* right after all - I thought it smelt of murder

[*Inspector Farmer enters*]

Farmer Oh yes he were murdered alright. By 'eck 'e was.

Isabel Ah, Inspector !

Simpson [Surprised] Farmer ?

Farmer Well if it's not Mr. Simpson ... and Mrs. - er - what you be called these days, M'dear ?

Gwend Smith - I'm still called Smith for the moment at least, Inspector.

Farmer Well it be lovely to see you again. Haven't seen you since - crikey - when was it ?

Simpson Three years ago ... when poor old Marreau ...

Farmer That's right - when Musher Marreau went and plopped down that bottomless well. I remember now. [*Chuckling*] Deary me, he came a right cropper didn't 'e ! By 'eck 'e did. - [Suddenly more sombre] Sad though that were - he were a nice chap were Musher Marreau.

Simpson So, you've been made back up to Inspector again now then, Farmer.

Farmer I certainly 'ave ... bit o' luck here and there - and here I am

Hamish You were saying Inspector - that Mr. MacAlium was definitely murdered ?

Farmer Oh yes - that be right - no doubt about it - and what's more we know where !

Isabel Really ! How ?

Farmer Duckweed.

All Duckweed ?

Farmer That's right, Duckweed.

Gwend Would you care to explain, Inspector, or are you going to leave it at that ?

Farmer Well it's like this it is. As well as finding water in that poor chap's lungs the Doc also found some duckweed. - But not any old duckweed, oh no, this were a special kind o' duckweed. Only grows in one place round these parts as far as anyone knows.

Gwend Oh I see - I'm intrigued, Inspector - where *is* it found then ?

Farmer Right here - in the lake of this very castle - introduced species you see - not naturally occurring ... had our forensic chappies right worked up it did - till one naturalist chappy he recognized it. Had some fancy Latin name for it - but said as how he'd only ever seen it in one place in the whole of Scotland - and that was MacTallach castle.

Hamish Good grief - Well I'll be ...

Isabel Oh no ! Oh dear ! Poor Donald - killed *here* ! ... oh that's horrible [whispers]

Hamish There, there my dear. It cannot be helped. No need to upset yourself.

Simpson I say, that's a bit of a turn up for the books isn't it !

Farmer So anyways we reckon as how he were killed here in your lake what you've got here and then he were just rolled down that hill into the sea. Thinkin' as how he'd get washed out to sea. But he weren't - he just got stuck there on that bit o' beach where we found 'im.

Gwend Well, Farmer, I'm impressed - you seem to have investigated this pretty thoroughly.

Farmer Thank-you m'dear, it's nice to be appreciated it is. By 'eck it is.

Simpson I don't suppose you've got any suspects ?

Farmer No, no not got that far - 'fraid not - couldn't find any clues at all as to *who* it was what did it - but I've got some men lookin' into y' lake at the moment - see if we can turn anything up.

Gwend Well done again Farmer ...

Simpson Yes, you seem to be getting the hang of this investigating lark !

Farmer Well I'll be off to the lake then - see how me men are getting' on. I'll let you know of any developments. [**Exits**]

Gwend What on Earth has happened to him ? He seems almost *efficient* these days.

Hamish Who ? Inspector Farmer ? He has been most helpful. In fact he was my biggest ally in getting a Post Mortem carried out - it was his superintendent who considered that it was not necessary.

Gwend Well frankly I'm astonished - it's amazing what a difference a few years can make.

Simpson Or a few seconds if someone's holding your head under water - what !!!

Isabel Oh, Simon, please - please don't - the very idea of it - oh it's too [*Breaks down*]

Gwend I realise it has no bearing on the case whatsoever - but who on earth would want to import duckweed ?

Hamish What ?

Gwend I mean I can understand someone introducing nice furry little animals from abroad - even plants - if they've got pretty flowers or interesting foliage or something - but *duckweed* ? Who could get excited about duckweed for Heaven's sake ?

Simpson Oh I don't know. My Uncle Stanley used to collect *mould*.

Isabel *Eurgh* - That's horrid.

Gwend Mould ?

Simpson Yes - loved the stuff - I remember him getting really excited about a rare Madagascan example - and I even brought him back some myself once. Abyssinian Slime Mould - that was the one - he was ever-so grateful.

Gwend Weird Simon, truly weird.

Simpson Bit sad though.

Gwend Very sad if you ask me.

Simpson No I mean it was sad that it killed him in the end.

Isabel The slime mould killed him ?

Simpson Indirectly yes. He had a prize-winning patch of it in his conservatory; but then after some damp weather it spread like wild fire. He went in there one day and slipped on it. Slid the full length of the conservatory and piled into life-sized statue of Eros ...

Isabel Oh dear !

Hamish How unfortunate.

Simpson Yes, it was the bow that did the damage.

Gwend A *life-sized* statue of Eros - how tall was the mythical god of passion and fertility then ?

Simpson About five foot three.

[Uncle Edgar staggers to his feet, he is sozzled]

Gwend Fine.

Edgar [Slurred] Wolffia Borealis !

Simpson [Startled] What ?

Isabel Uncle Edgar ... you're awake !

Edgar Wolffia Borealis I say !

Hamish Yes, we heard you - what are you talking about though ?

Edgar The duckweed - that's its name ... Very rare. Quite a feather in father's cap that was !

Isabel You knew about the duckweed, then ?

Edgar Absolutely ... remember the day father brought it back from British Columbia like it was yesterday - a great day that was - we had Pink Champagne to celebrate. Excellent. And a few brandies too. Well quite a few brandies if I remember rightly. Ha ha - he liked his brandy did father. Those were the days.

Isabel A trait you've inherited, Uncle.

Edgar Quite so, quite so. Like a drop of brandy. Certainly do.

Hamish We've noticed.

Edgar And Scotch of course - well living up here, could hardly not like Scotch could I ? Ha ! No, like a drop of malt.

Isabel You often sit out by the lake don't you Uncle.

Edgar Yes, yes, sit by the lake and watch the duckweed. Can't beat it.

Gwend You didn't see anything untoward did you ?

Edgar What d'you mean - untoward ?

Gwend With regards the drowning ...

Edgar What old Donald - is that what you mean ?

Isabel Yes of course it's what we mean, Uncle.

Edgar Oh right - well yes - I did actually.

Simpson Oh ? What ?

Edgar Well I think I probably saw him being murdered actually.

All: What ?!!!!

Edgar Hold on - no - that's not right.

Isabel What are you talking about, Uncle ?

Edgar Well, I wouldn't have said it was murder - more of an accident I'd've said.

Hamish Edgar - explain yourself - what did you see ?

Edgar Oh, yes - well they were having a fight ...

Hamish Who were ?

Edgar Donald of course - and - um - what's-his-name - you know

Isabel [Getting exasperated] For pity's sake - no we don't know - who was he fighting with ?

Edgar Urm - oh dear, my memory's just not what it was - you know the fellow - no - it's gone - sorry - it'll come back to me I'm sure - perhaps if I had another little drink

Hamish Do you think that's really advisable ?

Edgar I tell you what, Hamish, come with me to the cellar and we'll pick out a nice bottle or two of Armagnac for our friends here ...

Hamish Why do you want me to come with you ?

Edgar I think you might have to hold me up, I'm feeling a little wobbly

Hamish Hmm, alright I suppose I could - very well - excuse me everyone.

[Exit Hamish & Edgar]

Isabel I'm sorry about that ... I'm afraid Uncle Edgar is rather partial to a drop of the strong stuff.

Gwend So it would appear.

Simpson Seems a nice sort of chap though.

Isabel Oh yes, he's not a bad old stick really.

Gwend I hope he regains his memory - about what he saw at the lake.

Isabel Yes - but - well - I'm not sure his testimony is really going to be that helpful even if he does remember.

Simpson Oh ?

Gwend It doesn't necessarily have to stand up in a court of law or anything - just as long as it puts us on the right track - then we should be able to find some more evidence.

Isabel That's not actually what I was worried about -

Simpson What then ?

Isabel Well, it's a bit embarrassing - but he sees things -

Simpson Yes - he said - he saw Donald having a fight ...

Isabel Yes but did he ? I mean he sees things that aren't there -

Simpson What ? Ghosts and things like that ?

Isabel No - more like pink elephants and giant badgers ...

Gwend Oh - right - really helpful

Isabel *Delirious Tremens* I think is the technical expression.

Simpson So you're saying he could have imagined the whole thing ?

Isabel Indeed he might have.

[*Bertie, Laura Taft and Mavis Travis enter together*]

Bertie What-ho folks !

Isabel Hello Bertie !

Bertie Hello Isabel -

Isabel You remember my late husband's brother Bertie don't you ?

Gwend Of course we do.

Simpson I'll say - nice to meet you again.

Bertie [To *Simpson & Gwendolyn*] Oh I say - hello again - It's Mr. Simpson and Miss Bayne isn't it.

Gwend Mrs Smith now -

Bertie Oh I see - didn't know you'd got married - congratulations -

Gwend He's dead.

Bertie Oh I say - Sorry - Put the old Size Nines in it there didn't I - What !

Simpson Don't worry Bertie, it was ages ago - she's not bothered by it now are you Gwendolyn ...

Gwend Well that's one way of putting it I suppose.

Simpson In fact Gwendolyn and I are

Gwend [Preventing Simpson from finishing] So who are your friends ?

Bertie Oh sorry - how remiss of me - Gwendolyn, Mr. Simpson, this is Laura

Isabel I think I'd better go and see how Hamish is getting on with Uncle. Excuse me a moment everyone. [**Exits**]

[General hellos etc.]

Laura I say - you're not *Simon* Simpson are you, by any chance ?

Simpson Yep, that's me.

Laura The Simon Simpson who discovered the lost village of *Impu Thumpu* ?

Simpson Um, yes, I did do that ...

Laura Oh crikey this is *so* exciting - I've always wanted to meet you !

Simpson Have you ? Oh - Gosh

Gwend Careful Simon.

Simpson Wait a moment ! - Laura ? - Not Laura Taft ?!

Laura Yes - why ? You've surely not heard of *me* have you ?

Simpson Of course I have - The person who unearthed the rock tombs of Cabamba ! Of course I've heard of you. Oh this is wonderful - there's so much I want to ask you ...

[*Simpson & Laura continue their conversation in the background during the following*]

Bertie [good humoured but with a hit of concern] Well old Simpson certainly seems to have hit it off with my girlfriend doesn't he !

Gwend Mmmm, I don't like the way this is going one little bit.

Mavis Well I'll just stand around and look stupid as usual shall I ?

Bertie Oh, sorry Mavis - Gwendolyn, may I introduce Mavis, Laura's friend.

Mavis And yours too, I hope, Bertie.

Bertie Oh yes, of course.

Mavis I realise I am a poor and feeble minnow in comparison to Laura, but I do actually exist.

Bertie Of course you do -

Gwend We're very pleased to meet you, Mavis - aren't we Simon.

Simpson [To Laura] Really ? That's amazing ! Three foot diameter ?

Laura And made of solid malachite.

Simpson Crikey. How many were there ... ?

Gwend Simon !!!

Simpson Uh ? Yes, Gwendolyn what is it ?

Gwend I was just saying we were very pleased to make Mavis's acquaintance ...

Simpson Who ?

Mavis No matter, Mr. Simpson, I realise I blend into the background ...

Simpson Oh, I'm sorry, - Mary is it ?

Mavis Mavis actually, but let it pass, I know that I'm not in the same league as Laura when it comes to enthralling men ...

Laura Oh come on, Mavis, you do put yourself down - I'm sure many men find you much more alluring than me - I mean not every man likes the feisty, daring, adventurous, devil-may-care type of female.

Mavis No of course not, Laura dear, I'm sure men are falling over themselves to get past you in order to ravish me ! Happens all the time !

Bertie Now, now, Mavis, no need to be bitter. Just because Laura has natural magnetism ...

Mavis Oh magnetism is it. That explains it. I must be the opposite pole then - going by the way men fly off me and land on little Miss Exciting over there.

Simpson I thought you two were friends.

Laura We are - ignore Mavis - she likes to have a little grumble every now and then. There's nothing in it really.

Mavis No, nothing at all. [*Sickly smile*]

Simpson Oh good. So do you go exploring with Laura then Maisie ?

Mavis [*stoically*] Mavis.

Simpson Oh yes, sorry - so do you ?

Mavis You've got to be kidding. Personally I consider all that hacking through jungles and swinging across precipitous gorges to be more suited to monkeys. Had I been born to do such things, God would have provided me with a prehensile tail, which He hasn't despite rumours to the contrary.

Gwend Hear ! hear ! I couldn't agree more.

Mavis [*genuinely surprised*] Oh ! Good Heavens ! Someone who doesn't think that that makes me some kind of pathetic amoeba. Well that *is* refreshing. Pity you're not a man, or I might've allowed myself the luxury of becoming quietly encouraged.

Bertie You are funny, Mavis.

Mavis [*coldly*] I aim to amuse.

Laura You haven't lived ! There's nothing quite so exhilarating as battling against the natural elements - the wild, the untamed jungle ! Diving into rapids, exploring the lost heart of primeval forests - Aaaah I can't wait to get back ...

Simpson Gosh ! Laura - You're right - it's about time I went on another little adventure ...

Laura Well, why don't you join me ? I'm off to New Guinea in July - you can come along if you want !

Simpson Really ? I say !

Gwend And I say "No" !

Simpson Oh, gosh - yes, sorry - I'd forgotten .

Laura Forgotten what ?

Simpson We're getting married in July ...

Bertie Who is ?

Simpson Of course you don't know do you ... I'm marrying Gwendolyn.

Bertie Good Heavens ! Congratulations - both of you.

Simpson Thank-you

Gwend Yes, thank-you - though I have a nasty feeling that I might just have to make contingency arrangements ... I certainly intend to marry someone in July - How about you Bertie ? Are you doing anything much in July ?

Bertie [totally flustered] Oh well - I mean - um - I -

Mavis I think Gwendolyn wasn't being entirely serious actually, Bertie.

Bertie Oh right I see - ha ... fine

[Isabel runs in, Bessie enters from the opposite side.]

Isabel Quickly ! Come quickly ... It's Uncle Edgar ... I think he's dead !

[Blackout]

Act I Scene 3

Scene : The same

Uncle Edgar is laid out along the table.

Present : Simpson, Gwend, Isabel, Hamish and Sprote

Sprote is checking Edgar for a pulse

Isabel How did it happen, Hamish ?

Hamish I do not know ! I had only left him for a few moments - when I came back there he was - lying on the cellar floor - lifeless.

Isabel Are you sure he's not just drunk ?

Hamish He's had a pretty nasty blow to the back of his head.

Sprote I am afraid that I cannot detect a pulse, madam.

Isabel I've sent Gruttock to fetch Alan.

Gwend Alan ?

Isabel You remember Alan - Dr. Protheroe ...

Simpson Great Scott ! Doctor Protheroe is living up here now ?

Hamish No, he's on holiday - he left Jane and Little Jimmy down South and came up here a couple of weeks ago - for the air - he's not been well of late.

Gwend [To Isabel] Of course - he's your Brother-in-Law too now isn't he.

Isabel Well, sort-of. He married my late husband's sister, so if that makes him my brother-in-law then he is ... but anyway I always got on pretty well with Jane and Alan and with Bertie of course - so we've kept in contact.

Hamish [Going over to the body] How is he Sprote ?

Sprote [seriously] Still dead sir.

Hamish As a matter of interest Mr. Sprote, why is your hand bandaged ...

Sprote An encounter with a troublesome platypus I'm afraid sir.

Hamish Duckbilled ?

Sprote That's the one sir - I neglected to maintain my guard against its spurs sir.

Simpson You *were* warned about that Sprotey.

Sprote Indeed I was sir, it is entirely my fault that I am suffering.

Isabel Oh - it's terrible

Sprote I assure you madam it isn't that bad.

Isabel What ? No - I didn't mean your silly hand - I mean the deaths - first Donald, now poor Uncle Edgar

Sprote I see madam, my apologies for unreasonably assuming your sympathy.

Gwend Hmmm - I wonder if Edgar was silenced to prevent him regaining his memory.

Isabel What ! Are you suggesting that he too was murdered ?

Gwend Well it's certainly a possibility isn't it.

Hamish Just what I was thinking ...

[*Mrs Gruttock, the cook enters*]

MrsGrut Excusing me as is just a poor cook but may I ask what it is with all the commotion ?

Hamish Ah, Mrs. Gruttock ...

MrsGrut Young Lily tells me there's been some sort of incident with Mr. Edgar - and then Murdo goes shooting off into toon !

Gwend Murdo ?

MrsGrut Och, sorry madam - that's m' husband Murdo Gruttock - the butler y' ken ...

Gwend Ah yes, we have met.

MrsGrut Well could y' tell a body what's going on please - I've got m' food tae consider.

Isabel I'm afraid it's bad news Mrs. Gruttock, Uncle Edgar has been taken from us.

MrsGrut D' yae think I'm blind madam, I can see him there - plain as the nose on m' face - so he's nae been taken anywhere ...

Gwend [Slightly irritated by her] He's dead, Mrs. Gruttock ... do y' ken that ?

MrsGrut Well why didn'ya say so in the first - [momentary pause] what d'ya say - *deed* ! Oh no, not poor Mr. Edgar - not deed is 'e. Oh that's a pity that is.

Simpson Well we won't be sure until the doctor gets here - but he seems pretty lifeless.

Sprote Definitely dead.

MrsGrut So he'll not be wanting his dinner then.

Isabel It would seem unlikely wouldn't it, Mrs. Gruttock.

MrsGrut I suppose it would - and him always such a hearty eater - that's a pity that is. I don't like seeing good food go to waste, that I don't.

Hamish What is the choice for dinner this evening, Mrs. Gruttock ?

MrsGrut I'm doing a special tonight - Boiled Beetroot for starters followed by Haggis

Hamish [Grimaces] Yes, right - and the alternative ?

MrsGrut For those that don't like good wholesome food there's Pan fried scallops in a cream and brandy sauce followed by roast capercailzie stuffed with wild woodland mushrooms.

Isabel Oh, not capercaille again ! We'll have the haggis, thank-you Mrs. Gruttock.

MrsGrut Thought you would, madam.

Hamish You were in the scullery about an hour ago weren't you, Mrs. Gruttock

MrsGrut You know I was - you saw me when you went doon the cellar - and when you came up again.

Hamish So did you see anyone else go down the cellar steps ?

MrsGrut Only Mr. Edgar ...

Hamish Yes obviously Edgar. He went down there with me - but was there anyone else ?

MrsGrut Then you came back up ... and a minute or two later Mr. Edgar followed you ...

Hamish What do you mean - followed me ?

MrsGrut He came out and called for you.

Hamish Did he ?

Isabel But we found him down in the cellar

MrsGrut Well I suppose he must've gone back doon then - but I didna see him - he was off doon the corridor the last I saw of him.

Simpson How strange.

MrsGrut But then I did go intae the kitchen for a wee while - so maybe he popped back ... come to think about it I did hear a bit of a crashing noise when I was in the kitchen - oh dear perhaps he fell down the steps.

Gwend That's certainly a possibility ... that could well have caused that bash to the back of his head.

Isabel Oh that's good - I mean that it looks like it was an accident - we don't want any *more* murders do we - certainly not *inside* the castle !

Hamish Indeed my dear we do not. Well thank-you Mrs. Gruttock - if you think of anything else that might be of use to us - please come and tell us.

MrsGrut That I will ... [leaving] Oh do you want to talk to Lily about it ?

Simpson Did she see something then ?

MrsGrut Nae, I dunna think so -

Gwend Oh well, we'll talk to her later then.

MrsGrut Right you are [Exits]

Hamish Well I am not sure *where* that leaves us.

Gwend I think we'd probably be best having a look around the cellar - see if we can decide if Edgar was attacked or simply fell down the steps.

Simpson Or perhaps both.

Isabel What do you mean ?
Simpson Well perhaps he was pushed down the steps - that would mean he was attacked *and* fell.
Gwend Oh dear, you're right - that'd be even more difficult to prove. I say Simon have you been exercising your brain again ? We've not had any completely inane comments from you for this whole case yet.
Simpson Give me time Gwenders, I'm sure I'll do something stupid sooner or later.
Gwend Yes, you're probably right. Anyway I'm going to have a look at the cellar see if anything jumps out at me, coming Simon ?
Simpson Not if there's going to be blood all over the place
Hamish I'll come with you Gwendolyn ...
Gwend Oh, right - Fine [Gwend & Hamish Exit]

Isabel Mr. Sprote ?
Sprote Yes madam
Isabel I take it that your attendance on Uncle Edgar is now a little superfluous.
Sprote Indeed madam.
Isabel Well in the absence of my own butler I wonder if you would be so good as to go and fetch us a bottle of claret - Mrs. Gruttock will show you which one.
Sprote Certainly madam [Exits S/L]

[*Bessie enters silently S/R*] [*She stays motionless at the back of the stage, unobserved*]

Isabel [Circles around Simpson After a moment purring] Alone at last Simon !
Simpson What ?
Isabel Just the two of us ... like in Paris ... [coming closer to Simpson]
Simpson Oh I see - gosh ...
Isabel You remember Paris don't you ? [Her arm around Simpson]
Simpson [squeaks] The moonlight ?
Isabel [purrs] dancing on the Seine ...
Simpson Um ... How could I forget ?
Isabel The sound of violins
Simpson [choked] ... wafting gently through the still night air ...
Isabel Let's relive the moment, Simon ! [Backing the flustered Simpson onto the sofa]
Simpson [squeak] Oh
Isabel I've never forgotten you Simon ! Never !
Simpson But - but - I thought you were happily married ...

Isabel I have needs Simon, you know I've always had needs ...
Simpson Needs ?
Isabel Fantastic unquenchable needs !
Simpson Oh gosh ... but ... but I'm engaged
Isabel [pulls up, surprised] What ? Engaged - Who to
Simpson To whom d'you mean
Isabel This is no time for Grammar lessons ...
Simpson Um, Gwendolyn ... I'm engaged to Gwendolyn
Isabel You can't be ! Not to her - not old Snooty Cow
Simpson Yes - Old snooty - I mean Gwenders - I am - really
Isabel You're mad, Simon ... [purring again] you want a real woman like me, not that embittered ...
Simpson But ... [Isabel advances on him once more pushing him into the sofa]
Isabel *Carpe Diem* Simon ! *Carpe Diem* !

[Gwend re-enters S/L just as Isabel engulfs Simpson]

Gwend [Coming onstage] Oh Simon I forgot [Sees them] Simon ! What are you doing ? Get off her !
[Bessie exits S/R]

Simpson But ! But Gwenders - she's on me !
Gwend You - you - hussy ! [She swipes at Isabel]
Isabel Oh !
Gwend Leave my fiancé alone ! [Drags Isabel off her]
Simpson Um ... I can explain
Gwend You can, can you ?
Isabel I can - I lost an earring - I thought it must've dropped down the back of the sofa ... Simon was just trying to help me find it - weren't you Simon ?
Simpson Er - um - oh - yes - that's it - lost ear-lobe ... that's the one
Isabel Ring, you idiot, earring
Gwend And you expect me to believe that do you ?
Isabel I realise it must've looked a bit strange - from the angle you were at ...
Gwend It's not my angle I was worried about ...
Isabel But I'm a happily married woman, Gwendolyn ... and Simon was just telling me about your engagement -
Simpson I had - yes - just then ...

Gwend Hmmmm - well I suppose I *could* have misconstrued the situation ...
Isabel I forgive you for hitting me, Gwendolyn
Gwend I will sleep easier knowing that, Isabel.
Simpson So what had you forgotten.
Gwend What ?
Simpson You said you'd forgotten something ... that's why you came back.
Gwend Oh yes ... er - Oh I don't know - I've forgotten again now !

[*Lily the maid enters with the claret*]

Lily Here's the wine you asked for madam.
Isabel Thank-you Lily - put it down over there will you.
Lily Yes madam.
Gwend Ah, Lily - you know Mr. Edgar has had a nasty accident ..
Lily Yes madam, I told cook about it.
Gwend So how did *you* hear about it ?
Lily Mr. Gruttock told me - just before he rushed off to get the doctor - told me to tell cook where he was going.
Gwend I don't suppose you know anything about how it happened ?
Lily How he got hurt do you mean ?
Gwend Yes, Lily, anything you saw or heard
Lily Oh I see - [*to Isabel*] is that alright madam - if I tell them ?
Isabel Of course Lily - why ever not ? Tell them everything you know.
Lily Well I was coming out of the Morning Room when Mr. Edgar came round the corner - he stopped and asked me if I'd seen the master - I said as far as I knew he was down the cellar. He grumbled something and turned around and headed off to the cellar again. I went into the Green Drawing Room and was doing my little jobs that I have to do when I heard a yell and a crash.
Simpson Oh ?
Lily So I stopped what I was doing and went to find out what was going on. As I got to the cellar steps I saw madam peering down the cellar ...
Isabel Yes that'd be right - I'd come to look for Hamish and Edgar.
Lily And you were calling down to someone weren't you, madam.
Isabel Oh, was I ? I can't remember - perhaps I was calling out to see if they were still down there.

Lily Then the master turned up and you both went down into the cellar. And that's all I know really.

Gwend Thank-you Lily

Lily Can I go now ?

Isabel Yes - oh wait a moment - have you brought the special glasses - the ones that Edgar gave us ?

Lily They're with the wine madam - cook showed me which ones they were - she had them out ready like you'd asked of her.

Isabel Good .. alright you can run along now

Lily Thank-you madam [Exits]

Simpson Not abounding with clues this case is it !

Gwend No - I wonder if Farmer has discovered anything interesting in the lake.

Simpson Well the last I could see he was standing next to an enormous mound of bottles.

Isabel Oh, those would be Edgar's discards. He's a devil for throwing them in the lake.

[*Hamish re-enters*]

Hamish Gruttock's taking his time finding old Protheroe isn't he ?

Isabel Well you know what Alan's like. He could be almost anywhere in Oban.

Hamish So have you been making Simon feel welcome, Isabel.

Simpson Um, yes ... very welcome.

Gwend Oh yes she's been doing that alright.

Hamish Splendid.

Isabel I thought we could all do with a glass of wine to steady our nerves ...

Hamish An excellent idea -

Isabel Will you do the honours dear ?

Hamish Certainly [*Goes over to wine, pours a glass each*]

Simpson Well this is jolly cosy isn't it ?

Gwend Oh wonderful - I can hardly think of anything snugger than a vast baronial hall with a corpse on the table.

[*They each take their glasses*]

Isabel A toast I think - to the memory of Edgar

All: "To Edgar" [*They drink*]

Hamish Well that's just how he would have wanted it I'm sure.

Isabel Though probably with a bottle each rather than a glass ! [Slight pause] I say - that tastes a little peculiar doesn't it ?

Hamish Mine tastes fine, dear.

Gwend Mine too, though I'm no expert.

Simpson No, absolutely tickety-boo - in fact it's a particularly good vintage I'd say

Isabel Aaaarghhh ! [Clutches throat]

Hamish Oh come on Isabel, it's really not *that* bad !

Isabel [Stumbles forward] I think - I think - I've been poisoned !

All: What !!!

[*Isabel crumples to the ground front of stage Hamish rushes to her side*]

Isabel I'm dying Hamish ...

Hamish No you can't be ...

Isabel Before I go I have something I must tell you ... I need your forgiveness ...

Hamish Oh Isabel - whatever it is - I forgive you - for I too have an admission ...

Isabel You Hamish - what - what is it ?

Hamish No my dear - you go first - you may not have much time ...

[*Gruttock returns with Dr.Protheroe and Farmer, they enter*]

Dr.Proth [Jaunty] Hello everybody ! Where's the body then ?

All: Ssshhhhhhhhhhh !!!

Simpson [Loud whisper] Isabel's dying Dr. Protheroe !

Farmer By 'eck !

Dr.Proth Isabel ! No, surely not ...

Hamish Isabel, the doctor's here - he may save you

[*Dr.Proth Dashes over to her, checks her pulse etc.*]

[*Bessie enters S/R unobserved*]

Isabel No - I'm dying - I know it

Farmer I thought it was that Edgar chappy what had died !

Simpson Him too

Farmer By 'eck - it's spreading !

Hamish You'll be alright now my dearest, won't she doctor ?

Dr.Proth I'm afraid I wouldn't bet on it Hamish - I think she's right actually - she *is* dying.

Isabel Told you so. [Gasps] Hamish ... I must tell you something - I'm so sorry

Hamish Why - what ?

Isabel Please, please don't think too badly of me ...

Hamish Never my dear - whatever is it ?

Isabel I've been unfaithful to you !

Hamish Oh I see; Well I forgive you dearest ... I did half suspect ... was it Hector MacBrayne ?

Isabel Um, Hector - Yes, yes it was - and Alistair Trump

Hamish Oh, right, Alistair too - yes I see

Isabel And Duncan MacCleod

Hamish Not Duncan

Isabel I'm so sorry dearest ... Oh yes ... and Smithers ...

Hamish Smithers ? [Thinks] Smithers the footman ?

Isabel I'm afraid so ... oh and that travelling blacksmith who called last week ...

Hamish Stop ! Stop Isabel ! I forgive you ... no more ... no more ... I forgive them all.

Gruttock [Aside] Phew ! That was close.

Isabel Aahh ... I'm falling fast Hamish ... what was it you had to tell me ?

Hamish Oh right, my turn now I suppose - I have been living a lie my darling ... I am not who you think I am ...

Isabel Oh yes you are my dear

Hamish What do you mean ?

Isabel I know who you really are ...

Hamish But you can't ...

Isabel Let me whisper ... [She whispers in his ear]

Hamish [He pulls away from her] Who ?

Isabel Oh am I wrong ?

Hamish You most certainly are ... [Stands] I cannot pretend any longer. I am not Scottish ! I cannot keep up this ridiculous accent a moment longer ! My name - it is not Hamish - It is Hemlock - [In the classic Marreauvian accent] Hemlock Montrachet Boniface Etienne Marreau !

All: Marreau ! [Simpson faints, Gwend staggers]

Hamish Indeed ! I am Marreau the Magnificent returnèd from the dead !

Isabel Hamish ! Marreau ! Aaaghhh ! [*slumps & dies*]

[Bessie exits]

[*A moment's pause - Edgar sits bolt upright on the table*]

Edgar Drink !!! I need a drink !

[Blackout, Curtain]

Act II Scene 1

Scene : The same

Isabel's body has been removed.

Edgar is lying on the sofa being attended to by Dr. Protheroe.

Marreau (formerly Hamish) is flumped in an armchair.

Also present are Gwendolyn and Mavis

Gwend [Tetchy] Well Marreau - I presume that's what you wish to be called now - I don't suppose it occurred to you to let us know that you were still alive.

Marreau Oh Gwendolyn, you do not know how many times I wrote the letter then ripped it up.

Gwend Poor Simon - you've really shaken him up - he's still lying down upstairs.

Marreau Ah yes, poor Simpson - I know - I really am sorry ...

Gwend Three years Marreau ! Three whole years - not a word - then suddenly out of the blue - there you are - as large as life and as French as ever !

Marreau Belgian !

Gwend Oh good grief, don't start that again - I'm not going to forgive you for this in a hurry.

Marreau But are you not pleased that I survived the fall ?

Gwend Well yes, of course I am and I want to hear all about it at some point - but it was a hell of a shock to us all ...including Isabel

Marreau [Groans] Ohhh ... poor Isabel ... do you think that the shock killed her ?

Mavis According to the doctor she'd drunk enough cyanide to fell a woolly mammoth so I don't think your revelation would have had a great effect on her.

Dr.Proth Quite so - I'm amazed she lasted as long as she did - that glass was covered in the stuff.

Marreau But how ? How did the cyanide get into her glass ?

Gwend Well, Marreau you poured the wine - did you not notice it ?

Marreau No - my eyesight is not what it was, my dear ...

Mavis How did they - the murderer that is - know that Isabel would drink from that particular glass - or were they not intent necessarily on killing Isabel specifically ?

Marreau Of the fact that they wished to kill Isabel I think there is little doubt. The wine glasses were a wedding present, and Isabel's and my glass had our initials on them. Whoever poisoned her certainly knew that she would drink from that glass.

Dr.Proth And from the amount they used there was no doubt that they intended murder.

Marreau Poor Isabel - why would anyone wish to kill her ?

Gwend Well Marreau, I don't wish to be heartless or speak ill of the dead, but she hadn't exactly kept to her marriage vows had she ? You heard that catalogue of lovers.

Marreau I know, I know

Gwend So there were probably a few aggrieved wives about for starters ...

Marreau I suppose so - but none with an opportunity to poison the glass

Gwend Very true.

Mavis As a matter of interest - did she name *all* her lovers ?

Gwend She'd got as far as a travelling blacksmith when Marreau stopped her - I dread to think what was coming next ...

Mavis Oh right, I see.

Marreau I suppose she was *not* the wife most faithful - but I was 'appy with her.

Gwend I know you were and I'm sorry that you've lost her.

Marreau At least one good thing has come out of poor Isabel's death.

Gwend Oh ? What's that, Marreau ?

Marreau I've told Mrs. Gruttock that we'll have the capercaillie for dinner after all.

Gwend Yes - that *is* good - but very little recompense for losing your wife really

Marreau True, but worth commenting on I thought.- [*putting a brave face on*] However - what about your news ? I hear that you and Simpson are to marry.

Gwend Well that's the theory - but I'll believe it when I see it.

[There is a slight commotion offstage]

J(W)A *[Offstage, shouting]* What d'you mean she's dead ?

[James (Wombat) Arbroath enters]

J(W)A What's this about Isabel being dead ?

Marreau And who may I ask are you ?

J(W)A Me ? I'm James Arbroath - Isabel's cousin. More to the point - who are you ?

Marreau I am Hemlock Marreau - Isabel was my wife ...

J(W)A Your wife ? But she was married to someone called Hamish ...

Gwend It's a long story Mr. Arbroath, but ...

J(W)A Mrs Smith ! What on earth are you doing here ? Oh jolly jumbucks - now I see - that's why you were talking about Oban ... you were coming up here ... now that really *is* what I call a coincidence ... even bigger than the last one ..

Marreau Oh ? What was the last one ?

Gwend Don't ask Marreau - you really don't want to know.

J(W)A So anyway - what's all this about the French guy here being Izzy's husband ?

Marreau Monsieur Arbroath I assure you I was - I will explain it all to you later ... for the moment we must shake off our emotions ! We must grasp the bullock by its horns and discover the perpetrator of this fiendish murder ! I will not rest until the evil coward who poisonèd my lovely wife is either brought to justice or slain like the knavish cur-dog that he is !

Mavis [Claps] Oh well said.

Marreau Thank-you my dear.

J(W)A Yes that was pretty rousing speech there. You say she was poisoned ? Poor Isabel - Let me know if I can help in any way. Oh and call me Wombat.

Marreau Where is it ?

J(W)A Where's what ?

Marreau Where is your Wombat that you wish us to call

Gwend Oh good grief

J(W)A No, no - that's m' name, Wombat - well that's what everyone calls me anyway.

Marreau How ridiculous. Anyway Monsieur Wombat - we will let you know if there is any assistance you can give.

J(W)A I'll go and see how old Bertie is, if that's alright with you. He must be pretty shaken up I should reckon - he was very fond of Isabel - well, we all were if you catch my drift, ha ha ... oh, sorry Monsieur Marreau.

Marreau Very well, we will need to talk to both you and the Monsieur Bertie soon though - to eliminate you from our enquiries.

J(W)A You can surely eliminate me straight away can't you - I've only just got here.

Gwend Yes Mr. Arbroath - you are not really a suspect, but you may be able to help in some way.

J(W)A Fair dinkum - as I say - anything at all, you just ask old Wombat here - [*leaving*] gotta catch the dingo who killed poor Izzy. [**exits**]

Dr.Proth Well one good thing - I think old Edgar is well on the mend.

Marreau It is so ironic - we thought Edgar was dead and now 'e is alive - but my poor Isabel is ...

[*sniffs*]

Dr.Proth Quite so. I don't blame Mr. Sprote thinking he was dead though ... cataleptic trances can be dashed difficult to diagnose you know - body goes rigid - no apparent pulse - not surprised everyone thought he was dead. Classic example. You know I came across a case back in '28

...

Gwend Another time Dr. Protheroe ...

[*Simpson enters with Laura*]

Simpson Thanks again Laura - you've made me feel a lot better ...

Laura My pleasure, Simon - any time. [*Gwend looks daggers*]

Simpson I'll take you up on that

Marreau Ahhh, my dear friend, Simpson - how are you feeling now ?

Simpson [curtly] I'm perfectly well now thank-you Marreau.

Marreau So here we are - the old team reassemblèd.

Simpson If you say so.

Laura I think Mr. Simpson is rather upset with you Monsieur Marreau ...

Marreau I do not blame him. I should have contacted you before this ...

Simpson [obviously hurt] Yes Marreau, you dashed-well ought to have. I spent three weeks pot-holing down that well trying to find you. How on earth did you survive ?

Marreau It is a long story my friend - but please, you must allow me a little forgiveness -

Gwend And why should we do that Marreau.

Marreau Because my dear - the very soonest that I could have contacted you was about a year ago.

Gwend Oh ? Why's that ? You're not going to tell us you were stuck down a well for two years are you ?

Marreau No, no, no - not at all. It was not until I had been married to Isabel for a little while that I fully regained my memory ... until then I had no idea who I really was - where I had come from - nothing.

Simpson I say - gosh - is that true Marreau ?

Marreau I promise you it is. I could remember falling down the well. How I tumbled and tumbled then I must have blacked out. When I came to I was in a cavern - It was pitch black but I could hear the sound of running water - I thought if it was an underground river - then at some point it must reach the surface. So I followed it for miles and miles, sometimes having to swim underwater through tunnels. I must have nearly drowned a dozen times. But bravely I persevered and eventually I saw a glimmer of light and I bobbed up to the surface in a valley most beautiful. Then once more I collapsed. The next thing I remember is awaking in the humble abode of a shepherd and his wife. They said I had slept for two days. They asked me who I was - and suddenly I realised that I did not know.

Simpson Gosh !

Gwend That's some story Marreau - what happened next ?

Marreau The kindly shepherd and his wife fed me and nursed me back to 'ealth. They were so kind - they leant me what little money they could and wished me luck - I bid them my adieu and determined to discover who I was. I did what work I could to earn my keep wherever I went. Little snippets of my former life kept flashing into my mind but disappeared again like puffs of smoke. It was not until by pure chance I met Isabel again that I recognised her - suddenly I remembered about the case with the little hamster - and bit by bit my memory returnèd.

Simpson So why did you not contact us then ?

Marreau Well my dear friend, by then it was already eighteen months since my accident - I knew both you and Gwendolyn would assume that I was dead. How was I to break the news ? I had a new life here in Scotland.

Isabel and I had such plans for this place. My old life it was like a volume of a book now closèd. What was I to do ? Was it fair to contact you after such a time ?

Gwend So why did you decide to in the end ?

Marreau It was the murder - the murder of poor Donald. It brought back the memories of our investigating days. I suddenly missed my old friends so much that I wanted them here to help me solve this riddle. That is why I asked Isabel to contact you. That is why you are here. And that is why you now know who I am. Please forgive me my friends - for now that Isabel is dead you are all I have in the world.

Simpson Marreau ! Of course we forgive you !

Gwend [Wiping away a tear] Yes, yes of course we do.

Laura That's a terrific story Marreau - you'll have to show me where that underground river is - can't wait to get in there and have a poke around. Sounds great ! Were there many stalagmites or anything ?

Marreau Stalagmites ? My dear I could not see my hand in front of my face - all I wanted to do was to get free from the acursèd place - I certainly was not carrying out the survey géologique !

Mavis You really can be crass at times can't you, Laura.

Laura Well at least tell me roughly where it was.

Marreau Oh - I cannot remember ...

Simpson The well was in Wildboar Castle [**FX : Thunder**]

Laura Where's that ?

Gwend Derbyshire.

Edgar The Manifold !

Dr.Proth Don't exert yourself, Edgar.

Edgar It would've been the River Manifold young lady - that's where he'd have been.

Mavis How on earth d'you know that Edgar.

Edgar Famous underground river in Derbyshire - must've been the one. Lots of interesting things down there there are. All sorts of flora and fauna - fascinating place. Wonderful *Phyllitis Scolopendrium* !

Dr.Proth Really ? - Good examples of *Phyllitis* are there ? That is interesting.

Gwend Excuse my obvious ignorance - but what are Phyllitis ?

Edgar Hart's tongue ferns young lady - massive ones down there - as big as your arm.

Laura You'll have to show me on a map.

Edgar It'd be a pleasure my dear.

Mavis I realise that this must all be fascinating for you troglodytes - but I'm a little surprised that you aren't exactly actively searching for Isabel's murderer.

Gwend Quite right, Mavis. We're wasting time.

Marreau This is very true. We must discover who had access to the wine glasses - who could have planted the poison.

Gwend Let's work backwards ... the last person to have contact with the glass before Isabel was you

Marreau ...

Marreau [Smugly] But of course we can eliminate me ...

Mavis Not so quick there - you had opportunity - you had the motive ...

Marreau What motive ?

Mavis Her serial adultery ? Pretty reasonable motive, I'd say.

Marreau But I am the Great Marreau !

Mavis And don't forget, something like ninety percent of all murders are perpetrated by the victim's spouse.

Marreau But ...

Gwend Unfortunately, I have to admit that Mavis is right - you do have to be considered a suspect, Marreau.

Marreau This is ridiculous !

Simpson Lily brought the glasses in - she could have put the cyanide in ...

Gwend And she had got the glasses from Mrs. Gruttock, the cook ... so there's another possibility.

Marreau And of course anyone could have got to the glasses before that as they were in an unlocked cupboard so I do not think that this particular line gets us very far.

Laura Who stands to gain the most from her death - I suppose that that's you again Marreau, isn't it ?

Marreau What ? !

Laura The castle, the estate - I presume that passes to you on Isabel's death.

Edgar No I think you'll find that the estate becomes mine actually.

Simpson Really ?

Marreau Indeed - I knew this - the inheritance of the castle is most complicated - it was all detailed in Lady Eustace's will.

Mavis So why does it pass to Isabel's uncle ... that is most strange.

Edgar No you don't understand - I was not Isabel's uncle - I was her late husband Edward's uncle. I am the brother of the late Lady Eustace ... the castle must stay in the family you see - though Isabel had the right to live in it for her life, put not to pass it on.

Gwend Looks like you've just talked yourself into having a motive too, Edgar.

Edgar Ha ! I suppose I have - how amusing. Think that calls for a drink.

Dr.Proth I wouldn't advise it, Edgar - you're still recovering from that nasty blow to your head.

Edgar And I'll recover a lot quicker with a glass in my hand and some liquor in my throat, thank-you doctor. [*Goes and pours himself a glass*]

Dr.Proth It's your funeral, Edgar - do what you will - I wash my hands of you. [*Exits in a huff*]

Edgar Sanctimonious prig !

Marreau I'm sure the doctor is only thinking of your well-being Edgar.

Edgar It must be hours since I had my last drink ...

Mavis Well even you would find it difficult to drink whilst unconscious, Edgar.

Edgar [*Pouring himself a large brandy*] Anyway - what about that Wombat fellow - he's the one I saw fighting with Donald by the lake after all.

All: What ???

Edgar Yes - that's him. Could've been him that pushed me down the cellar steps too.

Marreau *Sacre Bleu !* Let us comprehend [*sic*] him immediately.

Gwend Wait a moment - are you sure that it was Wombat fighting with Donald ?

Edgar Not for certain, no - but he certainly fits the bill.

Simpson But I thought you knew for sure who you saw arguing with Donald - but just couldn't remember his name.

Edgar Something like that.

Simpson But you'd never seen Wombat before today had you.

Edgar Of course I had - saw him chatting to Isabel a couple of weeks ago.

Simpson No, you must be mistaken there - Wombat had never even heard of Oban until yesterday. He told us so -

Gwend Yes - and that was before he even knew we would be here - or who we were - so there would've been no reason for him to lie.

Edgar Rubbish - he was up here just two weeks ago I tell you.

Marreau Well I didn't see him, Edgar.

Edgar No well that's not too surprising - Isabel kept most of her male friends hidden from you, old boy !

Laura Mavis and I have been here for three weeks - I've never met him before - have you, Mavis ?

Mavis No, and believe me - I'd've remembered him.

Laura I don't think he's your type, Mavis, looks to me like he's wrestled with a few man-eating sharks in his time.

[*Bertie and J(W)A (Wombat) enter - J(W)A remains close to the doorway*]

J(W)A Did I hear you talking about me ?

Marreau Ahh, Monsieur Wombat - I think you have some serious questions to answer.

J(W)A Oh ?

Gwend You told us that you'd never heard of Oban, is that right.

J(W)A Not until yesterday, that's right.

Simpson So you've certainly never been up here before.

J(W)A No, certainly not -

Edgar I tell you I *saw* him.

Marreau I think you must've been imagining things, Edgar. Monsieur Wombat seems a trustworthy sort of fellow.

Edgar What about him pushing me down the steps !

J(W)A What's the old soak on about now ?

Edgar You young whipper-snapper !

Simpson You said you didn't know *who* had pushed you, Edgar.

Edgar No - well - not for sure I don't - but it could've been him ...

Gwend I think we can probably leave it at that.

Mavis So, Wombat - tell me - do you like fighting the wild untamed wilderness ?

J(W)A Wild untamed wilderness ? You've gotta be joking. I never venture out of Sydney if I can help it - no way.

Laura But the Australian Outback must be fascinating ...

J(W)A Fascinating ? Bloody bleak if you ask me. No, the Abbo's are welcome to it ! Too many nasty little creatures wanting to nibble your feet or sting your backside for my liking !

Laura But it would be so exciting ! It's such a huge place full of the unknown !

J(W)A And it can stay unknown for all I care. Now Sydney - that's a completely different story ...

Bertie Wait a moment Wombat - I've just thought - I'm sure Isabel mentioned that you'd been up here a couple of weeks ago.

J(W)A Isabel ... she said I'd been here ?

Bertie Yes - I'm sure she did ...

J(W)A [Suddenly concerned] No, I've not seen her since we all met up in Oz.

Bertie Now I know that's not right - because she told me how you'd changed

J(W)A Damn ! [Suddenly runs *offstage*]

Marreau After him ! After him ! Do not let him escape !

[*Everyone dashes offstage after him*]

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 2

Scene : The same

*Marreau is pacing, *** Bessie drifts in ****

***** Optional *****

Marreau [As he turns he finds he is looking straight at Bessie, he jumps slightly] Oh it's you again - off you go, Bessie. [*she turns and exits*]

[*Gwend enters*]

Marreau Any sign of him ?

Gwend No, he seems to have got clean away.

Marreau *Merd !* I never trusted him.

***** Optional *****

Gwend Who were you talking to just then ?

Marreau When ?

Gwend Just now as I came in.

Marreau Oh, only Bessie.

Gwend Bessie ? I didn't see anyone.

Marreau Did you not ? There is perhaps (a reason for that ...)

[*Simpson dashes in*]

Simpson It's alright ! [*small pause*] Wombat's been caught by the Gruttocks !

Marreau *Magnifique !*

Gwend No more than he deserves it would seem.

Simpson They've got him pinned down on the parterre.

[*Lily enters*]

Lily [Excited] They've got that nasty Wombat man.

Marreau Thank-you Lily, Simpson has just informed us.

Lily Did he kill madam ?

Gwend We've no proof of that - but it seems likely that he killed Donald MacAlium.

Lily Oh no, he couldn't have killed Mr. MacAlium

Marreau Whyever not ?

Lily Well our poor dear madam didn't telephone Mr. Arbroath until after they found Mr. MacAlium's body - he came up the next day.

Simpson How do you know that, Lily ?

Lily I was madam's maid - I heard her make the phone call - and I made the arrangements for Mr. Arbroath to stay in the Minches Hotel in Oban.

Gwend Now that is interesting ... so why on earth did he run ?

Marreau A question we must put to him ... what have they done with him ?

Lily He's being held upside down over the parterre.

Marreau By the Gruttocks ?

Lily Just one Gruttock; [*pause*] the other one is laying into him with her rolling pin !

Marreau No, no, no ... we cannot have our suspects beaten to a pâté ... have him brought here immediately.

Lily Right you are sir - I'll get them to drag him in. [**exits**]

Simpson I can't understand this case at all.

Gwend For once you're not the only one, Simpson.

Simpson Oh ! I'm Simpson again now am I ?

Gwend [Laughs] Oh, sorry Simon - force of habit - I was back in "old days" mode I think.

Marreau So Monsieur Wombat could not have killed Donald - but he lied about having been up here - I wonder why - it is most peculiar.

Simpson And who pushed Edgar down the steps ...

Gwend And who poisoned Isabel ...

[*Bertie and Gruttock drag the beaten-up J(W)A onstage and throw him onto the sofa*]

Bertie Here he is - the reprobate.

Gruttock Och - why don't we just string him up now and be done with it ?

Marreau You cannot go taking the law into your own arms ! It is not the way to do things.

Simpson Quite right - we need to ask him some questions - can't do that if he's dangling on the end of a rope !

Marreau Leave us please to interrogate Monsieur Wombat on our own now thank-you.

Bertie Very well

Gruttock [To J(W)A] You cowardly murderer ! [Gruttock exits with Bertie]

J(W)A Murderer ? Me ? No ! I'm no murderer !

Marreau Monsieur Wombat - I suggest that if you really wish us to believe that you are not involved in some way with at least one of the foul and dreadful murders that have been perpetuated [sic] at this castle then it would be best for you if you no longer prefabricate [sic] !

J(W)A Yes - yes - whatever you say - just don't let that mad cook get anywhere near me again !

Marreau Very well - So then - explain why you were here two weeks ago and why you pretended not to have been.

J(W)A There's no great mystery. I got a telephone call from Isabel a couple of weeks ago. I'd written to her to tell her I was in the country and that I was keen to meet her again - so I wasn't surprised that she phoned.

Gwend Where had you met before then ?

J(W)A Oh it was years ago - in Sydney - the sunlight was bouncing off the Harbour Bridge - the sound of Waltzing Matilda drifted across the ...

Marreau Yes, yes, yes ... you need not proceed any further.

J(W)A So I'd always had a bit of soft spot for Izzy ever since. Anyway when she phoned she told me about that MacAlium fellow getting drowned. Asked if I could help.

Simpson She wanted you to help investigate ?

J(W)A No - nothing like that - no she wanted my advice - see if I could help her with her plans for redeveloping the estate. That's my job you see - building.

Marreau Ahhh, Je comprend ... but why then did she keep your visit a secret .. and why did you perpetrate [sic] this myth ?

J(W)A Oh look, I'm sorry Hamish or Marreau or whatever your name is - but I'm afraid - well let's just say Isabel and I rekindled our relationship.

Marreau You were 'aving an affair with her.

J(W)A Yes ... yes ... that's why I lied

Marreau That is all ?

J(W)A What do you mean *all* ?

Marreau So why did you run away ?

J(W)A I thought that you as the jealous husband might try to kill me ...

Marreau I think that there would be little point in that, Monsieur Wombat - you were hardly alone ...

J(W)A You mean I wasn't her only lover ?

Marreau Not quite.

Simpson But Wombat ... why did you lie to *us* about not knowing Oban ? You didn't know that we'd be here investigating the murder did you ?

J(W)A Well yes I did actually - or at least we thought you might. Isabel phoned me - told me about the letter she'd sent you - told me to find a way of meeting you and find out whether you'd be coming up. That's why I let me little platty loose in yer gairden ... so I'd got an excuse to visit.

Simpson I say - what a scheme !

J(W)A Bit of a liberty I know - but I really liked Izzy - so it didn't seem an unreasonable request. And if Isabel hadn't spoken to Bertie it would all probably have remained secret.

Gwend Except that Lily knew all about it of course.

J(W)A Oh gosh yes - of course - she made all the arrangements didn't she.

Marreau Well it would seem, Monsieur Wombat that you are off the coat peg as they say. But unfortunately that means we are no closer to finding the murderer.

J(W)A Believe me, I'm as keen as you are to find out who killed Isabel - I was very fond of her.

Marreau Alright there is no need to rub my nostrils in it.

J(W)A Oh, yes, sorry Marreau.

Marreau I suggest you go and have a lie down now - recover from your injuries.

J(W)A Thank-you - that'd be most welcome. [exits]

Simpson So if Wombat's in the clear - we haven't got a suspect again, have we.

Gwend Nor a motive - nothing

Simpson I wonder if Farmer's come up with anything

Marreau Ah yes, Inspector Farmer ... he was poking about in the cellar I believe.

Gwend The cellar ? But we looked there didn't we, Marreau - didn't find anything strange.

Marreau I'm not sure what he was looking for - but he seemed quite intent on something.

***** If omitting Bessie, omit this next section *****

Simpson We've spoken to everyone now haven't we ?

Gwend No - what about Bessie ?

Simpson Bessie - oh is she that little maid ?

Marreau Ah, you too have seen Bessie have you, Simpson ?

Simpson Well if she's that very pale looking girl then yes - only fleetingly though - she seems almost scared of me.

Marreau [Laughs] I do not think that we will get much out of her.

Gwend Oh ? Why not ?

Marreau If ever there was a silent witness, it is she !

Simpson What do you mean Marreau ?

Marreau How old would you say that she is, Simpson ?

Simpson Oh I don't know - twenty - twenty five maybe.

Marreau You are quite a long way out there my friend - she is at least 400 years old

S&G What ?

Marreau Bessie is our resident ghost. One gets quite used to her after a while - but I must admit she used to give me the shiverings whenever I saw her.

Simpson She's a ghost ?

Marreau You should consider yourself privileged - not everyone can see her at all.

Gwend You have a real ghost here ? That's wonderful ... I've been reading all about the spirit world,
Marreau ...

Marreau She is not the only ghost in this castle - but she is certainly the most persistent - I see her almost every day.

***** End of Bessie section *****

[Bertie enters]

Bertie [Bluffly] I've just seen that Wombat fellow - he says that he's not under arrest or anything.

Marreau Indeed Monsieur Bertie, I believe that he is innocent of any crime.

Bertie Oh right - I see - so no closer to getting the devil who killed poor Isabel then.

Marreau Indeed not

[Farmer enters with Dr.Proth]

Farmer I wouldn't be so sure about that, actually, Monsieur Marreau.

Gwend Why ? What have you found, Farmer.

Farmer I've been having a look down that there cellar - and I've made an interesting discovery I have.

Simpson What is it Farmer ?

Farmer I found this little bottle I did - took a sniff of it - right near knocked me out cold it did.

Marreau Mon dieu ! What was in it ?

Farmer I got the Doc here to have a look at it - see if he could work it out.

Dr.Proth Jolly interesting it is too.

Gwend Go on ...

Dr.Proth It's an opiate - a very strong one.

Marreau So you are suggesting that there is an opium addict in the castle ?

Dr.Proth I wouldn't have thought so - this is a particularly fascinating compound. It induces narcosis in seconds ... just the sort of cataleptic state that old Edgar was found in.

Simpson Gosh so he was drugged ...

Dr.Proth So it would seem ...

Bertie Bashed on the head and drugged ... good job he's made of strong stuff.

Simpson Or at least full of strong stuff - what - ha !

Dr.Proth Considering the quantity of alcohol that he consumes I'm surprised that Edgar didn't die on the spot when the opiate was administered - but I'm sure now that's what was used on him.

Gwend But if he fell down the steps and then someone dosed him up with opium - whoever did it must have still been down the cellar when you and Isabel found him, Marreau.

Marreau I suppose they must ...

Farmer Unless it was either you or her what drugged him of course, Musher Marreau.

Bertie I say Hamish - I mean Marreau - it wasn't you was it ?

Marreau Do not be ridiculous.

Dr.Proth If you'd excuse me I need to run a few more tests - on the opiate, find out precisely what it is

...

Marreau Certainly doctor [**Dr.Proth exits**]

Gwend Marreau - when you went down the cellar with Edgar - why did you come back up and leave Edgar down there ?

Marreau Ah yes, that was to get the cellar book - Edgar said he thought he'd seen it in the Library ...

Gwend Did you find it ?

Marreau No as it happens I didn't.

Farmer The cellar book ? Is that a big red book with gold lettering on it ?

Marreau Indeed it is Inspector - why ?

Farmer When I were pokin' about down the cellar I came across it. Tucked in to a crevice it were - quite well hidden really.

Simpson So it was down there all the time.

Bertie What do you conclude from that ?

Marreau I have no idea ! I do not wish to be the damp sponge Inspector, but the incident with Edgar is of rather less consequence than the two murders. Did you find anything of interest when you investigated the lake ?

Farmer I'm afraid not really - there was some marks over the far side where there could've been a scuffle - but there's been so much rain lately that there was no real evidence. Oh and we found 732 empty bottles at the last count ...

Bertie That always struck me as funny - the way Edgar tossed his empty bottles into the lake.

Gwend Why funny ?

Bertie Well he was always so concerned about the estate - the plants and animals - it was just so out of character.

Marreau Ah, no, I know why he did that. He said that the bottles did not pollute the lake - but that they provided homes for the leedle aquatic animals ...

Bertie Really, how interesting. You know, if old Edgar hadn't said that it was some *fellow* he'd seen arguing with Donald out by the lake, I'd've put my money on it being Mavis who ducked old Donald.

Marreau Oh ? Why on earth do you say that ?

Bertie Well I heard them having a right old ding-dong not long before he got himself killed.

Gwend Where was this ?

Bertie Over by the old gazebo ... they were really having quite a fight I can tell you.

Simpson What were they saying ?

Bertie Well, it wouldn't have been too polite to eavesdrop ... but I couldn't help overhear Mavis ripping into Donald for two-timing her.

Simpson Oh I say !

Bertie And then, Donald said something most ungallant to her !

Farmer By 'eck, you know there *was* one thing we found down by the lake - right near where the scuff marks were ...

Marreau Oh and what was that Inspector ?

Farmer It was a brooch ... a lady's brooch ... but coz. we were pretty sure it was a man who'd done in old Donald we didn't take much notice of it, we didn't.

Gwend Have you still go the brooch ?

Farmer Oh yes - I's got it here as it happens [*produces brooch*]

Marreau Sacre Bleu, this could be a most important clue ...

Gwend Especially as Edgar's testimony is a bit doubtful to say the least.

Farmer By 'eck, what you think it might've been a girlie what did this ?

Simpson But what reason could Mavis have for killing *Isabel* ?

Bertie Can't help you there ... I know Isabel and *Laura* didn't hit it off - in fact I believe they disliked each other intensely - but I never heard a cross word between her and Mavis.

Gwend I think we ought to get everyone together, Marreau ...

Marreau Oh ?

Gwend Yes - but if we could talk to Laura and Mavis first I think we might be able to sort this case out - it's all suddenly becoming very clear.

Marreau Is it ? Oh yes of course - naturally - I was coming to the same conclusion my dear ...

[**Blackout**]

Act II Scene 3

Marreau, Gwendolyn, Simpson and Farmer together

Gwend So, have you got that Simon ? Let the others in when I give the signal.

Simpson Yes, fine - gosh this is ever-so exciting. - Er what was the signal again ?

Gwend I'll ring this bell

Simpson Oh yes - the bell - fine - got it. [Exits]

Gwend Now then Farmer, go and get Mavis and Laura ... bring them in here then go and help Simpson round up the rest of the suspects.

Farmer Right you are miss - I wish you'd tell me what's going on though.

Gwend All in good time.

Farmer Oh alright. [Exits]

Marreau So what is going on, Gwendolyn - I really do not understand - do you mean you know who the murderer is ?

Gwend Well I certainly have my suspicions. That brooch by the water's edge - it is just too much of a coincidence.

Marreau So you think that it is Mavis ?

Gwend Not necessarily, but I think that the brooch will lead us to the murderer whoever they are.

Marreau I wish I understood your reasoning Gwendolyn - It is obvious that I have been leading the easy life for far too long. The leedle red cells - they are not as good as they used to be.

Gwend I'm sure they'll recover with practice Marreau - No, just do what I told you ... both now and when we have everyone else in the room and I believe the murderer will reveal themselves ...

Marreau Very well my dear ...

[*Farmer re-enters with Mavis and Laura*]

Farmer Here they are ...

Gwend Thank-you Farmer

Farmer You sure you don't want me to stay here - help you question them ?

Gwend No thank-you inspector ...

Farmer But ...

Marreau Inspector, please do what Gwendolyn asks ...

Farmer Oh, very well ... [exits]

Mavis So what do you want to speak to us for ?

Laura You don't suspect *us* do you ?

Gwend Not at all - I have asked you here on a completely different matter.

Mavis Oh I see.

Gwend Just something we want to get sorted out before the excitement of Marreau's exposé of the murderer in our midst !

Mavis Oh don't ... what a horrible thought.

Gwend Have either of you lost any jewellery in the last few weeks ?

Laura Um - yes - I did as a matter of fact ...

Marreau Would you care to describe it to us ?

Laura Certainly it was a {describes relevant brooch, to suit prop}

Gwend Do you recollect when you lost it ?

Laura Let's see ... Yes - it was - um - two weeks ago last Wednesday

Marreau Before all the trouble with Monsieur MacAlium then ?

Laura Yes - let me think - it must have been just a day or two before.

Gwend Is this the brooch ? [shows her]

Laura Oh crikey - it is - yes - wherever did you find it ?

Marreau Before we tell you this - perhaps you would be good enough to tell us where it was when you last saw it.

Laura Certainly. I leant it to Mavis for the ball - it went far better with her dress than with mine - that's right isn't it, Mavis.

Mavis Absolutely - I remember thinking what an uncharacteristic display of generosity it was on your part, dear.

Laura Yes it *was* nice of me wasn't it.

Gwend [To Mavis] So did you return it to Miss Taft after the ball ?

Mavis I most certainly did - didn't I, Laura.

Laura Oh yes - I'm not accusing Mavis of losing it. It disappeared some time the next day. I thought I'd put it back in my jewellery box - but the next time I looked it wasn't there.

Marreau And your jewellery box - you keep this locked ?

Laura No, I'm afraid I don't - my jewellery is not really valuable enough to worry about - just a few trinkets. I suppose anyone could have taken it - look, I thought you said that this was simply about returning the brooch to me.

Gwend Indeed, Miss Taft - here you are - [gives her the brooch]

Laura Thank-you, I'll try to look after it a little better this time.

Mavis Is that it then ?

Marreau Almost - I will soon call in everyone else and unmask the double murderer of MacTallach castle, but first Gwendolyn has one or two other questions which she thought you might like to answer without quite such a large audience.

Mavis What sort of questions ?

Gwend Well let's start with precisely why you, Miss Travis, were arguing with Donald MacAlium shortly before his untimely death ...

Mavis What ? Who says I was ?

Marreau Never mind who it is that has told us - please answer the question.

Mavis Yes, yes, alright - I *was* arguing with him - and yes - I suppose that means I was the last person to see him alive -

Laura Mavis - why ? Why were you arguing with Donald ?

Mavis Over you of course, Laura !

Laura Me ?

Mavis Come on Laura - don't deny that you were having an affair with Donald ...

Laura I wouldn't call it an affair ... just a bit of fun ...

Mavis The first man to pay any attention to me in years and you go and steal him from me !

Laura Steal him from ... But Mavis I didn't know ... honestly I didn't

Mavis I don't care ! I half suspected that you had been completely blind to the fact that for once in my life I'd found a little bit of happiness.

Laura Oh Mavis !

Mavis So I didn't actually think that you'd taken him from me to spite me ...

Laura No certainly not - I wouldn't have ...

Mavis But I was just so disappointed in *him* ... why wasn't he satisfied with me ... why did he have to fall for your oh-so-obvious charms ? Wasn't I enough for him ?

Laura But Mavis - if you'd only said ... just one word and I wouldn't have dreamt of ...

Mavis Don't you see, Laura - don't you understand - I didn't want you to avoid him - to rebuff him.

Laura What then ?

Mavis It's not you that I blamed - It was him. I thought that what we had was strong enough to survive your allure. I thought at last I had won a man's affection in my own right - but no - no I was wrong ! Wrong as usual ! Wrong as ever. I should have known. I never win. Never !

Marreau So in the extreme of your anger for him you fought by the water's edge ...

Mavis No !

Gwend Was it an accident, like Edgar said ? Did he slip ...

Mavis No no no !

Marreau Did you try to save him perhaps ?

Laura Oh Mavis - really - was it you ?

Mavis No - will no-one believe me ? We argued yes - I even hit him - I admit that - in my weak and feeble way I hit him - he laughed - he thought it was funny.

Marreau And this enraged you !

Mavis Certainly it did - I was hammering on him and he was just giggling ... in the end I just ran away ... ran off ... back to the house ... and to

Gwend Yes ... to where ...

Mavis To Isabel ... she was so kind ... I told her what had happened ... she said that he was an idiot preferring Laura to me ...

Laura [Lightly] Oh that was nice of her !

Mavis Well yes it was in the circumstances ... even if she didn't mean it - it was nice to hear it.

Gwend But you are saying that Donald was alive when you broke away from him ?

Mavis Yes, yes, yes - if only Isabel were still alive she could vouch for what I say ... we watched him you see - we saw him go down to the lake ... but that was the last time we saw him. The next thing we knew he'd been found down on the beach - dead - and I can't say that I wept a single tear for him. He'd hurt me.

Marreau Mademoiselle, you tell this story with such conviction that I am enclinèd to believe you.

Perhaps you can clear one thing up - would this tryst have occurred after Monsieur MacAlium was seen out by the croft ?

Mavis Oh yes, certainly ... dusk was falling ... I'm sure that apart from the murderer, Isabel and I were the last people to see him alive.

Marreau But why did Isabel not tell me this ? It was crucial information in the case ! Why did she keep it from me ?

Mavis Because, Monsieur Marreau, despite all her faults - which I realise were many - Isabel had a generous heart and kept her promises. She promised me - at my request - that she would reveal nothing of what I had told her and that she had seen. That is why she kept her counsel - why she didn't tell you what she knew.

Marreau Amazing - she was in many ways an incredible woman.

Gwend I think the time is here Marreau -

Marreau But my dear Gwendolyn - Mademoiselle Travis is clearly innocent ...

Gwend Indeed she is - and that simply confirms my opinions ...

Laura I say, you don't suspect me do you ?

[*Gwendolyn rings the bell*]

Gwend Monsieur Marreau and I will reveal the murderer to you very shortly. And if, Miss Taft, that is you - then you will find out soon enough !

Laura But ...

[*Simpson and Farmer lead all the remaining guests in*]

[Denouement]

[*They cluster round (the order should be pre-arranged)*]

[If using Bessie, she may be used in this scene as deemed fit by the director]

Bertie I hope this isn't going to take too long, Marreau - I've got a game of golf booked for two o'clock.

Marreau I think, do not you, Monsieur Bertie that unveiling the murderer of my wife, your sister-in-law takes precedence over hitting a silly little ball into a silly little 'ole, *n'est-ce pas* ?

Bertie Oh right, yes, put like that, yes, I suppose so.

J(W)A So you know who did it then Marreau ...

Marreau All in good time - all in good time. [Aside to **Gwend**] You do know what you're doing don't you Gwendolyn.

Gwend [To **Marreau**] Yes, of course, have I ever let you down ?

Sprote Monsieur Marreau - I have locked all the doors as you requested

Marreau Thank-you Sprote

Sprote I have the keys about my person should you require them.

Simpson Well done Sprotey

Sprote A pleasure sir - there were only 43 doors to lock so it took me no more than two hours.

Simpson I say Gwenders - this really is just like old times isn't it. There are you and Marreau with all the answers and we're all clustered round wondering who it is ... except for the murderer of course - I suppose he knows who it is ...

J(W)A Or she ...

Gruttock But I thought it was this Wombat man - I thought that had been established.

J(W)A No - I didn't do anything.

Marreau Indeed - Monsieur Wombat is no longer suspected of any crime - other than despoiling my wife ... and I believe you too Gruttock are not entirely innocent in that department !

MrsGrut Murdo ! This better not be true !

Gruttock But ... but who's been telling you that, sir ?

MrsGrut Why you You just wait till I get you in that kitchen

Gruttock I can explain

Marreau QUIET !!!

Edgar I say, I'm going to have an exceptionally large port ... anyone care to join me ?

Bertie Be quiet Edgar - If you must have a drink do it quietly.

Marreau Thank-you Bertie.

Lily Do you really know who did it, Mr. Marreau.

Marreau Bon ! à coup sûr !

Gwend If we might begin with you, Edgar ..

Edgar Me ? How can I help ?

Marreau You say you saw someone whom you recognized fighting with Monsieur Donald ... is that correct ?

Edgar Yes you know it is.

Marreau But you could not remember who it was - and eventually accusèd Monsieur Wombat - though we have now established that it could not have been him.

Edgar Well - it certainly looked like him.

Gwend You then say you were attacked on the cellar steps - but didn't see who your assailant was.

Edgar When I've had a few drinks - you know - my eyesight goes a bit [*makes wavy gesture*] ...

Marreau So in other words your testimony is completely useless.

Edgar [*slight pause*] Yes - yes I suppose it is. Just ignore me.

Marreau An excellent idea. ... Now then - Gruttock ... you discovered the body of Mr MacAlium I believe.

Gruttock That I did, doon on the shore.

Marreau And you had been having a relationship with my wife ... [*Mrs Gruttock hits him*]

Gruttock Aye, aye, I admit tae that [*Mrs Gruttock hits him again*] but nae more ... I didna kill anyone.

Gwend The developments that Isabel had planned would have put you out of a job - would they not ?

Gruttock No, no - not at all - far from it - I was to be made up to Estate Manager ... Madame's death is a disaster for me - Mister Edgar is dead set against any plans to change the castle in any way.

Marreau That's true, Gwendolyn ... Gruttock *was* set to become the Estate Manager

Gwend Well I wish you'd mentioned that to me before, Marreau ... that's - oh crikey ... I'm stuck now.

Marreau Well I certainly do not know what to do.

Simpson Hang on a moment ... can I ask a few questions ?

Marreau Certainly Simpson - be my host.

Simpson Lily - where are the glasses kept - the ones which you brought up with the claret ?

Lily In the Crystal Room - aren't they Mrs. Gruttock

MrsGrut That's right.

Gwend The Crystal Room ?

Lily It's where we keep all the crystal and cut glass.

Gwend I see.

Simpson Whereabouts *is* the Crystal Room

MrsGrut It's next to the Butler's Pantry, between that and the China Room

Simpson How far is that from the entrance to the cellar ?

Marreau Just along the corridor

Simpson So when you went to look for the cellar book, did you pass that room, Marreau

Marreau Yes - yes I suppose I did - certainly.

Gwend Mrs. Gruttock, did you wash the glasses once you'd got them from the Crystal Room ?

MrsGrut There was no need - they'd been used only the day before and washed up then - no need to do extra work.

Marreau Indeed. So anyone could have crept into the Crystal Room and laced poor Isabel's glass with poison.

Gruttock I suppose they could - yes - though with us servants around they would have been taking a big risk of being spotted.

Marreau Unless of course it was one of the servants that did it !

Gruttock What ! Who - Not me, nor my wife ... and you surely don't suspect little Lily do you ?

Sprote If your suspicion of servants extends to myself - then may I point out that whilst it would feasibly have been possible for me to murder Madame Isabel - though for Heaven-knows what reason - at the time of Mr. MacAlium's demise I was firmly ensconced in Hertfordshire.

Simpson Don't be silly, Sprotey. Of course we don't suspect you.

Sprote Thank-you sir. That is most reassuring.

Gwend Donald was being employed by Isabel to make modifications to the castle wasn't he ?

Marreau More than modifications my dear ... she wanted to knock down the Ivy Tower ... fill in the lake, convert the wild meadows into a golf course ... many many things ... I cannot say I really approved - but it was not my castle.

J(W)A That's right ... the old walled garden was going to become the car park ... most of the rooms in the castle would have become guest bedrooms ... there are tremendously detailed plans ... It's a darned pity ... I don't suppose Edgar is going to continue them, are you ?

Edgar Too damned right I'm not !

Marreau But Isabel had all the relevant permissions ... the work was to start next week !

Edgar Philistines ! Idiots ! Destroying this beautiful place I tried to persuade her ...

Bertie Steady on Edgar ...

Edgar Oh shut up you windbag ...you did nothing to help did you ?

Bertie What - what do you mean.

Edgar Isabel's plans - All my father's work - all those rare species - they'd all have gone. All destroyed ... for what ... a country club and golf course. Our beautiful lake ! Our beautiful duckweed !

Simpson Lily - where was it you bumped into Edgar ?

Lily Well now you come to mention it .. it was just by the Crystal Room ... and I noticed he was slipping a little bottle into his pocket ...

All: [gasp]

Farmer By 'eck Marreau ... you don't suppose

Marreau I most certainly do !

Edgar ... you would seem to have a pretty strong motive for killing Isabel ... you would inherit the castle and therefore be able to stop her plans.

Edgar What if I did ?

Marreau You also had the opportunity to slip the cyanide into the glass while I was searching for the cellar book ... a book that you yourself could have easily secreted

Edgar So what are you saying, Marreau ?

Marreau You and you alone say you witnessed the murder of Donald MacAlium ... all of which could be pure fabrication ... Edgar - I believe that you are the murderer ... that first you murdered Duncan and then my dear wife, Isabel ... well Edgar - defend yourself !

Edgar [pause] [sneers] Of course it was me ! You blithering fool ! I didn't want to hurt Isabel - I tried to reason with her - told her she shouldn't do things to the castle - that it was only on loan to her - but I was powerless - it is only the land that must be left - she could have razed the whole castle to the ground I could not have raised a finger to stop her.

Simpson But you certainly did raise a finger didn't you Edgar.

Edgar Yes - yes - I saw that fool Donald by the lake ... I hated him - he'd put a lot of the crazy ideas into Isabel's head ... I told him I was going to kill him. He just laughed - a really foolish conceited laugh.

Mavis I know the one, Edgar !

Edgar I thought, you see - if I got rid of him then Isabel would have to give up ... so I did it, we argued by the lake. ... I tripped him up - stupid fool - Into the lake he went - plop ! ... It was such a satisfying sound ! A real good sploosh ! He came gasping to the surface - but I held his head down I did ... glug glug glug ... I liked that, drowned him in the lake that he wanted to fill in and destroy ! Poetic justice - that's what I thought !

Mavis No more than he deserved - well done Edgar !

Edgar I hoped that would be an end to it - but I was wrong.

Bertie I say - Edgar ... do you mean to say that you killed Isabel too ?

Edgar Didn't want to. Really didn't. Had to old man. She found that Wombat idiot to replace MacAlium ...

[To J(W)A] I thought about getting rid of you too young man ...

J(W)A Me ?

Edgar But what would have been the point - she'd only have gone and found someone else ... so it had to be her. I had the cyanide down in the cellar ... got you to come with me Hamish - give me an alibi ... made you go and look for the cellar book. I crept out and put the cyanide in Isabel's glass ... so easy with that big "I" on it ... glasses I'd given her ... what a joke. My only bit of bad luck was bumping into Lily - her seeing the bottle ... but I didn't think she'd put two and two together.

Lily You nasty man ...

Edgar I'm sorry Lily ... you're brighter than I took you for ... then as I got back to the bottom of the cellar steps I took a sniff of the opium ... I knew what it would do ... I was out like a light ... fell backwards, bumped my head ... all perfect ... superb alibi ... if only Lily hadn't seen me.

Laura So why did you steal my brooch and plant it near the lake Edgar ? Were you trying to implicate me ?

Edgar Brooch ? What brooch ?

Laura This one [*shows him the brooch*]

Edgar Never seen it before .. oh wait a minute ... something fell out of Donald's pocket when we were fighting .. I remember seeing something shiny fall to the ground ... no I didn't steal your brooch young lady, I might be a murderer but I'm no thief - it must've been Donald

Mavis That figures.

Gwend More to the point - Where did you hide the cyanide, Edgar ? ... We'd better not leave it lying about for just anyone to pick up !

Edgar The cyanide ! ... Great Scott - I'd forgotten about that [*feels in pocket*] ha ! [*produces bottle from pocket*] How careless of me ! When I knocked myself out with the opium, I'd still got the cyanide on me. ... Good job you didn't look in my pockets or the game would've been up long ago ... Isabel might even still be alive.

DrProth Careful with that cyanide Edgar ...

Edgar [*unscrews cap*] So - if I come with you, Inspector, it's the gallows for me -

Farmer I reckon you're right there, Mr. Edgar.

Edgar Double murderer, no doubt at all I'd say - Can't have that ... there's a much much quicker way [*puts the bottle to his mouth*]

DrProth I say ! Edgar - don't [*goes to intervene*]

Marreau [*holding Protheroe back*] No doctor - it is for the best.

Edgar [*Swallows*] There - it's done ... ahhh [*clutches at his stomach*] ... a ... particularly [*collapses*] ... good [*gasps*] vintage ! [*dies*]

[Blackout]

Marreau will return in *Marreau and the Tregalleon Inheritance*