

Marreau
and the
Trilobite of Rheims
aka

Marreau
and the
Killer Rabbit

By

Robert Farrow

A detective comedy in two acts. The eleventh Marreau adventure.

Revision 1.10f "*Stackpole Quay*" 29.04.14

Production Edition

First performance run: Wednesday 30th April to Saturday 3rd May 2014

Dramatis Personae

With original cast (30th April 2014)

Hemlock Marreau	Marlon Gill	The famous continental detective
Gwendolyn Smith	Jenny Booth	Secretary and friend of Marreau
Simon Simpson	Nigel Froment	Friend of Marreau
Victoria Knight	Vi Malcolm	Researcher at Tring Institute
Kenneth Cross	Adrian Burroughs	Researcher at Tring Institute
Dr Protheroe	Andy Faber	The ubiquitous doctor
Dr Doris Crabbe	Lindsay Stafford-Smith	Senior researcher at Tring Institute
Professor Algenon Finn	Mark Wainwright	Head of Tring Institute
Emma Chancellor	Sue Fuchter	Researcher at Tring Institute
Countess Annuska	Regina Dobbs	An Hungarian noblewoman (party guest)
Lewis P. Lewis	Jake Arkell-Hardwick	Palaeontologist at Tring Institute
Superintendent Farmer	Rob Farrow	The ubiquitous policeman
Sergeant Teddy Treadworthy	John Francis	A police sergeant* *can be doubled

Costume

Hemlock Marreau	DJ & black trousers, Black leather shoes
Gwendolyn Smith	Party / Evening Dress (30s)
Simon Simpson	Comfortable “country” suit to change into
Victoria Knight	Party / Evening Dress (30s)
Kenneth Cross	Loud suit / Blazer / Cravate or loud tie
Dr Protheroe	DJ & black trousers, stethoscope, Black leather shoes
Dr Doris Crabbe	Party / Evening Dress (30s)
Professor Algenon Finn	DJ & black trousers, Black leather shoes
Emma Chancellor	Party / Evening Dress (30s) * needs to be able to accommodate rabbit’s head between knees !!!
Countess Annuska	Party / Evening Dress (30s) - Tiara
Lewis P. Lewis	DJ & black trousers, Black leather shoes
Superintendent Farmer	DJ & black trousers, bicycle clips, Black leather shoes
Sergeant Teddy Treadworthy	A police sergeant’s uniform

Act I - Scene 1

Scene : A drawing room – a table at the side with drinks and glasses.

A pedestal centre rear, with a curtain around it and a cushion on it. On the cushion is The Trilobite of Rheims. Seating around periphery including a sofa and armchairs.

A waltz is playing quietly off stage.

As the curtain opens the music briefly gets louder as Marreau enters, then quieter again (i.e. signifying that he has entered through a door and the music is playing elsewhere)

Marreau Gwendolyn, when you ‘ave finished powdering your nose, I shall be pouring drinks in the sketching (/ painting) room.

Gwendolyn Drawing Room, Marreau ...

[*Marreau opens Champagne and pours two drinks*][**Gwendolyn** enters]

Gwendolyn Well, Marreau; I think we ought to toast the new king – especially as he was once my guest

Marreau Quite right, Gwendolyn – “King Edward the Eighth” [*pause*] “Long may he reign.”

Gwendolyn [*drinks*] Well, I have to say this is all very pleasant, Marreau.

Marreau Indeed my dear, a charming soirée.

Gwendolyn It was good of them to think of us and invite us to their knees up.

Marreau Well after my magnificent triumph solving the Terror of Tring they were hardly likely to forget me !

Gwendolyn Not to mention Simpson actually killing the beast, of course.

Marreau Well quite – that minor contribution did help I suppose.

Gwendolyn It was rather cruel of you, Marreau, telling Simpson that this was a Fancy Dress party.

Marreau I suppose it was – but you ‘ave to admit it is quite funny

Gwendolyn [*Laughing*] Well yes – it doesn’t seem to have affected his ability to attract the girls does it ...

Marreau Indeed. Who is he with at the moment ?

Gwendolyn Last I saw he was dancing with that Hungarian princess or whatever she is.

Marreau Ah yes ... a very attractive young woman.

Gwendolyn Hmm. Anyway [*walks over to Trilobite*] so this is the famous Trilobite of Rheims, is it ?

Marreau *Absolument* – solid gold with diamonds for eyes !

Gwendolyn [*peering at it*] Still not exactly pretty, is it ?

Marreau Oh I don’t know, I think it has a certain woodlousey charm about it.

Gwendolyn I suppose beauty is in the eye of the beholder, as they say

[*The “door” opens and Victoria Knight and Kenneth Cross enter arm in arm, laughing.*]

Victoria [*To Marreau & Gwendolyn*] Ah Gwendolyn, Marreau: Hello again – lovely do isn’t it ?

[*She pours a glass of champagne for **Kenneth** & herself*]

Marreau We were just saying the same, were we not my dear.

Gwendolyn Yes – though I must say that you two look particularly happy ...

Kenneth Shall we tell them Vickie ?

Victoria Oh, Kenny, I thought we were going keep it a secret for now

Kenneth I want the whole world to know !

Marreau Great ‘eavens ! What is this news of international importance ?

Victoria [*laughs*] Hardly that ...

Kenneth It is to me ...

Victoria Kenneth has proposed to me and I’ve accepted.

Kenneth Isn’t it wonderful news

Gwendolyn Congratulations [***Gwendolyn** raises her glass*]

Marreau *Félicitations !* [*raising his glass*] To the ‘appy couple !

[*they all drink*]

Victoria Oh good grief !

Kenneth Whatever’s the matter my darling ?

Victoria I’ve just realised what my name will be once we’re married !

Kenneth Oh crikey yes – Victoria Cross – ha ! I’d not thought of that !

Marreau There are worse names than that my dear – be thankful that his surname isn’t “Sponge”

Victoria I would absolutely refuse to marry anyone called “Sponge”

*Kenneth starts laughing – then his laughter turns into a splutter – he grabs his throat,
Staggers ...*

Victoria Whatever’s the matter Kenny ?

Kenneth I ... I ... [*he falls to the floor*]

Victoria Kenneth ! Kenneth !

[*Gwendolyn stoops to check him over, Victoria stands stunned*]

Gwendolyn Oh no ... Quickly Marreau – find a doctor !

Marreau Of course ! [***Marreau** Dashes offstage*]

Victoria [*breathless*] What’s happened to him ? He’s not ... he’s not ... *dead* is he ?

Gwendolyn I’m not sure – best wait for the doctor, Victoria

Victoria [*wails dramatically*] No ! No he can’t be dead

[***Simpson** appears dressed head to foot as a rabbit*]

Simpson I say ! What’s going on – Marreau’s dashing about asking for a (doctor) [*sees **Kenneth***] – *oh !*

[***Simpson** goes over to **Kenneth** and stoops over him*]

Gwendolyn Simpson, get your ears out of the way ...

Simpson Damn. Sorry. I guess now’s not a good time to be a rabbit.

Gwendolyn Is there ever a good time ?

[**Marreau** *re-enters with Dr. Protheroe*]

[**Simpson** *is obscuring the view of Kenneth*]

Marreau There he is doctor.

Dr.Proth What ? The rabbit ?

Gwendolyn Simpson get out of the way.

Marreau Yes, Simpson let the doc see the – er – patient. [*Goes to champagne glasses, inspects them*]

Dr.Proth Ah, I see – him – alright – give me some space everyone. I suppose I'd better check him over – though I must say that he looks like a goner to me. [*Goes to **Kenneth***]

Victoria [*wails*] Kenny !

[**Dr. Protheroe** *checks over **Kenneth** - While he's doing this, the music stops and everyone else enters*]

Dr.Proth [*After a few moments*] Nope, he's a dead-un I'm afraid.

Victoria [*wails*] No ! He can't be !

Dr.Proth [*still holding Kenneth's wrist*] Oh hang on a tic.

Simpson [*said as a straight question*] What's up, doc ? [*note: do **not** say it a la Bugs Bunny*]

Dr.Proth I thought I felt a faint pulse there for a moment.

Victoria Save him Doctor !

Dr.Proth Well I'll do what I can ... can't promise anything. [*he produces a small vial and sniffs the contents, shudders slightly, then wafts them under Kenneth' nose.*] Yes, definite pulse now.

Victoria So he'll be alright ?

Dr.Proth Too early to say – but he's certainly still in the land of the living at the moment.

Marreau This is very good news.

Dr.Proth Any idea what made him collapse ? Did he clutch his chest or anything ?

Victoria No – it was his throat, wasn't it Gwendolyn ?

Gwendolyn Yes – yes it was

Dr.Proth Ah, that's interesting

Marreau I believe 'e 'as been poisoned

Most: *Poisoned !* [*said by most of the assembled people*]

Marreau [*only just noticing everyone*] Out ! Out ! Out ! Do not impinge upon the doctor in his administrations !

[*All newcomers start to filter out muttering as **Marreau** shoos them away*]

Doris [*Exclaiming dramatically*] The Rabbit ! [*those exiting stop, turn and look*]

Simpson Me ?

Doris The Rabbit of Death !

Simpson Death ?

Prof. Finn Oh come on Doris – you know that's just (a costume) ...

Doris [*interrupting*] But it's just as I saw it, Algy.

Prof. Finn [To all] You'll have to excuse Doris I'm afraid – she's been having strange dreams recently.

Doris Such real dreams though – like visions ! And always the rabbit – the Killer Rabbit !

Prof. Finn But still just dreams nevertheless, Doris.

Doris I know they must be – but there it is – The Rabbit just as I saw it !

Marreau I can assure you that it is only a costume ...

Simpson Yes it's me, Doris – Simon Simpson – you remember me don't you ?

Doris Oh – Mr Simpson I'm so sorry – and after you saved me from that snake ...

Simpson Don't worry, Doris -

Doris I don't know what came over me – it must be the shock – poor Kenny, that's all.

Marreau [Calming down] Yes, of course – that is understandable – but still it would be better if you gave the doctor 'is space to work. [all newcomers except Doris have now left]

Doris Of course – you will let us know how he gets on, won't you.

Marreau *Bien sûr.* [**Doris exits**]

Dr.Proth So what makes you think he was poisoned then Marreau ?

Marreau Sniff this doctor ... [proffers champagne glass]

Dr.Proth Hmm, not totally champagny I agree ...

Marreau Cyanide n'est-ce pas ?

Dr.Proth Cyanide ? [*Dismissively*] Certainly not.

Marreau Oh ?

Dr.Proth [sniffs the glass again] No trace of an almond smell there ... but there is *something* – a bit mushroomy perhaps.

Marreau Ah ! The Deadly Nightcap again !

Dr.Proth No – can't be Death Cap, that takes days to kill you – no, I have an idea though.

Marreau Oh ?

Dr.Proth I'll get it analysed – tell them what to look for first. [*Gives **Kenneth** another sniff of salts*]

Marreau *Bonne idée* – [*points at **Kenneth***] Look doctor, he's moving [***Kenneth stirs slightly***]

Dr.Proth Aha ! [*He wafts smelling salts at Kenneth again, then takes another extravagant sniff himself*]

Ahhh, good stuff this is ...

Gwendolyn I think he's coming to, doctor

Kenneth [*groans*]

Victoria He's going to survive !

Dr.Proth Looks that way ! Steady on old fellow – take it easy.

Kenneth [*very groggy*] What happened ?

Gwendolyn You collapsed

Victoria We thought you were dead, Kenny – I thought I'd lost you.

Kenneth [*rallying*] Well I still feel pretty dicky I must say.

Dr.Proth I think I'd better get the contents of that glass analysed – see if my hunch is correct.

Marreau *Tout à fait*

Dr.Proth [To **Kenneth**] I suggest you take it easy, young man – that was a pretty serious reaction you had there.

Victoria Yes, **Kenneth** – I’ll take you upstairs – you should have a lie down.

Kenneth Sounds like a good idea to me. [**Kenneth & Victoria exit**]

Simpson So do *you* think someone poisoned him, doctor ?

Dr.Proth Looks that way – I’ll get off and run some tests.
Get one of those scientist chappies to keep an eye on him will you ? I’m sure they’ll have some medical knowledge between them – if he has a relapse or anything get him off to hospital pronto.
[going to exit] I’ll be back as soon as I know anything.

Gwendolyn Thank-you doctor. [**Dr. Protheroe exits**]

Simpson Funny how this sort of thing happens whenever we’re about, isn’t it.

Gwendolyn Hilarious, Simon

Marreau This is very strange – the poison that does not really work.

Gwendolyn Yes, that is peculiar.

Simpson I say – wasn’t that big woodlouse thing supposed to be on that cushion ?

Marreau You refer to the Trilobite of – [realises it’s missing] *Mon Dieu !* The Trilobite of Rheims ! It has been stolen ! [Goes to cushion, frantically searches around it]

Gwendolyn [rather amused] Oh dear, Marreau – from under your very nose – that’s a bit embarrassing.

Marreau Embarrassing ? *C’est une catastrophe !*

Simpson What’s that Marreau ?

Marreau It is a disaster ...

Simpson No – what’s that on the floor ?

Marreau What ? Where ?

Simpson Just flew out from under the cushion ... here [goes to pick up a small card, can’t grasp it with his rabbit paws] Can you get that for me please Gwenders – my paws aren’t up to it.

Gwendolyn [retrieving card] It just says “L”

Marreau Elle ?

Gwendolyn Yes just a capital letter L

Marreau Ah *je comprend* – I thought you meant E. L. L. E.

Gwendolyn No, just the letter – but it’s like a calling card. I wonder what it means.

Simpson Large probably.

Marreau Large ?

Simpson That’s what L usually means.

Gwendolyn On a calling card ?

Simpson Well no, not on a calling card.

[**Professor Finn enters**]

Prof. Finn Seems like Kenneth is going to be alright – that’s jolly good news isn’t it.

Marreau Indeed it is ... but Professor Finn, I have some very *bad* news for you I’m afraid.

Prof. Finn Oh ? What’s that then ?

Marreau [*Gesturing towards the empty cushion*] The Trilobite ...

Prof. Finn [*Unconcerned*] Oh dear that’s a pity.

Gwendolyn You don’t seem terribly bothered, Professor

Prof. Finn No, well, that’s because it was just a replica, only cost us a few pounds.

Marreau [*much relieved*] Thank ‘eavens for that

Prof. Finn You don’t suppose we’d be stupid enough to leave the *real* trilobite sitting around on a cushion for just anyone to swipe do you ?

Simpson I say, what a good idea – where’s the real one then ?

Prof. Finn Safely tucked away in this safe [*opens curtains on pedestal to reveal safe*]

Marreau Ah, *bon* ! May we see the real thing ?

Prof. Finn I don’t see why not. [*Bends down to safe*]

----- *This next section should be played as though perhaps the play itself has gone wrong* -----

Prof. Finn [*Twiddling dial*] ... er ... it won’t open

Marreau You *are* using the right numbers ?

Prof. Finn I think so

Simpson Does anyone else know the numbers ?

Prof. Finn Um – well no-one - er - in this room,

Gwendolyn Shall I wander off and try to find somebody ... who does know ?

Prof. Finn Might be the best idea.

Gwendolyn Who does know it then ?

Prof. Finn Um – er – Farmer

Simpson Chief Inspector Farmer ? Is he here then ?

Prof. Finn I think I saw him back - er - back there.

Simpson May *I* have a quick look ?

Prof. Finn At what ?

Simpson The safe.

Prof. Finn Oh yes - be my guest - but you don’t know the combination do you ?

Simpson No, but I’m quite good with locks and things ... [*Goes to safe*]

Marreau You’ll never do it Simpson – it is a professional safe.

Simpson [*After a moment or two*] These stupid paws are useless – hang on ...

[*Simpson attempts to wriggle his arms out of his rabbit costume with no luck; others join in, pulling and twisting the costume*]

Gwendolyn Shall I go and get Farmer ?

Simpson I think you may have to unscrew it
Marreau Unscrew what ?
Simpson My head – I think it screwed on ...
Gwendolyn That explains a lot !
Prof. Finn Hang on then [*Twists rabbit head – ends up pointing backwards*] – It's stuck.
[*There is a scream offstage [Victoria]*]
Marreau What was that ?
Gwendolyn Sounded like a scream to me ...
Marreau Let us investigate ! [**All but Simpson** *charge offstage*]

*Simpson, his rabbit head pointing backwards, now gropes his way around the stage.
His arms outstretched he bumps into various things until, near the back of the stage he collides
with Emma as she enters.*

Act I Scene 2 (the same)

[**Emma Chancellor enters**] [**Simpson, arms outstretched, head reversed, bumps into her**]

Emma [Being pawed by **Simpson**] Mr Simpson, I believe.

Simpson Ah, gosh yes – sorry – can't see a dashed thing in here.

Emma I'm not surprised – you're looking the wrong way.

Simpson I know – we've been trying to unscrew it

Emma Your head ?

Simpson Yes – can you twist it back around for me ?

Emma O.k. [*starts to twist clockwise*]

Simpson *Arrgh !* No – the other way please

Emma Oh, sorry. [*twists head anticlockwise back to forward facing*]

Simpson That's better – at least I can see now – ah, it's you Emma.

Emma Would you like me to pull it off for you ?

Simpson [*pause*] Er - You can try ...

Emma [*she tugs to no avail*] It's not budging. [*thinks*] Perhaps if I grab your head with my knees and you wriggle out backwards ?

Simpson Might work [*gets down on all fours, places head between Emma's knees and pulls backwards*]

Emma [*after a few moments*] It's very stiff.

Simpson You're telling me - It shouldn't be this hard.

Emma [*Rabbit head comes off, Simpson falls backwards, Emma lands on top of him*] Oh !

[**Marreau, Gwendolyn and Annuska enter**]

Gwendolyn For Heaven's sake Simon !

Marreau Whatever are you doing ?

Annuska I am disappointed in you Simon !

Simpson What ?

Emma Yes, hold on a minute ! What are you suggesting ? I was just helping him out of his costume !

Annuska That much is obvious.

Emma I mean I was pulling it off.

Annuska What ?

Emma His head.

Simpson She was – look [*points to head*] !

Gwendolyn I suppose we should give you the benefit of the doubt.

Emma I should damn-well hope so ! What kind of girl do you take me for ?

Marreau My apologies Mademoiselle Emma – it is just with Simpson's history ...

Simpson I say Marreau – what d’you mean my history ?

Gwendolyn Well Simon, you can’t deny there’s always some floozy or other falling all over you.

Emma *Floozy* ? Are you calling me a floozy now ?

Gwendolyn No, no – just some of Simpson’s former female friends have been, well, a bit floozyish

Simpson [*unusually cuttingly*] Are you including yourself in that list, Gwenders ?

Gwendolyn Simon ! How could you ! We were engaged.

Annuska You two were engaged ?

Gwendolyn Yes, Countess we were – A long time ago. [*pause*] We both came to our senses.

Emma So anyway - what was all that screaming about ?

Marreau It is Monsieur Kenneth I am afraid.

Simpson Didn’t sound like Kenny.

Gwendolyn Well no, it was Victoria who screamed.

Emma So what’s happened to Kenneth this time then ?

Annuska It seems he’s dead

Simpson Again ?

Emma Are they certain ?

Marreau Not for sure, no – it could just be a relapse – they’ve sent for an ambulance.

Gwendolyn And we’ve sent a message to Doctor Protheroe.

[**Doris enters**]

Doris [*heavily*] I reckon he’s definitely bought it this time.

Marreau Why ? What are the symptoms ?

Doris Well first he was delirious – talking all sorts of rubbish. Then suddenly he was motionless. Staring into space. Ghastly pallor. Usual sort of death symptoms really.

Marreau *Sacre bleu* !

Gwendolyn Poor Victoria

Emma Victoria ?

Gwendolyn Yes, she’d just become engaged to him: didn’t you know ?

Emma What ? Really ? Victoria – and Kenneth

Gwendolyn Yes – they’ve just announced it

Emma [*obviously dumfounded*] Victoria’s getting married ? [*slight pause*] That’s a bit odd.

Marreau Oh ? Why do you say that ?

Simpson Not married already is she ?

Emma No, no – not at all – quite the opposite in a way.

Gwendolyn What do you mean, Emma ?

Emma It’s just that [*pause*] I always thought Victoria - um - “batted for the other side”, as they say.

Marreau [*Utterly confused*] Batted for the ... what ‘as her cricketing affiliation got to do with anything ?

Gwendolyn Ah, Marreau – that’s not quite what Emma meant.

Simpson Gosh ! You mean she's a spy ? For whom ?

Gwendolyn Oh for pity's sake Simpson –

Emma [*incredulous that he doesn't understand*] No Simon – a spy – no – I just meant that I'd always thought that she – oh you know – “worshipped at the shrine of Sappho”.

Marreau Ah ! It was her religious beliefs that you thought prevented her from marrying. Like a nun !

Em & Gwend [*exasperated*] No !

Annuska Will someone please explain, for I too have no idea what anyone is talking about !

Doris Nor I – Sappho rings a bell, but it's years since I studied any Greek mythology.

Gwendolyn Oh look – enough euphemisms – what Emma is suggesting is that she isn't interested in men and prefers the company of women, let's say.

Emma Thank-you, Gwendolyn. Precisely what I meant.

Simpson So Marreau's right then – like a nun.

Gwendolyn *No*, not like a nun – like ... oh hang on, Simon – like your Auntie Poppy and Uncle Mavis !

Simpson *Ohhhh ! [light dawns] like them !*

Marreau Ah je comprend ! [*quite jolly*] Elle est une lesbienne, oui ?

Gwendolyn [*surprised by Marreau's bluntness*] Well yes – that was the suggestion
[**Victoria enters unseen by others**]

Marreau So if she is une lesbienne, why all of this pussy-footing around ? Why not just say that she is une lesbienne rather than all these silly cricket references ?

Victoria Who's a lesbian ?

Simpson Oh – er – My Auntie Poppy

Marreau And Uncle Mary

Gwendolyn Mavis

Marreau 'im too

Victoria Fair enough. Takes all sorts. Anyway, I just thought I'd come and tell you that Kenny's come round again. Seems fine now.

Marreau Excellent news.

Doris Crikey yes. I was *sure* he'd had it this time.

Victoria I know. He didn't look good did he. I'm getting exhausted with all this on/off death business. It takes it out of you.

Marreau Well quite.

Annuska So what is he doing now, Victoria ?

Victoria Lying there feeling sorry for himself really. I'd had enough of hanging around mopping his brow, so I thought I'd take a break.

Doris Shall I go and check on him. Make sure he's alright ? [*going to exit*]

Victoria [*unconcerned*] Be my guest.

Emma I'll come with you Doris. [*to exit*]

Victoria [sotto voce] I thought you might. [**Doris & Emma exit**]

I must say all this Kenny business has put rather a dampener on things hasn't it ?

Annuska Yes I think we can safely assume that the party is over.

Gwendolyn I reckon you can probably change out of that ridiculous costume now, Simon.

Simpson Ah, yes, I'm waiting for Sprotey to turn up.

Gwendolyn Surely you can get changed without the aid of your butler, Simon !

Simpson But he's bringing my clothes.

Gwendolyn You didn't bring any spare clothes ?

Simpson Don't be silly Gwenders. Of course I did.

Gwendolyn So why not get changed into *those* ?

Simpson Well they're not a lot better really.

Marreau *Comment ?*

Simpson It's a squirrel.

Victoria What's a squirrel ?

Simpson My other costume – in case someone else turned up as a rabbit – I had a spare squirrel.

Gwendolyn As you do.

Annuska But no ordinary clothes ?

Simpson Er – no – but Sprotey should be here soon with them though.

[**Finn enters**]

Prof. Finn Hello all.

Marreau Ah, Professor, any luck at finding the combination to the safe ?

Prof. Finn No, I'm afraid not. The code we were using should have worked according to Farmer.

Marreau This is most strange – could the code have been changed ?

Prof. Finn Only from inside the safe once it's opened.

Gwendolyn So someone must have opened it and changed it then.

Prof. Finn I can't see how – there are only three of us that knew the combination in the first place; Farmer, Lewis and myself.

Marreau *Comment ?* Who is Lewis ?

Prof. Finn Oh haven't you met him yet ? Great heavens – he's the fellow who won the thing for us – he's our brilliant new palaeontologist.

Simpson Perhaps he got the real trilobite out of the safe to show someone.

Prof. Finn No – I've already asked him – he's been too busy meeting everyone – he didn't even know that our *facsimile* had been stolen.

Marreau Most strange. So the genuine trilobite is trapped inside the safe !

Victoria Seems to me like you need a safe-cracker.

Simpson Once I've got this damned rabbit off, I could have a bash if you like.

Prof. Finn Ah – Sorry Mr Simpson, I meant to tell you; your valet has turned up with your clothes.

Simpson Oh, right, Jolly-D, I'll scoot off and get changed then ... [*going to exit*]

Annuska [*surprised*] You can crack safes Simon ?

Simpson Well, possibly – we'll have to see [**Simpson exits**]

Gwendolyn I wouldn't put too much reliance on Simpson breaking in to it if I were you, Professor. Perhaps Farmer could find someone with the relevant expertise though.

Marreau Ah yes, he must have come across a few criminals who could open it in a whiffy.

Prof. Finn That's not a bad idea – I'll go and find him. [**Finn exits**]

Annuska So let me get this straight. Someone has stolen a pretend trilobite that was on the cushion – and the real trilobite is inside the safe but no-one can get it out – is that right ?

Gwendolyn Yes – that sums it up.

Annuska So we can assume that whoever stole the pretend trilobite wasn't aware that it was a fake and thought that they were stealing the real one.

Marreau *Absolument - un très bon point.*

Victoria But almost everyone knew it was fake.

Gwendolyn *We didn't.*

Annuska Neither did I.

Victoria Yes, I suppose the guests were supposed to think it was the real thing. When did it go missing ?

Marreau It was around the time that your poor fiancé Kenneth collapsed.

Gwendolyn Oh good grief ! We've been idiots Marreau !

Marreau Whatever do you mean, Gwendolyn ?

Gwendolyn This whole Kenny business – the poisoning – the fact that it wasn't fatal. It was never meant to be.

Marreau *Pourquoi ?*

Gwendolyn It was just to create a diversion so that the trilobite could be swiped when everyone's attention was diverted.

Marreau But of course; well deduced Gwendolyn – this was the conclusion I was just formulating myself.

Annuska So the poisoning wasn't aimed at Mr Cross specifically then ?

Victoria You mean any of us might have taken the poison ?

Gwendolyn Absolutely – whoever picked up that glass got the poison – it didn't matter to the assailant who it was – provided they reacted to the poison and caused enough commotion to distract everyone.

Victoria So it could just as easily have been I who was poisoned !

Gwendolyn Of course.

Victoria That's terrible !

Annuska Ingenious though.

Marreau Indeed. There is quite a determined villain at work here – and I suspect that when he realises that he has only stolen a replica ...

Gwendolyn ... he'll try again.

Annuska Or she.

Victoria She ?

Annuska No reason why this is a crime by a man – poison can be administered by anyone.

Gwendolyn Very true.

Marreau Indeed, we 'ave discovered in many cases before now that the female of the species is just as devious as the male.

[Lewis enters]

Lewis Hello. Old Prof. Finn told me I ought to come and introduce myself ...

Marreau Aha – you are Monsieur Lewis the esteemed palaeontologist, *oui* ?

Lewis Quite right – whereas you no doubt are the famed sleuth Monsieur Marreau, and [*turning to Gwendolyn, smiling*] you my dear, must be the estimable Gwendolyn Smith.

Gwendolyn [*charmed*] That's me – but you have me at a disadvantage, Mr Lewis – as you know my first name whereas I don't know yours.

Lewis Ah, well, as it happens you do. I'm Lewis Lewis – or Lewis P. Lewis if you prefer.

Marreau *Sacre bleu* ! How unusual !

Lewis Not really – I'm sure you've heard of Jerome K. Jerome for example

Marreau *Mais oui*, the three men that are in a boat together, *n'est-ce pas*.

Lewis And Ford Madox Ford

Gwendolyn Oh yes – Parade's End – I love Parade's End.

Lewis So do I. Something we have in common – we must both be confirmed romantics.

Gwendolyn Well – I can't say I'd ever thought of myself as a romantic ... but maybe I am.

Lewis And I believe we have other things in common ...

Gwendolyn [*intrigued*] Oh ? Anything in particular ?

Lewis We have both been widowed for one thing.

Gwendolyn Yes, yes, poor Mexi – that seems a long time ago now.

Lewis [*condolingly*] I too lost my wife in tragic circumstances involving a newt.

Marreau *Sacré bleu! C'est une coïncidence plus incroyable!*

Annuska Excuse my interrupting these somewhat surreal revelations – but *I* have not yet been introduced – Monsieur Lewis, I am the Countess Annuska Asztalos of Esztergom.

Victoria [*sotto voce*] Try saying *that* after a few drinks.

Lewis I am delighted to meet you too, Countess.

Annuska Likewise.

Lewis I am honoured that you have joined us as our guest.

Annuska I have always had a keen interest in fossils – ever since the discovery in my home country of the Ipolitarnóc site.

Lewis Of course – a most fantastic find – I hope to visit one day.

Annuska I'm sure that can be arranged ...

Lewis That would be excellent ...

Gwendolyn [*fearing a rival*] Excuse me but can we get back to this newt – you say your wife was killed by one too ?

Victoria That's pushing it a bit, Lewis.

Lewis As Vickie says - not exactly. She was working in the amphibian department. A whole bunch of newts escaped and she was trying to round them up.

Marreau What on earth went wrong ?

Lewis Unfortunately, it seems she trod on one; slipped on the resultant slime and crashed headlong into the corner of a table – killed outright.

Marreau *Mon dieu.*

Victoria The newt died too.

Lewis [*tetchily*] Which is of somewhat less significance I would have thought.

Victoria Yes of course, Lewis – just thought I'd mention it.

Marreau So, in both cases, the newt was an unintentional cause of death and paid with its life – it is wrong therefore to blame the amphibian itself.

Gwendolyn Doesn't stop me hating the accursed little beasts though. Damn them all to Hell !

Annuska You're really not a fan of them are you, Gwendolyn. [*rubs her own temples*]

Gwendolyn I try not to think of them if at all possible.

Lewis I'm sorry – it's my fault, bringing up the subject.

Gwendolyn Not at all – I know my hatred of them is entirely irrational. I just can't help it though.

[**Kenneth** *staggers into the room*]

Marreau [*seeing Kenneth*] Monsieur Cross – should you be out of bed ?

Kenneth I had to get away from Doris – she was fussing over me like a mother hen.

Victoria I can imagine. And Emma ?

Kenneth Oh yes she turned up too. Not for long though.

Victoria Blocked by Doris was she ?

Kenneth [*laughs*] Yes she was rather. Ah, Vickie, darling – I wish it had been you.

Victoria Sorry Kenny; I'm not very good at all that bedside stuff

Lewis Anyway - Good to see you on the mend, Kenneth

Kenneth Thanks Lewis

Annuska If you will excuse me, I feel a migraine coming on – I need to go for a lie down [*staggers*]

Marreau I am sorry to hear this ...

Gwendolyn [*cuttingly*] You *do* look a bit pasty and insipid – do you need to sit down ?

Annuska No, no – I should be alright if I take one of my pills and stay in a dark room for a while.

Victoria Would you like a hand getting up the stairs, Countess ?

Annuska That would be helpful - If you wouldn't mind ... [*going to exit*]

Victoria [*going to exit*] Not at all.

Annuska Hopefully I'll be back down soon. [**Annuska** and **Victoria** *exit*]

Lewis So, talking of invalids – how are you fairing now, Kenneth ?

Kenneth Oh not too bad – comes in waves you know.

Gwendolyn Make yourself comfortable on the sofa ...

Kenneth [*lounges on sofa*] Thank-you Gwendolyn.

Marreau Has the doctor seen you again ?

Kenneth Yes, popped in to check on me – told me I'd almost certainly been poisoned – but that it was nothing fatal – that I should make a full recovery.

Marreau *Très bon*

Gwendolyn I don't suppose he mentioned what the poison was, did he ?

Kenneth Oh crikey – coprine I think, something like that – sorry I'm a fish man myself – and a few amphibians at a push – no good at drugs and chemicals and things, sorry.

Lewis Ah wait a minute – Coprine – I've heard of that, I'm sure – comes from a fungus – Ink Cap I believe.

[**Farmer** enters]

Yes I'm sure that's coprine poisoning ...

Farmer By 'eck – did I hear you mentionin' copper-thingy poisonin' just then ?

Marreau [*cheerful*] Farmer – good to see you again.

Farmer Likewise Musher Marreau – and Mrs Smith ...

Gwendolyn Hello again Chief Inspector

Farmer I's a Superintendent again now.

Marreau [*cheerfully*] Ah, felicitations on your promotion.

Farmer So old Doc Protheroe was right was 'e – 'e said to me when 'e left as how 'e thought it might be that there copper-thingy poisoning.

Lewis Only affects you if you drink alcohol I believe ...

Marreau So combined with a glass of champagne it is guaranteed ...

Lewis Quite – not to mention being at a party – everyone's going to have had a drop or two.

Marreau [*lightly*] Good job it was not *you* who drank it, Gwendolyn ...

Gwendolyn [*only curious*] What do you mean, Marreau ?

Marreau Well, with the amount that you drink, it would have probably ...

Gwendolyn [*now cross*] What do you mean “the amount that I drink” ?

Marreau Simpson and I were discussing it only the other day ...

Gwendolyn [*furious*] You were, were you ?

Marreau It was only concern for you, Gwendolyn ...

Gwendolyn Well you can keep your concern to yourself, thank-you Marreau !

Marreau I only ...

Farmer Well anyway ...

Gwendolyn And you can keep out of it, Farmer

Farmer Righty-o

Gwendolyn I can't believe you said that, Marreau – especially in front of other people ...

Lewis Oh don't worry about what I think, Gwendolyn ...

Gwendolyn But I do ...

Lewis I mean it doesn't bother me.

Kenneth [*from sofa*] Nor me ...

Farmer You can drink as much as you like as far as I'm ...

Gwendolyn Oh be quiet Farmer !

Farmer Righty-o

Gwendolyn I am really not happy, Marreau [*goes to door*]

Marreau But I ...

Gwendolyn Not with you and not with Simon ...

Marreau I am sorry Gwendolyn ... We did not mean any (harm by it) ...

Gwendolyn You've said more than enough Marreau ! Goodbye ! [**Gwendolyn** *exits in high dudgeon*]

Marreau *Sacre bleu !*

Farmer By 'eck

Lewis I think you crossed a bit of a line there Marreau.

Marreau So it would appear ...

Kenneth Oh, don't worry old chap, she'll calm down – they always do.

Marreau I 'ave never seen 'er so cross before.

Lewis It *was* a bit tactless, if you don't mind my saying.

Marreau Not my strong pack of cards, I am afraid – the tact – do you think I should go to her ?

Lewis Hmm, perhaps – no, I'll tell you what, *I'll* go and find her, have a word on your behalf.
[*goes to door*]

Marreau That is most kind.

Lewis Not at all; I'd be delighted [**Lewis** *exits*]

Farmer By 'eck Musher Marreau – I think you've put your foot in it good and proper this time.

Marreau So it would seem.

Farmer Well - now it's just the two of us, I've got ...

Kenneth [*coughs*] ... and me ...

Farmer Oh yes, I'd forgotten about you there, Mr Cross.

Marreau What is it that you wanted to tell me, Farmer ?

Farmer It's about that there missing trilobite – and the safe

Kenneth But the trilobite's only a replica ...

Farmer That's as maybe – it's still theft though whether it's worth five pounds or five thousand.

Marreau This is true ...

Farmer And what's more – I think there's more to it ...

Marreau Oh ?

Farmer Yes – this little clue what I've found ...

Marreau What sort of clue ?

Farmer Come with me and let me show you (what I've found) ... [*going to door*]

Marreau [*following him*] Very well – oh Monsieur Cross – will you be alright on your own ?

Kenneth Yes, yes – don't worry about me. I'll just have a rest here.

Marreau If you are sure.

Farmer Come on Musher Marreau – I's quite excited about it ... [**Marreau** and **Farmer** exit S/L]
 [*Just **Kenneth** remains, lying on the couch*]
 [*He stretches, gets to his feet and wanders fairly aimlessly towards a magazine rack, picks out a newspaper or magazine and wanders back towards sofa*]
 [*The **Rabbit** peeps round S/R – and after a few moments enters*]

Kenneth [*seeing **Rabbit***] Oh, hello Mr Simpson – still in your costume ?
 [*the **Rabbit** says nothing but approaches Kenneth*]
 I'm glad you're here I was getting ... [*the **Rabbit** produces a knife*]
 What the ... Help ! HELP !!
 [*The **Rabbit** stabs **Kenneth***] Arrrrgggghhh !
 [*The **Rabbit** turns and runs offstage S/R (exit)*]
 [**Kenneth** staggers to his feet] Help ! HELP !! [*staggers towards S/L exit*]

[**Marreau** and **Farmer** run back into the room S/L and see **Kenneth**]

Marreau Whatever has happened Monsieur Cross ?

Kenneth [*gasping*] The Rabbit ! The Rabbit ! I've been stabbed by the Rabbit !

Farmer By 'eck – a *rabbit* d'you say ?

Marreau Quickly Farmer – get help – anyone – see if you can find the doctor

Farmer Right you are ... [**Farmer** exits at speed] (*offstage shouts for help / doctor several times*)

Kenneth [*gasping*] I thought that it was Mr Simpson ...

Marreau Simpson ! No he would not ...

Kenneth No, no – I know – it wasn't him ...

Marreau So who was it ?

Kenneth [*last breaths*] The Rabbit ... Like in Doris's dream ... it was the Rabbit – the killer Rab ...
 [**Kenneth** dies]
 [**Blackout**] [possibly **Curtain**]

Act I Scene 3 (the same)

(On stage **Marreau, Farmer, Finn, Simpson**)

- Farmer By 'eck Monsieur Marreau, I can always rely on you to come up with an interesting case for me!
- Marreau This turn of events it is most unfortunate and unexpected.
- Prof. Finn Well we knew someone was trying to kill Kenny – we should have been more vigilant.
- Marreau It did not seem necessary. It appeared that the poisoning of Monsieur Cross was *not* an attempt on his life.
- Simpson Yes, you said you thought it was just a diversion to allow someone to steal the trilobite.
- Prof. Finn Well you were obviously mistaken, Marreau.
- Marreau So it would seem. Have you made sure no-one can leave the house, Superintendent ?
- Farmer Yes, I's got my men makin' sure as no suspects can get away.
- Prof. Finn Fortunately nearly all our guests had left after the poisoning – well before the murder occurred.
- Marreau That is good ...
- Farmer We *are* missing two people though.
- Marreau Oh, who are they ?
- Farmer Mrs Smith ...
- Simpson *Gwendolyn* ? She's not here ?
- Farmer Well we can't find 'er
- Marreau *Sacre Bleu*
- Prof. Finn Ah, yes that's right - I saw Mrs Smith dashing off myself ...
- Marreau Dashing off ? 'Ow ?
- Prof. Finn In her car ...
- Marreau But Gwendolyn does not 'ave a car !
- Simpson I didn't even know she could drive !
- Prof. Finn Well I definitely saw her high-tailing it off in a Bentley ...
- Simpson A *Bentley* ? Not a 1929 Racing Bentley ?
- Prof. Finn Something like that ...
- Simpson In British Racing Green ?
- Prof. Finn That's the one.
- Simpson That's *my* Bentley – she's a bit of a handful – Gwenders is bound to crash her.
- Marreau *Sacre Bleu*, poor Gwendolyn –
- Farmer By 'eck – Mrs Smith scootin' off like that in a stolen car - that's a bit suspicious that is ...
- Prof. Finn But she drove off several minutes before the murder I'm sure ...
- Marreau Farmer – you were not seriously suspecting Gwendolyn of dressing up as a rabbit and murdering Monsieur Kenneth were you ?

Farmer No I s'pose not ...

Simpson Who was the other person, Farmer ?

Farmer Other person ?

Simpson You said two people were missing

Farmer Oh yes – that Lewis chappie – can't find him neither we can't.

Marreau Ah – he went off to find Gwendolyn – perhaps *he* was driving the Bentley.

Prof. Finn No – Mrs Smith was definitely alone.

Simpson Shall I take *your* car Marreau – see if I can find Gwenders – make sure she's alright ?

Marreau But of course – *C'est une bonne idée*

Farmer I'm not really sure as anyone else should leave the house I'm not.

Marreau You surely cannot suspect Simpson !

Farmer Well, no, I know it's unlikely – but 'e was seen dressed as a rabbit – which you must admit is a bit suspicious – what with the murderer *bein'* a rabbit an' all.

Simpson I'd taken it off by then – someone must have borrowed it.

Prof. Finn We only have your word for that though, don't we Mr Simpson.

Marreau But what possible motive could Simpson 'ave for murdering Monsieur Kenneth ?

Simpson I'd hardly met the poor chap.

Marreau And meanwhile our dear Gwendolyn might be lying in a ditch somewhere.

Farmer I'll tell you what – I'll get some of my men out looking for 'er if you like...

Marreau *Ah bon !* Yes that is the best idea ...

Simpson Quickly though Farmer – she might be injured.

Farmer Right you are – I'll go and sort it out [*to exit*]

Marreau And find out what 'as 'appened to Monsieur Lewis too ...

Farmer OK – will do. [**Farmer exits**]

Marreau So, Professor – you probably knew the deceased as well as anyone here – have you any theories as to why he may have been killed – and by whom?

Prof. Finn Well no – not really. Quite an inoffensive sort of chap, really.

Simpson How's Vickie taking it ?

Prof. Finn Not too bad – she was getting used to the idea really. After all he'd apparently been dead twice today already.

Marreau I suppose this is true.

Simpson A bit like trial runs in a way.

Marreau That is one way of looking at it.

[**Doris enters**]

Doris Ah, there you are Marreau. Found that damned rabbit yet ?

Marreau I am afraid my investigations have only just started.

Doris Well, look sharpish about it – told you I’d had the premonition didn’t I ?

Simpson That’s right – when you saw me ...

Doris If you’d listened to me, you could have prevented it.

Marreau How precisely ?

Doris I don’t know – set up some kind of trap for it.

Prof. Finn Not really practical was it Doris – we none of us really believed you were having a premonition, did we ? Not even you.

Doris No well – better be safe than sorry now.

Prof. Finn Now ? What d’you mean “now”

Doris In my dream it went on a bit of a spree

Marreau A spree ? You mean it strikes again ?

Doris Certainly does. Bodies all over the place – amid the carrots etcetera.

Simpson Carrots ?

Doris Yes, yes – general devastation in its wake; carrots, bodies, spinach, limbs, heads, turnips – you name it – right old mess – especially the spinach.

Marreau I do not think that this particular rabbit will strike again ...

Doris Oh you don’t, hey – why’s that then ? I reckon it might have a taste for it now !

Simpson It wasn’t a real rabbit, Doris – it was my costume.

Doris Well I know that ! I’m not a fool – I realise it couldn’t be a real rabbit doing this – hardly equipped to wield a dagger, your average bunny, is it ?

Marreau Well quite.

Prof. Finn It was just someone who’d stolen Mr Simpson’s costume ...

Doris So have you found it ?

Simpson What ?

Doris The costume – so it can’t be used again.

Marreau *Sacre Bleu* – this is the point most – er – pointy !

Prof. Finn She’s right you know – we really ought to find the costume – at the very least it may hold some clues.

Marreau *Tout a fait*. Simpson – go and find Farmer – start a search immediately !

Simpson Righty-o

Prof. Finn Rather a lot of searching going on isn’t there ...

Marreau Indeed, I hope Farmer has sufficient Billies.

Doris Billies ?

Simpson [*at door*] Bobbies

Marreau ‘Ave you not gone yet Simpson ?

Simpson Just off [**Simpson exits**]

Marreau Doctor Crabbe – I do not suppose your dream revealed the *identity* of the rabbit did it ?

Doris No sorry – Just a damned great rabbit savaging all and sundry – not to mention the vegetables.

Prof. Finn I think we can ignore the vegetables, Doris.

Doris Yes, quite right.

Marreau So – in your premonition – did you see who the next victim was ?

Doris No – sorry – no detail like that – didn't know it'd be Kenny either – or I'd've warned him.

Marreau A bit of a useless premonition then, all things considered.

Doris [*heavily sarcastic*] Well I'm sorry – I'll have to have a word with my subconscious – tell it to be more specific next time, shall I ?

[**Emma enters**]

Emma Any developments ?

Marreau Marreau is formulating his ideas – the leedle red cells are working furiously.

Emma And what have they come up with then, Monsieur Marreau ?

Marreau I must keep my ponderlings [*sic*] to myself for now.

Prof. Finn I say Emma, you don't happen to know where Lewis has got to, do you ?

Emma Lewis ? Yes – I saw him leaving in his car – off at quite a lick he was.

Doris When was that ?

Emma Oh – let me think – well it must've been a few minutes after poor Kenny was murdered

Marreau *Sacre bleu !* Are you certain of this ?

Emma Yes – definitely – I heard that policeman shouting for help and was coming downstairs to see what all the commotion was.

Prof. Finn And that's when you saw Lewis ?

Emma Yes, just as I reached the bottom of the stairs – I heard a car revving hard then saw Lewis's MG go hurtling up the drive.

Marreau *Nom d'un nom* – these are the actions most suspicious – the exiting of the scene at high speed moments after the murder has been committed !

Doris Was he dressed as a rabbit, Emma ?

Emma A rabbit ? No – well I don't know – I only saw the back of his head – but I'm pretty sure that wasn't rabbity.

Marreau Well obviously if 'e is the culprit he would have taken off the costume before making his escape.

Prof. Finn But think how much difficulty Mr Simpson had getting out of the costume.

Emma Yes – even getting his head off was a struggle

Marreau Indeed, this is true – [*with passion*] *mais le criminel désespéré* - he might summon up the ability

Doris I suppose it's possible – but I can't believe it of Lewis – he's such a calm sort of fellow.

Prof. Finn And why, Marreau ? Why would Lewis want to kill Kenny for Heaven's sake ?

Emma No, I can't see it either – not Lewis.

Marreau Well someone has killed him – and it is someone who works for your organisation, Professor Finn.

Prof. Finn But that’s terrible – no, I can’t believe it

Doris He’s right though, Algy – it must be one of us.

Emma Or the Countess.

Prof. Finn Great Scott ! Not the Countess, surely !

Marreau So my friends, the murderer is one of six people - Lewis or the Countess or Victoria – or one of you three !

Doris What about Mr Simpson ? I mean I like the fellow and he did save my life from that snake – but all the same – he doesn’t have an alibi, does he ?

Marreau Alright – ridiculous though it is – I will allow that we have to include Simpson as a suspect. But that is it – Farmer was with me, so I am obviously in the clear and we know that Gwendolyn left before the murder had occurred. So seven suspects, if you insist on including Simpson.

Emma There is always the possibility that one of the other guests that we thought had left, was lurking behind and did it.

Prof. Finn Yes – we didn’t take a roll call when they left – it could have been any of them.

Marreau Well if this is the case then the lurker is still ‘ere in the house – as all the exits were sealed within moments of the murder.

Doris They weren’t sealed quickly enough to prevent Lewis from leaving were they.

Marreau [*sighs*][*bitterly*] *Mer!* – This is also true.

Prof. Finn No, but all the other cars had gone – so if it is an outsider then they don’t have transport.

Marreau *Bon !* Good ! I will work on solving the six suspect scenario.

Emma Seven

Marreau Very well, seven if you insist.

[**Farmer** and **Simpson** re-enter, the latter carrying a bag]

Farmer By’ eck it’s all go out there.

Marreau Oh ? Any sign of Gwendolyn ?

Simpson Not yet

Farmer Apparently that Lewis chappie snuck out before we’d sealed all the exits.

Marreau So we ‘ave ‘eard.

Farmer I’s thinkin’ as how he must be the chief suspect

Marreau At the moment I’d tend to agree.

Prof. Finn Any luck finding a peterman to crack our safe, Superintendent ?

Farmer Oh no – sorry, they’re all banged up as we like to say – but I got a little bit o’ gelly

Marreau Jelly ? Why would we want to eat jelly at the moment ?

Farmer [laughs] No – not wobbly jelly – gelignite ! [produces lump of putty]

Prof. Finn Good God, Superintendent – is that safe ?

Farmer Oh yes, safe as houses this stuff [throws it in the air and catches it] – provided you know what to do with it.

Emma And *do* you ?

Farmer What me ? Well I could have a little play around [squeezing it] see what ‘appens.

All: *NO !*

Farmer Only jokin’ – Mr Simpson here knows how to use it don’t you ?

Simpson Yes – I’ve done a bit of blasting now and then.

Doris Are there no end to your talents, Mr Simpson ?

Simpson Oh yes – there’s no *start* to most of them, but I’m not bad with explosives.

Prof. Finn So you’re proposing blowing the door off the safe are you ?

Farmer That’s the general idea, yes.

Simpson Okey dokey – I’ll get on with it shall I ?

Prof. Finn Very well – I suppose we ought to check that the trilobite is safe and sound – what with everything else that has happened.

Marreau Indeed, I feel that the trilobite is inexcusably [*sic*] involved with this strange case.

Doris Really ? You think it’s linked to Kenny’s murder.

Marreau In some way – *oui* – I believe it must be.

Emma Is it safe for us to be around, Mr Simpson ?

Simpson It might be a good idea for you to take cover when I pop it – it might make a bit of a bang.
[over to safe]

Doris Shall we make ourselves scarce Emma ? Leave them to it ?

Emma Sounds like a plan to me, Doris.

Prof. Finn Good idea ladies – I’d join you too, but I’m eager to confirm that the trilobite’s still there.
[Emma and Doris exit]

[During the next few lines Simpson proceeds to place “gelignite” around the safe door; gets detonator, wire and charge box out of the bag he had brought in]

Marreau You definitely know what you’re doing don’t you Simpson.

Simpson Well yes – never done a safe before, but I’ve blasted doors open and things.

Prof. Finn This safe may be a bit trickier than just opening a door.

Simpson Don’t worry – it’ll be fine. Right take cover everyone – she’s ready to blow.

Marreau [Diving behind settee] *Dieu nous protégé*

Prof. Finn [sheltering] Take care, Mr Simpson ...

Simpson [Back to audience] 3

Farmer Good luck !

Simpson 2

Marreau *Sacre bleu !*

Simpson 1 – Here goes
[presses plunger]
[An enormous explosion (mine pyro or maroon) – the safe blows apart. The top flies upwards the four sides all collapse outwards]
[As the dust settles, Finn, Farmer and Marreau emerge gingerly]
[Simpson still has his back to the audience]

Prof. Finn Good God !

Farmer By ‘eck

Marreau *[Viewing the scene]* Simpson.

Simpson *[Turns towards front – his face is black with smuts, his hair in disarray]* Er – yes

Marreau *[considerable pause]* Removing the door was all that was required.

Prof. Finn Look though – there it is – safe and sound – the trilobite. *[goes over to safe, retrieves trilobite]*

Marreau Ah well thank ‘eavens for that.

Simpson Not too bad then.

Prof. Finn *[Inspecting trilobite]* Oh no !

Marreau &
Simpson What ?

Prof. Finn It *is* bad ! It’s *very* bad. This – this thing – it’s the replica – this is the replica – the real Trilobite of Rheims has been stolen !

[Blackout] [Curtain]

Act II Scene 1

Scene : In front of tabs. Far S/R - A park bench.

Gwendolyn is sitting on the bench – her head in her hands.

After a few moments **FX:** sound of a car pulling up and stopping. **FX:** Door slamming

Gwendolyn looks up.

Gwendolyn Oh no. [*to self*] Who's that ? [*Stands up ready to flee*] [*After a moment Lewis enters S/L*]

Oh – Mr Lewis – it's you [*sits back down*]

Lewis [*having walked across stage*][*gesturing to bench*] May I ?

Gwendolyn Of course – it's a public bench.

Lewis Thank-you – and it's just Lewis – no mister.

Gwendolyn OK – *Lewis* – it's you.

Lewis That's better.

Gwendolyn Is it ?

Lewis It is for me.

Gwendolyn I presume your finding me is no coincidence

Lewis No - it isn't

Gwendolyn How *did* you find me ?

Lewis Just followed the skid marks and the smell of burnt rubber.

Gwendolyn Oh right – yes I'm still learning to drive

Lewis Might I suggest something a little less powerful than a supercharged Bentley next time.

Gwendolyn [*Laughs*] Yes – she is a bit lively.

Lewis I'm amazed you're both still in one piece.

Gwendolyn [*pause*][*serious*] Look here, Lewis ...

Lewis No, wait

Gwendolyn For what ?

Lewis For me

Gwendolyn To do what ?

Lewis To speak first.

Gwendolyn [*pause*] Very well – go ahead.

Lewis Your friends

Gwendolyn *Huh !*

Lewis *All* your friends – they're only thinking of you.

Gwendolyn Well I wish they wouldn't.

Lewis Do you ?

Gwendolyn Oh damn it

Lewis What ?

Gwendolyn Damn it all. [*slight pause*] The trouble is ...

Lewis Yes ?

Gwendolyn The trouble is that they're right.

Lewis OK - So they're right

Gwendolyn I know perfectly well

Lewis I'm sure you do

Gwendolyn Just a habit I got into after ...

Lewis After your husband died ?

Gwendolyn No – funnily enough – not really

Lewis When then ?

Gwendolyn After Marreau came back from the dead

Lewis Ah yes, your Scottish adventure

Gwendolyn You know about that ?

Lewis It did make all the papers

Gwendolyn I suppose it did – fame hey !

Lewis Yes – it made you all quite famous that case.

Gwendolyn But I split up with Simon soon after that.

Lewis Ah yes – you and Simon – a bit of an unlikely couple I'd've thought.

Gwendolyn Absolutely. Completely crazy. But for some reason it worked – for a while.

Lewis He certainly seems an affable sort of chap.

Gwendolyn Oh yes – no-one nicer – and of course, him being heir to the Dukedom of Hampshire meant we certainly had a very pleasant lifestyle ...

Lewis What went wrong ?

Gwendolyn After Marreau returned – it just sort-of fell apart – it seemed ridiculous.

Lewis So it's Simon you're missing.

Gwendolyn No – no it isn't.

Lewis What then ?

Gwendolyn I don't know – certainly not Simon – I can't imagine us together again – not like that.

Lewis But you're still good friends ?

Gwendolyn Oh yes. Absolutely – the best of friends.

Lewis So what *are* you missing ?

Gwendolyn Someone special I suppose.

Lewis There's a vacancy is there ?

Gwendolyn There certainly is – that's a good word – a vacancy.

Lewis Well Gwendolyn – [*pause*] I have a similar vacancy ...

Gwendolyn You do ? [*getting closer*]

Lewis If you'd like to share – um – vacancies [*about to kiss*]
FX: *Car approaching at speed with old-fashioned police bell*
FX: *Car crunches to halt, bell stops, door slams*

Gwendolyn You've been saved by the bell, Mr Lewis [*they part*]

Lewis [*laughs*] The kind of saving I could do without.

Sgt Tready [*Calls from offstage S/L*] Hello

Gwendolyn Hello

Lewis Hello

Sgt Tready [*From S/L of stage*] Mrs Smith ! Mr Lewis [*Walks across to them quite quickly*]

Lewis [*To Gwendolyn*] Shall we finish this conversation later ?

Gwendolyn Gladly – [*To Sgt Treadworthy*] Yes officer, can we help you ?

Sgt Tready The Superintendent wants you back at the house himmediately.

Gwendolyn Oh – why – what's so urgent

Sgt Tready There has been an hincident madam

Lewis Ah – there did seem to be some commotion just as I was leaving.

Sgt Tready Yes well, if you'd kindly come with me ...

Lewis What about our cars ?

Sgt Tready Don't worry I'll get some of my boys to return them to the house ...

Gwendolyn Just as well I'm not driving again I suppose.

Lewis That is true.

Gwendolyn [*walking back S/L with Lewis*] What sort of incident, Sergeant ?

Sgt Tready A death madam

Gwendolyn What ?

Lewis Who ?

Sgt Tready Mr Cross I believe his name is.

Gwendolyn Oh not again !

Lewis Are you sure he's dead this time ?

Sgt Tready Oh yes – no doubt about it – stabbed to death by the killer rabbit. [**Exeunt omnes S/L**]

[**Blackout**] [**Curtain opens for II/2**]

Act II Scene 2

As Act I, but the safe has been cleared away and the furniture somewhat rearranged.
The pedestal with a cushion on it is rear S/R
Simpson is seated. Marreau is pacing.

Marreau This is a disaster my friend. The real trilobite – gone !

Simpson Not to mention poor Kenny.

Marreau And again the calling card with the letter L

Simpson I say !

Marreau What do you say *mon ami* ?

Simpson L – well it's obvious isn't it ?

Marreau Is it ?

Simpson L for Lewis – for Lewis Lewis

Marreau *Sacre bleu – quel idiot* – but of course

Simpson *And* he's scarpered from the house

Marreau My suspicions all along !

Simpson Isn't it just a little obvious though ?

Marreau *Non !* It is arrogance – that is what it is !

[**Victoria** enters]

Victoria [*despondently*] Caught the rabbit yet, Marreau ?

Marreau *Non*, mademoiselle – not yet but the net it is closing *sur le lapin* as we speak !

Victoria I'll believe it when I see it Marreau.

Simpson Don't worry Victoria – Marreau's never failed yet – have you Marreau ?

Marreau Marreau the Magnificent is proud to say he has the record 100 per cent.

Victoria Really ? Is that so. Well if you catch Kenny's killer I will be most impressed.

Marreau Already I have the suspicions *plus formidable*

[**Farmer** enters]

Farmer Good news Musher Marreau, Mr Simpson !

Marreau Oh ?

Simpson What's that, Farmer ?

Farmer We've found Mrs Smith *and* that Lewis chappie.

Marreau Well done Superintendent – that is indeed very good news

Simpson Is Gwendolyn alright ?

Farmer Right as rain, Mr Simpson

Simpson Good.

Marreau *Excellent.*

Simpson [*cautiously, expecting bad news*] And Bessie ?

Victoria Bessie ?

Farmer By ‘eck – who’s Bessie ? I didn’t know there was any Bessie missing.

Simpson Sorry, I meant my car – my Bentley.

Farmer Oh that – that’s fine I believe – one of my lads is bringin’ it in right now.

Simpson Crikey – well done Gwenders.

Victoria And will this help you find the murderer, Monsieur Marreau ?

Marreau *Peut-être, peut-être.* Farmer – you say you have got Lewis ?

Farmer Yes – he was with Mrs Smith he was ...

Simpson Really ?

Marreau Ah, *oui – je comprend* – hmm – well I would like a word with him.

Farmer Of course – I’ll take you to ‘im. [*going to door*]

Marreau Simpson ! The game it is on foot, as you say !

Victoria [*caustically*] It’s a game to you is it, Marreau ?

Marreau No, no, no – it is simply the turning of the phrase. *Au revoir* mademoiselle ...

[**Marreau and Farmer exit**]

Simpson You have to forgive Marreau his little sayings – he is Belgian you know

Victoria Belgian ? I thought he was Swiss.

Simpson Yes, sometimes he is.

Victoria What ?

Simpson Swiss, French, Monegasque, Luxembourgish – anywhere they speak French really.

Victoria That’s ridiculous

Simpson I suppose it is – but I’m used to it.

Victoria Why do you work for him, Mr Simpson ?

Simpson Work for him ? I don’t work for him – he’s my friend.

Victoria Oh I see – what about Gwendolyn – I can’t work her out at all

Simpson Join the club

Victoria Oh sorry – you were engaged to her weren’t you. [*rhetorical*]

Simpson Yes – it was a long time ago though.

Victoria Not bitter ?

Simpson No, not at all – we work better as just good friends – really [*as in “honestly”*].

Victoria So have you got anyone at the moment ?

Simpson Got anyone what ?

Victoria A fiancée ?

Simpson Oh good heavens, no !

Victoria [*lightly*] You make it sound preposterous

Simpson Well it is – you won't catch me getting engaged again in a hurry.

Victoria Well I suppose it lasted longer than my engagement ...

Simpson Oh crikey – yes – sorry – there am I wittering on when you've just lost your fiancé

Victoria Five hours – I wonder if it's a record.

Simpson No. My friend Stubby Pilkington got engaged and split up with Mimsie Pimlow in fifteen minutes at her birthday bash last year – [*laughs*] – mind you they were both out of their heads on absinthe !

Victoria Hardly the same then ...

Simpson Oh sorry – there I go again – I'm terrible at this small-talk business

Victoria Don't worry – so am I

Simpson Perhaps we ought to just sit here in silence.

Victoria [*Sitting right next to him*] Or we could just cut the chat and get down to business ...

Simpson Business ?

Victoria [*very close*] ... or should I say "Pleasure" !

Simpson Pleasure! Gosh! Yes! Right, I see, um ...

Victoria I find you very attractive Simon !

Simpson Really ? Do you ?

Victoria Yes – I don't know what it is – I just want you ! [*she strokes his hair*]

Simpson Oh gosh ! Um – what about poor Kenny ?

Victoria He's dead, Simon – dead and gone ... [*even closer*]

Simpson He's not gone far – they've put him in the cellar I believe.

Victoria Still dead though.

Simpson Well yes – crikey, they were wrong about you weren't they ?

Victoria [*sitting up*] Who were - What d'you mean ?

Simpson [*all the following rather flustered*] Um - they said that you were an Australian batsman !

Victoria A what ?

Simpson No that's not right – that you worshipped saffron !

Victoria Saffron ? What - crocuses ?

Simpson Crocuses ? No – not crocuses - er poppies – that's the one – poppies

Victoria Poppies ?

Simpson Auntie Poppy ... and Uncle Mavis ..

Victoria Uncle ... [*light dawns*] ohhhh ...that conversation I caught the end of – ha – that's Emma isn't it.

Simpson What's Emma

Victoria So it was *me* that was the lesbian was it ?

Simpson Well um ...

Victoria Don't fib, Simon – tell me the truth.
Simpson Well yes - That's *is* what was suggested
Victoria [*standing up*] Hmm – funny how these little tales get spread around.
Simpson It just started off with her saying that she was surprised that you were marrying Kenny – that's all.
Victoria Ah – so it *was* Emma – I thought it must be.
Simpson Oh well no – I'm not saying it was – it might have been someone else ...
Victoria Relax Mr Simpson – I'm not that bothered to be honest
Simpson Really ?
Victoria No; just rather disappointed in Emma that's all.
Simpson She wasn't being catty I don't think – she just seemed genuinely surprised.
Victoria [*cool now*] No, that's fine. And please, Mr Simpson, forget the way I came on to you just then. It's the grief I think. Kenny's murder has made me a little – oh I don't know – unstable ...
Simpson Of course – forget it. I have – there you go – gone. No memory of it at all.
Victoria [*laughs*] You really are quite a dear, aren't you Simon.
Simpson Try to be.
Victoria [*businesslike*] Good, right – I think I need to have a little word with Emma
Simpson Oh dear
Victoria No, don't worry Simon. I shall be conciliation personified.
Simpson Gosh. OK.

[**Finn enters**]

Prof. Finn Ah, Mr Simpson – have you seen Marreau about anywhere ?
Simpson He went off with Farmer ...
Victoria To speak to Lewis I think ...
Prof. Finn Oh, right, well this letter has turned up for him ...
Simpson I'll give it to him if you like
Prof. Finn If you would ... [*hands Simpson the envelope*] oh, Victoria, Emma was looking for you ...
Victoria That's convenient – I wanted a word with *her* – where is she ?
Prof. Finn In the Library
Victoria Thank-you – I shall go right away [**Victoria exits**]
Simpson [*looks at envelope*] This letter – it's got no stamp
Prof. Finn No – I just found it on a salver in the hall
Simpson Interesting. Anyway, Professor – any sign of the trilobite ?
Prof. Finn [*glum*] No – blasted thing – I thought we'd taken all necessary precautions
Simpson Yes, what with your replica and everything ...

Prof. Finn And this accursed L fellow has the gall to swap it with the original !

[Marreau *re-enters*]

Marreau Most interesting.

Simpson What's that Marreau ?

Marreau My leedle chat with Monsieur Lewis.

Prof. Finn Oh ?

Marreau He says he saw the rabbit through the window as he was leaving

Simpson Do you believe him though Marreau ?

Marreau I am inclinèd to, as it 'appens.

Simpson [*remembering letter*] Oh – the professor just gave me this letter for you [*hands over letter*]

Marreau Hmm, [*peruses envelope*] *intéressant* [*opens letter*]

Simpson Who's it from, Marreau ?

Marreau [*reading letter*] It is from L

Prof. Finn The damned trilobite thief ?

Marreau So it would seem – and it is most revealing

Prof. Finn What's it say man ?

Marreau It says – [*reads*]

DEAR MONSIEUR MARREAU

I HAVE LONG ADMIRERD YOUR DETECTIVE SKILLS AND THOUGHT YOU WOULD ENJOY SOLVING THE LITTLE CHALLENGE I HAVE SET YOU BY STEALING THE TRILOBITE.

AS YOU SURMISED I DID LACE A RANDOM GLASS WITH COPRINE TO CAUSE A DISTRACTION. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHATICALLY DENY HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE DEATH OF MR CROSS. GOOD LUCK FINDING HIS MURDERER.

YOURS MOST SINCERELY L

Simpson I say !

Prof. Finn Dashed impertinence !

Marreau And this I most readily believe.

Prof. Finn You do ?

Marreau *Absolument* – I did not see how the two crimes could be connected – and as you know, did not believe that poor Monsieur Kenneth was in any danger. In this I was of course wrong – but I was wrong for the *right* reasons.

Prof. Finn Any clues in the letter as to who L is ?

Marreau [*chuckles*] It has of course been typed – and I would guess that they used the typewriter in the study. I could get Farmer to dust the keys for fingerprints, but I think that our friend L is far too clever to leave such clues behind.

Prof. Finn This damned L may be your friend Marreau – but he certainly isn't mine.

Marreau Professor – have no concerns over your trilobite – I guarantee its safe return.

Simpson [*impressed*] Bravo Marreau !

Prof. Finn [*doubtful*] Well I damn-well hope you're right – I haven't dared inform the Grand Council of the Trilobite yet – God knows what ordure will descend on us when I tell them that it's missing.

Marreau And I suggest you make no such call – the trilobite will be returned to you today.

Prof. Finn Today ? Well that would be splendid – *if* you manage it.

Marreau But – far more important and more urgent is the discovery of the killer rabbit!

Prof. Finn I suppose that's true ... you know [*stops*] ...

Marreau What is it professor ?

Prof. Finn Well I really can't believe she's up to it, but ...

Simpson Who ?

Prof. Finn It's just how strangely Doris has been acting over the last few weeks – these dreams and things.

Simpson Premonitions you mean!

Prof. Finn Or self-fulfilling prophecies.

Marreau *Zut alors !* – you are suggesting that Doris murdered Monsieur Cross while dressed as a rabbit, just so that her dreams are proved to be correct ?

Prof. Finn I know it sounds preposterous – and I'm really fond of old Doris – but it's just – well she's been getting odder and odder – I wonder if she's entirely sane.

Marreau It is the theory most intriguing – and one I shall certainly not discount.

Prof. Finn I really can't see her actually murdering anyone though.

Marreau Professor – as a matter of interest, how did you select the guests for the party ?

Prof. Finn Oh just the usual Great and Good of the Natural History world – you know – plus a few other famous bods to add a bit of sparkle.

Marreau Such as the Countess, for instance.

Prof. Finn Yes quite – though actually we got a message from the Hungarian embassy saying that she would like to attend as she was so interested in fossils.

Marreau *Ah d'accord.*

[**Victoria** runs in]

Victoria [*alarmed*] Monsieur Marreau ! Professor ! Come quickly !

Prof. Finn Whatever's the matter, Victoria ?

Victoria It's Emma !

Simpson What's happened to her ?

Victoria I don't know – when I got to the library she wasn't there ! Just her shawl [*shows shawl*] – with what looks like blood on it [*showing signs of blood*]– and a load of vegetables strewn about !

Prof. Finn Vegetables ?

Victoria Turnips, carrots, spinach all over the place !

Marreau *Sacre Bleu ! Les légumes !*

Victoria Spinach everywhere !

Simpson Just like Doris said !

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 3 (the same)

[Doris and Marreau *on stage*]

Doris I warned you – I told you it was on a spree !

Marreau Indeed you did ... let us hope that Mademoiselle Emma is in fact unharmed

Doris That seems unlikely though doesn't it Marreau ?

Marreau But of her body there is no trace – this is very different from the killing of Monsieur Kenny

Doris But the spinach – just like I saw it – spinach and carrots everywhere – it must be The Rabbit !

Marreau Who knew the details of your premonition, Doctor ?

Doris Oh – um – well everyone I suppose – I was warning everyone about The Rabbit!

Marreau So, anyone could have made the scene look as you described it.

Doris But why ?

Marreau Ah yes, why – why indeed – what is the motive. If we find the motive we will find the murderer
I am sure. Have you any ideas ?

Doris I can't think of anyone who disliked Emma – but Kenneth had a few run-ins with people, I
suppose ?

Marreau Run-ins ? What are these ?

Doris You know disagreements and the like – but nothing I can imagine leading to murder ...

Marreau Disagreements ? With whom ?

Doris Mostly with Lewis I suppose – just a personality clash really. I think Lewis didn't like the way
Kenny had treated Emma.

Marreau Monsieur Kenneth and Emma ? What had happened there ?

Doris Oh didn't you know – they'd been an item ...

Marreau An item ? You mean they were engaged ?

Doris No, never got that far – though we all thought it would.

Marreau And was it Victoria who came between them ?

Doris No – they'd split up just before Vickie arrived at the Institute. No, Vickie and Emma have
always been good friends I think.

Marreau I see – but their engagement – Victoria and Kenneth – this must have been a shock for her.

Doris Well you were there Marreau – when she heard – she didn't seem that bothered did she – more
surprised at Victoria being that way inclined.

Marreau *Cela est vrai* –

Doris Funny thing though ...

Marreau What is it that is amusing ?

Doris No, not amusing – not at all really – no, it was when poor Kenny was delirious upstairs.

Marreau Oh ? What 'appened ?

Doris It was Emma he was calling for, not Vickie – rather embarrassing, what with Vickie being there.

Marreau *Nom d'un nom* – ‘ow did Victoria react to this ?

Doris Well, she laughed it off – told him that it was her – Vickie – that was there for him ...

Marreau I see

Doris He seemed to understand, and got less agitated – he didn’t call for Emma again anyway.

Marreau *Bon*. Was there anyone else who had these runnings in with Monsieur Cross ?

Doris Well [*pause*] There was a rumour ...

Marreau Oh ?

Doris A bit delicate this – but what with Kenneth being so well off ...

Marreau Monsieur Cross was wealthy ?

Doris Oh yes – rolling in it – apparently he’d recently inherited a fortune from an uncle or some such.

Marreau *Mon Dieu* – perhaps another motive ... who would inherit on his death ?

Doris I’ve no idea – but anyway – apparently there was talk of Kenneth being bumped up the pecking order ...

Marreau The pecking order ? What is this order of pecking ?

Doris You know – seniority – at the Institute

Marreau Ah *bon*

Doris Yes, well, there was talk that he might even get Finn’s job as head of the Institute – and I know that Professor Finn would not like to lose that position one little bit!

Marreau As I feared – it seems the motives they are growing – we are back to the many suspects.

Doris Sorry if I’ve messed up you ideas, Marreau.

Marreau Not at all ...

[Countess **Annuska** enters]

Marreau Ah Countess – a pleasure to meet you again.

Annuska Likewise Monsieur Marreau – although this news about Miss Chancellor is a bit worrying

Doris Poor Emma - It’s The Rabbit – I warned them – but no-one took any notice – I told them The Rabbit would strike again.

Annuska Yes, I heard about the spinach. [*pause*] In your premonition, doctor, did this rabbit kill again ?

Doris Difficult to say. It was only a dream after all – but I get the feeling that, yes – it hasn’t finished its spree of mayhem yet !

Annuska [*shudders*] Oh dear.

Marreau Do not worry for yourself Countess, I shall protect you!

Doris Sounds like favouritism there, Marreau – you didn’t offer to protect me !

Marreau Of course I extend this protection to everyone.

Doris That’s not been much use so far, has it ?

Marreau We do not yet know the fate of Mademoiselle Emma – I remain ‘opeful.

Doris Well I think I’m going to find a little protection of my own, if you’ll excuse me ...

Annuska What kind of protection, doctor ?

Marreau Please do not take matters into your own hands ...

Doris Don't worry – I won't do anything rash – just a few anti-bunny measures if you know what I mean – I'll see you later [**Doris exits**]

Marreau Countess, I am pleased that we are alone –

Annuska This sounds intriguing Monsieur Marreau

Marreau You see I have a few things I would like to discuss with you.

Annuska [*coming close to him*] I had a feeling you might have.

Marreau *Vraiment ?* You were expecting this conversation ?

Annuska Hoping rather than expecting [*gets very close*]

Marreau Hoping ? Not fearing then ?

Annuska Oh no – not fearing at all – I knew from the moment we met.

Marreau You did ?

Annuska I felt it.

Marreau [*somewhat surprised*] Really ?

Annuska [*right up to Marreau*] There's something growing between us, Marreau !

Marreau [*slightly jittery*] You may well be right!

Annuska Yes ! I can definitely feel a connection between us !

Marreau *Désolé !!* [*takes a step backwards*]

Annuska [*re-advancing on Marreau*] Something spiritual

Marreau Ah ! *Je comprend* [*clinch*]

Annuska I am right aren't I ?

Marreau *Peut-être vous êtes.*

Annuska You do find me attractive don't you, Marreau ?

Marreau *Mais bien sûr* – you are the lady most alluring – this I cannot deny.

Annuska Then let us seize the moment.

Marreau Countess ...

Annuska Call me Annuska.

Marreau Annuska ...

Annuska Yes – Hold me Marreau !!! [*throws herself into his arms*]

Marreau Annuska – you are right.

Annuska I knew I was

Marreau No – [*slightly breaking away*] – you are right that there is something between us.

Annuska I knew it ...

Marreau But it is not what you think ...

Annuska [*curious*] oh ?

Marreau It is just a leedle thing ...

Annuska Oh well - never mind, we'll manage ...

Marreau But I am afraid that it has the potential to be much bigger !

Annuska Oh Hemlock! Don't worry about that !

Marreau But I must worry – for it is burning the hole in my pocket

Annuska Such ardour !

Marreau [*breaks away a foot or so*] No – it is this ! [*produces very small carrot*]

Annuska [*amazed*] A tiny carrot – is that some kind of metaphor ?

Marreau [*looks at carrot*] Ah – non – not the leedle carrot – wrong pocket

Annuska Thank Heavens for that ...

Marreau It is this [*produces the original L “calling” card with a flourish*]

Annuska [*a certain cooling*] A calling card

Marreau Indeed the calling card. The calling card with the letter L upon it. The letter L which my friends suggest might mean large.

Annuska Might do ...

Marreau Or perchance it is L for Lewis

Annuska That's also a possibility

Marreau No Countess, no, no, no, you and I we both know what this L it stands for do we not ?

Annuska [*all innocent*] Do we ?

Marreau It is the L that stands for Lafayette !

Annuska And this should mean something to me ?

Marreau Lafayette the most prodigious jewel thief Europe has seen in fifty years ...

Annuska Oh *that* Lafayette

Marreau Yes, Countess, that Lafayette. That Lafayette who has stolen the Trilobite of Rheims from under the very nose of Marreau the Magnificent simply - I believe - as a leedle test of his skills.

Annuska And have you solved the mystery, Monsieur Marreau ?

Marreau Oh yes, my dear – it was the letter that gave the game away.

Annuska [*still all innocent*] The Letter L ?

Marreau *Non, non, non.* The letter from Lafayette – the typèd letter admitting the theft of the trilobite - but denying the murder of Monsieur Cross.

Annuska And do you believe this Lafayette ?

Marreau Oh yes. Undoubtedly. Lafayette is no murderer. But you see, when the trilobite was stolen there were dozens of guests here who could have been Lafayette – but when Monsieur Cross was murdered and the letter appeared – well then – then my dear there was only one.

Annuska [*slightly losing composure*] Only one ?

Marreau *Mais oui.* Only one person remainèd in the house who could have committed audacious robberies all around Europe. Only one.

Annuska And are you going to arrest this ... one ?

Marreau Arrest ? It is not in my power to arrest – that is for the police – for Superintendent Farmer.

Annuska And the Superintendent – he knows of your ideas ?

Marreau My dear, the Superintendent is like the *chauve-souris*

Annuska Chauve-souris ?

Marreau Ah – how you say – the bat – the blind bat in a coal mine – flapping about and making the squeaking noises, but seeing nothing ! He knows nothing !

Annuska But will you tell him ?

Marreau [*pause*] There has been at least one and possibly two *mairdairs* in this house, *ma chère*.
Mairdair ! This is the crime that Marreau solves.
Suppose for example, the golden trilobite was to mysteriously reappear. What crime would have been committed ? None ! Not even the theft of the replica, for Lafayette has already replaced this. If there is no theft, what needs anyone know of Lafayette ?

Annuska But wouldn't the capture of the famous Lafayette be a feather in your cap, Monsieur Marreau.
A feather you could not resist collecting ?

Marreau Please Annuska, call me Hemlock. [*directly to her*] Some bright feathers should be left attached to their original bird, do you not agree ?

Annuska It is a charming thought, Hemlock

Marreau *Mon chapeau* will remain unadornèd.

Annuska I am sure that Lafayette will be forever in your debt.

Marreau No need to talk of debt. It has been a privilege to cross swords with such an admirable opponent – so skilled in their profession. For example I still have no idea how the replica was replacèd back into the safe – this part is close to magic.

Annuska [*laughs*] Just a theory of course; but perhaps the trilobites had been switched beforehand and the safe's combination changed – and it was the real trilobite on display which was taken when Kenneth was drugged.

Marreau *Éclatant ! C'est Magnifique !*

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 4 (the same)

[Simpson and Marreau on stage]

Marreau Have you seen Gwendolyn since her return, Simpson ?
Simpson Only briefly – she seems to be avoiding us.
Marreau Or *peut-être* she has found someone she is more interested in ...
Simpson You mean Lewis Lewis
Marreau Indeed – they seem to have “knocked it off”, as you say.
Simpson “Hit it off” Marreau
Marreau Ah *oui*.

[Farmer enters with Dr.Protheroe]

Farmer By ‘eck the Doc’s got some interestin’ news for you, Musher Marreau
Marreau Oh ? What is this news, Doctor ?
Dr.Proth That stain you asked me to test on that shawl ...
Marreau Yes – what ‘ave you discovered ?
Dr.Proth It’s blood all right ...
Marreau I never doubted this – but is it *human* blood ?
Dr.Proth Well done Marreau – quite right – it isn’t !
Simpson I say – is it from a rabbit ?
Dr.Proth No – It’s difficult to be certain – but I’d say it’s fish blood.
Marreau Aha. *Excellent !* I think you will discover it is in fact from the trouts !
Dr.Proth Could well be ...
Farmer By ‘eck Musher Marreau – how could you possibly know that ?
Marreau *Simple mon cher superintendent.* The vegetables – the spinach and the carrot and the turnips – they were taken from the kitchen – and in the kitchen also were the trouts waiting for the pot.
Simpson I say – so what does this mean for Emma ?
Marreau I would surmise from this that Mademoiselle Emma is still alive ...

[Gwendolyn enters]

Gwendolyn [*quite jolly*] What’s this Marreau – I hope you’re not trying to solve this case without *me* are you ?
Marreau Ah, Gwendolyn I am so pleased to see you again.
Simpson Are we forgiven Gwendy ?
Gwendolyn Not if you call me Gwendy !

Simpson Ah yes, sorry [*over to Gwendolyn*] well I'm really pleased to see you back – well done not crashing Bessie – I didn't even know that you could drive.

Gwendolyn No well – it was a close run thing in places.

Dr.Proth Do you need me any longer – only I've got a few more tests I'd like to run.

Marreau No, Doctor – you have been most helpful, thank-you

Dr.Proth Jolly good – I'll catch you later [**Dr. Protheroe exits**]

Farmer Coming back to Miss Emma – she *is* still missing, so she might still 'ave been killed by The Rabbit.

Gwendolyn You're right Farmer – that certainly is still a possibility.

Marreau Indeed – the fish blood it does not prove her survival – it just makes it more likely.

Gwendolyn Farmer - have you found the rabbit costume yet ?

Farmer No – it's disappeared without trace it has.

Simpson Like Emma

Gwendolyn Yes – just like Emma.

Farmer My boys have hunted high and low – I know that this is a big house – but I'd've thought they'd have found one or t'other by now.

Marreau I suggest you have a word with Professor Finn and Doctor Crabbe – they may know some possible hiding places.

Farmer Good idea – I'll go and do that now [*goes to exit*]

Marreau Before you go, superintendent – 'ave you yet discovered who will benefit from the estate of Monsieur Cross ?

Farmer I've contacted 'is bank and solicitors – so I should get the info pretty soon – I'll let you know as soon as I hear anything. [**Farmer exits**]

Gwendolyn So Marreau – I think we should go through the suspects to see who we can eliminate.

Simpson I love this bit – you two are so clever.

Gwendolyn Right – let's start with Emma

Marreau Indeed – this disappearance it is too convenient.

Gwendolyn Agreed – there's something fishy about it

Simpson [*hoots*] Ha ha ! Very good Gwenders !

Gwendolyn [*laughs*] Sorry – that was unintentional – has she a motive though ?

Marreau She was – how-you-say – dumpèd by Monsieur Cross

Gwendolyn Oh really – that's interesting. What about an alibi ?

Simpson She said she saw Lewis driving away - which was just after the murder ...

Marreau This is not the alibi though is it ? The mairdairer could have witnessed this ...

Gwendolyn True – so Emma is a definite suspect – if she's still alive.

Marreau Agreed – Let us move on to Lewis

Gwendolyn No - It can't be Lewis

Simpson Are you sure, Gwenders ? He didn't leave until after the murder.

Gwendolyn No – but how could he have got out of the costume in time to come and chase after me ?

Marreau This I admit would be very difficult ...

Simpson Too right – it took me ages to get in and out of that blessed thing – especially the head!

Gwendolyn It's *not* Lewis – I just know it isn't – let's move on.

Marreau Very well – similarly I know for sure it is not the Countess

Gwendolyn *Oh ?*

Simpson How do you know that Marreau ?

Marreau I have just recently interviewed her – and I have no doubt that she did not commit the mairdair.

Gwendolyn Are you going to share your reasoning ?

Marreau [*pause*] *Non.*

Gwendolyn Is that it ?

Marreau Simply accept that I believe the Countess had other lobsters to boil – and anyway, what possible motive could she have ?

Simpson That's true – she was a guest like us – she'd hardly met the chap.

Gwendolyn Fair enough – we'll discount the Countess

Simpson So – how about Finn – I always feel like he's hiding something.

Gwendolyn Funny you should say that Simon – I actually agree with you.

Marreau He has no alibi that I am aware of – and perhaps the strongest of motives.

Gwendolyn Really ? What's that, Marreau ?

Marreau There was the rumour that Monsieur Cross might depose him as head of the Institute.

Simpson Great Scott !

Gwendolyn Well I think that bumps him up to the top of our list

Marreau I am inclinèd to agree, my dear. But let us consider the other two.

Simpson It can't really be Doris can it ?

Gwendolyn Well she is a bit odd – but I can't see her jumping in and out of a rabbit costume can you ?

Simpson Even to fulfil her prophecies as the Prof suggested

Marreau No – I agree – I think our mairdairer would have to be more agile.

Gwendolyn And so to Victoria

Marreau Victoria – now here is a carborundum [*sic*] – the grieving fiancée – who grieves so very little.

Gwendolyn And seemed to be getting rather fed up with him once he was ill.

Marreau And then there is the suggestion that she doesn't even like men ...

Simpson Ah – I think you can ignore that one ...

Marreau Oh ? Why is this ?

Simpson Um [*pause*] well, [*awkward*] let's just say I have my reasons to doubt that !

Gwendolyn Simon ! You're incorrigible !

Marreau *Sacre bleu*, Simpson – surely not

Simpson Hold on – it's not my fault – she just jumped on me !

Gwendolyn Was this before or after Kenneth had been killed ?

Simpson Um - After.

Gwendolyn I'm not sure which is worse !

Marreau Well after this revolution [*sic*] I think we must put Mademoiselle Victoria high up on our list too.

Gwendolyn Quite. So it seems it is between Victoria, Emma and Finn

Marreau Just so – but how to discover which of them. We need to make The Rabbit show its hand.

Simpson Paw

Marreau Poor what ?

Simpson No – a rabbit has a paw not a hand

Marreau I know that – but this is not a real rabbit

Gwendolyn And it's a hand of cards anyway

Marreau What ?

Gwendolyn The hand – as in “show its hand” – it means a hand of cards

Marreau Well that will be of no use to us, Gwendolyn.

[**Farmer** *bursts into the room*]

Farmer By 'eck 'ave I got some news for you, I 'ave – by 'eckly beckly I really 'ave !

Marreau You seem quite excited Farmer – please tell us your news

Farmer Where to start ! Right – Miss Emma

All: Yes ?

Farmer Found 'er we 'ave – live and well and hiding in a cupboard !

Simpson Crikey ...

Marreau Hiding you say ?

Farmer Yes – she reckons as 'ow The Rabbit came after 'er in the library but she escaped and hid – too frightened to come out again in case that there mad bunny got 'er.

Simpson I say, poor Emma

Gwendolyn Hmmm – we'll see about that.

Marreau Indeed – I need to integrate [*sic*] Mademoiselle Emma *tout de suite*.

Gwendolyn And your other news, superintendent ?

Farmer Oh yes – you'll like this – we've not found 'is will yet – Mr Cross that is – but there's something funny 'bout 'is bank account ...

Marreau Oh ? Was 'e not as rich as has been suggested ?

Farmer Oh no 'e'd got plenty of money – but it weren't no inheritance it weren't

Simpson How d'you know, Farmer ?

Farmer From 'is Bank Manger – most helpful he were. Regular payments going in there were - £200 every month without fail – til three months ago when it jumps to £500 a month.

Marreau *Zut alors !*

Simpson Perhaps they're interest payments from investing his inheritance.

Farmer No Mr Simpson – not these – these were cash deposits – and I know what that looks like to me...

Marreau *Chantage !*

Simpson Singing ?

Marreau *Non, non, non* – Chantage – is how-you-say – the blackmail !

[**Blackout**]

Act II Scene 5 (the same)

[Marreau, Gwendolyn and Emma (seated) *on stage*]

Note: *The Trilobite has been replaced on a cushion on the pedestal at the back of the stage but this should be in shadow and not obvious.*

Marreau So Mademoiselle Emma – ‘ave you recovered from your ordeal in the broom cupboard ?

Emma Yes thank-you – but it wasn’t a broom cupboard – it was one of the cupboards where we keep the specimens.

Marreau Specimens ?

Emma You know – dead animals and things pickled in bottles. In fact I was hiding behind a Gorilla skeleton to be precise.

Marreau Ah, *je comprend*. Now then, Professor Finn told us that you wanted to speak to Victoria – but when she got to the library you had vanished ...

Emma Yes – The – [*gulps*] The Rabbit got there first and I managed to get away ...

Gwendolyn How long had Finn been gone before The Rabbit appeared ?

Emma Oh, let me think – a few minutes I suppose – maybe five.

Marreau Did you get a good look at The Rabbit ?

Emma Not really – as soon as I saw it I made a dash for it ...

Marreau So you could not tell who it was inside the costume ?

Emma No, sorry – not a chance.

Gwendolyn Did you get the impression of whether it was a man or a woman ?

Emma Hmmm – it seemed big – surprisingly big – so it couldn’t have been Victoria for instance.

Gwendolyn Nor Doris ?

Emma Good Heavens no – certainly not Doris – it was far too agile – if it hadn’t tripped over I’d never have got away from it.

Gwendolyn [*calmly, simply inquisitive*] Why didn’t you scream ?

Emma Scream ?

Gwendolyn You see someone approaching you dressed as a rabbit – someone who has already killed while dressed as a rabbit – someone no doubt intent on murdering you – and yet you don’t scream for help ?

Emma [*coldly*] I’m not the screaming type, Mrs Smith.

Gwendolyn But you didn’t call out at all ? You must admit it is a little surprising.

Emma I was shocked. All my thoughts were on getting away – not wasting time.

Marreau Very well – thank-you for your help – would you ask Mademoiselle Victoria to join us please.

Emma Vickie ? Why do you want to talk to her ?

Marreau Why should we not ?

Emma Oh – no reason – sorry, I’m still a bit flustered. I’ll go and find her [Emma exits]

Gwendolyn [*waits for Emma to be well out of the way*] What d’you make of her then, Hemlock ?

Marreau Her story – to me it does not have the ringing of truth about it.

Gwendolyn Nor to me.

[Lewis and Simpson enter]

Simpson What-oh !

Gwendolyn [*a-flutter*] Oh Lewis – what are you doing here ?

Lewis I’ve just been having a chat with Simon – thought I ought to tell you something.

Marreau Oh, what is this.

Lewis This idea about Kenny being a blackmailer ...

Marreau You are going to tell me that you cannot believe it of ‘im I suppose.

Lewis No – quite the opposite in fact. I didn’t say anything before – you know, not speaking ill of the dead and all that – but, well, it wouldn’t surprise me at all to discover that he was a blackmailer.

Gwendolyn Why’s that Lewis ?

Lewis He was a thoroughly nasty piece of work was Kenneth Cross, I’m afraid.

Marreau On what do you base this ?

Lewis Where shall I start ? The way he treated women – got what he wanted, if you know what I mean, then just dropped them. He treated Emma abominably. Then there was the way he was using his money to win influence with the directors of the Institute. And the snide little remarks he’d make. And the lies he’d tell to cause trouble between people. Take it from me – the World’s a better place without him.

Simpson Crikey – sounds like he was a bounder.

Lewis An utter bounder, and a cad.

Marreau The blackguard !

Simpson What a rotter !

Lewis Yes he was a scoundrel, I’m afraid.

Gwendolyn So Victoria’s had a lucky escape.

Lewis Yes – and no.

Marreau Whatever do you mean.

Lewis Victoria is not stupid. She knew perfectly well what Kenny was like.

Simpson So why did she get engaged to him ?

Lewis Why indeed ? She had some other plan – there was no way that she would have fallen for his pathetic wiles. No – that engagement was a sham – believe me.

Marreau This is the information most interesting. Thank-you Monsieur Lewis.

Lewis I suppose I’d better leave you to your investigations now though.

Marreau If you would be so kind ...

Lewis That's fine. [*to exit*] See you later Gwendolyn ?

Gwendolyn [*dreamy*] Yes, Lewis – quite soon with luck.

Lewis Bye [**Lewis exits**]

Marreau *Nom d'un nom.* The possible motives are now legion.

Gwendolyn They certainly are.

Simpson Which makes the attack on Emma seem even more strange.

Marreau *Pourquoi ?*

Simpson Well – this Kenny fellow looked like he was asking for it – but what had Emma done ?

Gwendolyn Quite right Simon – it doesn't fit at all.

[**Victoria enters**]

Victoria You wanted to see me ?

Marreau Ah yes, Mademoiselle Victoria – do take a seat.

Victoria Thank-you Monsieur.

Marreau Let us now not mess about – for Marreau is getting a little weary of silly stories

Victoria Sorry Marreau ? What silly stories ?

Marreau You looked so happy with Monsieur Cross when you told us of your engagement ...

Victoria That seems so long ago now – yes I was – very happy.

Marreau Because he had fallen into your trap *n'est-ce pas ?*

Victoria [*mock confusion*] Trap ?

Gwendolyn You had no intention of marrying him, had you, Victoria ?

Victoria [*apparently affronted*] Why do you say that ?

Marreau Because he was a blackguard !

Simpson And a bounder and a cad and a scoundrel and ...

Gwendolyn Alright Simon, I think she's got the message.

Victoria [*realises game is up*] Ah. So you've heard have you ?

Marreau *Oui mademoiselle*, we 'ave 'eard. So what was your plan in getting affianced to him ?

Victoria I was going to dangle him

Marreau *Mon Dieu* you intended to hang him !

Victoria [*laughs*] No – nice idea – but no. I mean keep him in suspense – make him want me more and more. Tease him and taunt him but never let him do anything until we were married. I would have gone to the church and denounced him at the altar !

Marreau And was Mademoiselle Emma in on this scheme ?

Victoria Emma – No – as I think you probably gathered from her reaction. I probably should have told her, but he went and proposed to me before I'd had chance to tell her. I wanted her to have the full satisfaction of watching my torturing him like he'd tortured her.

Simpson Good grief, Victoria – you really didn't like him one bit did you ?

Victoria Like him ? I utterly loathed him. As you could probably tell when I felt like celebrating with *you* Simon, after he was killed.

Simpson I thought you wanted me to forget about that !

Victoria [*chuckles*] You really are a sweetie aren't you!

Gwendolyn You are of course claiming that you are not The Rabbit.

Victoria Correct; I am *not* The Rabbit – though I am indebted to her [*quickly, slight stumble*] or him. Saved me months of tedious pretence with that odious globule of excrement.

Gwendolyn Can you tell us why Emma thought you – let's say – preferred the company of women ?

Victoria Ah yes – that. That I think I *can* explain.

Marreau Do go on.

Victoria When I arrived, Emma was still in a bad way from being dumped so horribly by Kenneth. Well I think she mistook my friendship and attention to her for a different kind of affection, if you understand what I mean.

Gwendolyn Yes I understand completely.

Victoria I realised she'd got the wrong end of the stick, but rather than embarrass her by telling her this, I was just careful not to reinforce her ideas – and was just sort-of less tactile afterwards.

Marreau Most thoughtful of you.

Gwendolyn So [*slight pause*] do you think Emma would have liked there to be more to it ?

Victoria Oh good grief – I hadn't actually considered that ... I don't know ... I really don't know.

Simpson I say Gwenders, I think we should leave it at that, don't you ?

Marreau *Je suis d'accord*

Gwendolyn Yes, I've no further questions for you – thank-you Victoria.

Victoria Right. Well, I would normally say good luck to you, trying to find a murderer – but in this case Monsieur Marreau – I really hope you fail. [*getting up to leave*]

Marreau This I understand – Oh just one thing before you go ...

Victoria Yes ?

Marreau Why would this Rabbit attack Emma ?

Victoria [*pause*] [*tries to think of an answer*] That I *can't* explain.

Marreau No, I didn't think you would be able to.

Victoria I think I need to talk to Emma. [*to exit*]

Marreau Please to hatch no more schemes.

Victoria No. I think it's time to unravel a few, Monsieur [**Victoria exits**]

Simpson Gosh !

Gwendolyn Yes, Simon – I think that sums it up quite well.

Marreau This really is the tin of slugs is it not.

Simpson What doesn't fit is the attack on Emma – it makes no sense.

Gwendolyn That's because it didn't happen, Simon.

Simpson What ?

Marreau Do you not see, my friend ?

Simpson Oh look, you know I'm pretty thick – what do you mean it didn't happen.

Gwendolyn Emma staged it – she was no more attacked by a killer rabbit than I was.

Simpson But why ?

Marreau A feeble attempt to throw Marreau off the scent – an attempt that in fact proves her guilt.

Simpson You mean that Emma is The Rabbit ?

Marreau *Précisément.*

Gwendolyn Hold on a moment, Marreau – it's maybe not quite that simple.

Marreau Of course it is that simple – why else the charade ?

Gwendolyn Yes, you may well be right – it might be Emma – but there is another possibility.

Marreau And what is that ?

Gwendolyn That she did it to protect someone she actually cares for ...

Marreau Aha !

Simpson Who ?

Gwendolyn Victoria of course.

Simpson *Ohhh !* Victoria and – oh – *I see*

Marreau So Gwendolyn, you believe Victoria is the mairdairer ?

Gwendolyn No – funnily enough I don't necessarily think that for sure either.

Marreau You are not making sense now my dear – first you say it is her, then you say it isn't.

Gwendolyn Either Emma *did* murder Kenneth – which is still a possibility I agree – or else she *thinks* that Victoria did it. Remember the one thing that Emma was insistent on – that The Rabbit could not be Victoria. It was the only thing she wanted us to know for sure. Emma is trying to give Victoria an alibi, whether she needs one or not.

Marreau And do you not think also that Victoria believes Emma to be the culprit – did you hear her refer to the rabbit as “her” then added “him” as the afterthought ?

Gwendolyn Yes – I did notice that – so it seems as though they believe each other to be the murderer.

Marreau And we must not forget Professor Finn who still has the motive *formidable*.

Gwendolyn But how do we discover which one it is ?

Simpson I've got an idea about that.

Gwendolyn [*dismissively*] This will be priceless I'm sure.

Marreau Let us hear your idea, Simpson.

Simpson We need to force The Rabbit's paw as you say – to reveal himself – or herself.

Marreau *Oui d'accord*

Simpson And whoever stole the rabbit costume from me is presumably the murderer, yes ?

Gwendolyn Obviously

Simpson So, what if I was to say that I saw someone steal my costume ...

Gwendolyn But you didn't, or you'd've said something already

Simpson I haven't finished Gwenders – I could say I saw someone but it's at the back of my mind and I can't recall who it was.

Marreau How does this help us then ?

Simpson I could say that if I slept on it in a dark room, that I'm sure it would come to me ...

Marreau And you are suggesting that the murderer would try to silence you before you could remember – *n'est-ce pas ?*

Simpson Yes – then you and Farmer pounce on whoever it is when they come to get me ...

Gwendolyn It'll never work, Simon – It's a typically brave idea – but honestly, they'd see it was a trap a mile off.

Marreau I tend to agree with Gwendolyn I am afraid – they would sniff the mouse I am sure.

Simpson Isn't it worth a try ?

Gwendolyn I admit we haven't got any better plans – but how do we disseminate the information to everyone without it being obvious that we're setting a trap ?

Marreau Hmmm – you are right – this will be the trickiest part ...

Simpson Farmer

Marreau What about him

Simpson He could accidentally let it slip – say that he thinks the case will soon be solved or something ... and when they ask why – that's when he'll accidentally let slip about me.

Gwendolyn You know, Simon, that might just work.

Simpson He'd only have to tell one or two people and it's bound to spread like wildfire.

Marreau It is the best plan we have.

Gwendolyn It's the only plan we have.

Simpson Right well – I'll lie down here then and you go and prime Farmer – let's see what happens !

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 6 - Denouement (the same – a darkened room, only low light)

[**Simpson** (apparently alone) *lying on the sofa*]

Gradually the lights rise

Simpson [*wakes*] Oh – hello – is there anybody there ?

Marreau [*appears from hiding place (e.g. a screen) S/L*] This is not a séance my friend

Farmer [*appears from hiding place S/R*] By ‘eck I was getting a bit stiff down there.

Marreau Enough waiting - I believe The Rabbit has called our bluff

Simpson [*sits up*] Oh well – it was worth a try

The Rabbit’s head peeps round the side (S/R) – **Marreau** sees it

Marreau *Sacre bleu !* It is ‘ere !!!

Simpson What’s here ?

Marreau The Rabbit – look [*points*]

[**Sergeant Treadworthy** *enters, holding the rabbit costume*]

Sgt Tready Sorry to interrupt you sir – but we’ve found this ...

Farmer By ‘eck Tready – you ‘ad us goin’ there you did !

Sgt Tready Sorry sir, but I thought you’d want to know

Marreau Indeed – thank-you Sergeant – this confirms that the culprit has not fallen for our plan.

Farmer Where did you find it, Tready ?

Sgt Tready It just turned up sir – left out in the hall for us to find.

Marreau [*takes costume from Sgt Treadworthy*] Most interesting. [*inspects it*]

[**Gwendolyn** *enters*]

Gwendolyn I take it you’ve given up, Marreau – [*sees rabbit*] Oh you’ve found the costume!

Marreau Indeed – and now I know for sure who the murderer is.

All: [*surprised*] You do ?

Marreau While I waited and waited, the leedle red cells they formulated the answer – please to call everyone in ...

Farmer By ‘eck Monsieur Marreau – you’s a genius you is. [*to exit*] Come on Tready we’ll go and get ‘em [**Farmer** and **Sgt. Treadworthy** *exit*]

Simpson Who is it then, Marreau ?

Marreau Patience my friend.

Simpson Who on earth is Patience ? Oh – I see, sorry.

Gwendolyn Well if you're right Marreau, I'm impressed, because I'm certainly still not sure.

[**Lewis enters**]

Lewis Gwendolyn – is it true – you know who did it ?

Gwendolyn Hemlock does apparently ...

[**Doris and Finn enter**]

Doris Stop fussing Algy, I can walk perfectly well ...

Prof. Finn What's the commotion, Marreau – not found my Trilobite have you ?

Lewis [*lightly*] Whose trilobite, Professor ?

Prof. Finn You know what I mean, Lewis

[**Victoria and Emma enter**]

Emma [*sheepish*] Monsieur Marreau – I've been talking to Victoria and I have something to admit to you, I'm afraid.

Marreau That you were not attacked by the rabbit, by any chance ?

Emma Yes ! How did you know ?

Marreau Never mind how I knew – but it is not news to me.

Doris What do you mean not attacked ? What about all the spinach and carrots ?

Emma Sorry Doris – I pinched them from the kitchen

Doris But why ? Were you trying to make a fool of me and my dreams ?

Emma No, Doris – not at all.

Victoria [*over to Doris*] No she wasn't Doris – I'll explain it to you later.

Doris Oh very well.

[**Farmer re-enters with Protheroe, Annuska and Sergeant Treadworthy**]

Farmer Here's the last of them, Musher Marreau

Marreau Ah, thank-you Farmer.

Farmer Sergeant – go and guard that exit.

Sgt Tready Right you are sir [*goes to S/L exit*]

Marreau My dear Annuska, so pleased to see you again.

Annuska The pleasure's mine, Hemlock

Gwendolyn [*to Marreau*] So how long have you two been on first name terms, Marreau ?

Marreau Oh, for a little while now.

Dr.Proth I've just been chatting to the Countess, Marreau – telling her about all the cases we've been involved in together.

Marreau I hope you were not too bored, Annuska.

Annuska Not at all, I found them all fascinating – and very impressive. And now I believe you are about to add the Killer Rabbit to your list of prizes.

Marreau That would seem to be my fate – though for once I do it with a heavy heart.

Annuska Really ?

Dr.Proth Why's that Marreau ?

Marreau Because, for in this instance I fully understand why the victim was killed – and to me it seems that he is no great loss to civilization.

Victoria Hear! Hear! Marreau.

Emma Quite right – *I'm* not sorry he's dead.

Prof. Finn I can't say *I'll* be grieving for him either.

Farmer By 'eck – 'e was right popular wasn't e !

Doris Poor Kenny – I didn't think he was too bad.

Lewis That's because he never caused you any trouble Doris

Marreau Anyway – if I might continue – I intend to be quite brief about this – as for me there is little triumph in this victory.

Simpson Still blinkin' exciting though Marreau!

Marreau There were always six possible suspects ...

Doris Seven

Marreau Alright seven – [*annoyed & rapidly*] but let us discount my friend Simpson right away on the grounds that it is patently ridiculous and not worth my breath. Why would the future Duke of 'ampshire kill a pathetic worm like Monsieur Cross whilst dressed as a rabbit ?

He had no motive whatsoever and the appearance of this [*shows costume*] whilst he was here on the sofa in this room proves his innocence – is that sufficient for you ?

Doris Oooh – sorry – what's *my* motive then ?

Marreau Very well Doctor Crabbe we will deal with you first. You are right – you have little motive that I can discover and I believe you are too old and creaky to jump in and out of the rabbit costume. You are therefore not a suspect.

Doris Oh I see. Right – well I'm not sure I'm happy with “old and creaky” but I suppose that's good.

Farmer By 'eck – two down already - just five to go.

Marreau And while we are talking of lack of motives – what possible motive could the Countess have ?

A Hungarian noblewoman who is a guest invited to the party.

Prof. Finn Well, none at all, I'd've thought.

Marreau *Précisément*. But then there is you, Professor Finn – whose job became in peril when Monsieur Cross ingraticulated [*sic*] himself with the directors of the Institute ...

Prof. Finn I say – where did you hear that ?

Marreau Are you denying it, professor ?

Prof. Finn Damn it – I suppose not. Yes, he was after my job as it happens, ungrateful little worm.

Marreau So professor, you had the motive *formidable* – and you had the ability – and also I believe the *sang-froid* to carry out the murder. Yes, Professor Finn – it certainly could be you !

Prof. Finn That’s – that’s

Doris Quite plausible, Algy ?

Prof. Finn Doris !

Marreau Moving on: Monsieur Lewis

Lewis Here, Marreau.

Marreau Monsieur Lewis Lewis – who disliked Monsieur Cross intently.

Lewis I don’t deny it

Marreau But Monsieur Lewis drove away from here with no sign of rabbitness about him just moments after the murder it had been committed. It is true that he could perhaps have just removed the ‘ead and then disposed of the rest later – but the discovery of this [*waves rabbit costume again*] proves this did not ‘appen. No, Monsieur Lewis – you are not guilty of this crime.

Gwendolyn Of course he’s innocent. [*goes to him, they link arms*]

Marreau And so we come to the *mademoiselles* - Victoria and Emma

Farmer By ‘eck – are you’re saying as it’s one of them girlies, Musher Marreau

Victoria [*fatalistically*] Come on then Marreau – let’s hear it.

Marreau Victoria and Emma. Emma and Victoria. What a pair you two are.

Emma What do you mean, Marreau ?

Marreau Both hating Monsieur Cross with a vengeance. Mademoiselle Emma for being so shoddily treated by him and Mademoiselle Victoria –

Victoria Because he was a horrible misogynistic lump of slime.

Marreau I could not have put it better myself.

Emma So you believe it is one of us, do you Marreau ?

Marreau Victoria and Emma - Making up the alibis for each other – while secretly believing that each other was the murderer.

Prof. Finn I say – is that true ?

Marreau But this belief – do you not see what it means ?

Victoria What are you saying Marreau ?

Marreau I am saying that it exonerates you both ...

Emma What ?

Victoria Really ? Why’s that ?

Marreau Because if you believe that each other is guilty – then it can be neither of you – for if *you* were the murderer you would *know* that the other was innocent !

Gwendolyn Oh good grief – of course. [*looks at Lewis*] My mind’s not on this case at all for some reason.

Farmer Hold on a moment Monsieur Marreau – couldn’t they be – by ‘eck, what’s it called ?

Simpson In cahoots ?

Farmer That’s the one

Marreau Ah yes – a good point superintendent – this was a possibility I considered for a while – but no – had they been in the cahoots you mention, then they could simply have said that they were together when the crime was committed – A simple alibi for each other that I could not disprove.

Gwendolyn You’re right Marreau.

Marreau Whereas they make up the preposterous stories – with Mademoiselle Emma even going to the lengths of the fake rabbit attack to make both herself and Victoria look innocent. When all the time they *are* both innocent !

Doris So that’s why you did it Emma!

Emma Sorry Doris

Farmer So it’s the professor then – shall I arrest ‘im ?

Prof. Finn It’s not me – I didn’t do it – you can’t have any proof that I did !

Marreau Wait ! I ‘ave not yet finishèd my revolutions !

Dr.Proth But there’s no-one else Marreau – oh except me of course ! Ha !

Marreau Doctor Protheroe – what an interesting suggestion – but I believe you were carrying out the tests when the murder was committed, is this not true ?

Dr.Proth Quite right Marreau – I wasn’t even in the house

Marreau Countess - Annuska – I believe you may be able to help here.

Annuska Happy to be of assistance, Hemlock.

Marreau I believe you are part of the Hungarian Trade Mission to Britain are you not ?

Annuska [*curious*] Yes I am – but what’s that got to do with anything ?

Marreau You will see its relevance in a moment, *ma chère*

Annuska Alright.

Marreau Professor – how much do you earn a year ?

Prof. Finn None of your damned business, Marreau !

Marreau The police can soon get this information, professor, but it will save a lot of time if you tell us.

Prof. Finn Oh very well – Two thousand a year.

Doris Crikey Algy – I didn’t realise that you were getting that much !

Marreau Two thousand a year – and you are of course the most well paid member of the Institute.

Prof. Finn Of course.

Marreau So even the well paid professor could not afford to give away two hundred pounds a month.

Prof. Finn Certainly not ...

Marreau Two hundred pounds a month – small change to my friend Simpson, I know ...

Simpson Well I wouldn't quite say that, Marreau ...

Marreau But still far more than anyone else in this room could afford, except *peut-être* for you, Countess.

Annuska Well yes, probably – [*a little concerned*] where's this going Hemlock ?

Marreau But £500 a month – that would be too much even for you, *oui, ma chère* ?

Annuska [*quietly*] Ah I see – yes – five hundred a month I could not afford.

Marreau [*forté*] Greed – sheer greed – that is what killed Monsieur Cross

Annuska [*head down*] True

Farmer What's this all about, Marreau – what's the Countess here got to do with it ?

Marreau I said that I was making these revolutions with an 'eavy 'eart – for Countess I must accuse you of being the Killer Rabbit.

All: [*general gasps and exclamations of disbelief*]

Marreau I have no proof. *Peut-être* this costume it may reveal something, but then again it may not. The evidence it is 'ow you say – circumferential [*sic*] – but *ma chère*, I know and *you* know that you killed the blackmailer Kenneth Cross!

Annuska [*sighs*] I'm sorry Hemlock – sorry I've put you through this.

Marreau Not as sorry as I am to have to reveal your guilt.

Annuska Yes – I killed Cross – he had been blackmailing me for two and a half years – two hundred pounds a month I'd been paying that horrible little man.

Farmer By 'eck – what was 'e blackmailing you with ?

Annuska Superintendent - If I was prepared to pay him thousands of pounds – and then kill him – to keep that a secret, then I'm hardly going to reveal it now, am I ?

Farmer No, I suppose not. Good point.

Annuska And then he said he needed more from me – five hundred a month – it was too much - I paid for a few months, but knew I had to stop him. He had to die!

Farmer By 'eck I don't blame you I don't ...

Annuska I knew he worked here at the Institute so I got my embassy to have me invited to the Trilobite party ...

Doris So my dreams – I was seeing you as the rabbit, Countess.

Annuska Sorry, Doris – when you came in and saw Mr Simpson – and said about the killer rabbit – the idea came to me to borrow the costume ... and use it as a disguise. I'm afraid your dream only came true, because I made it so.

Emma Well thank-you Countess – you have done us all a favour.

Victoria Hear! Hear!

Prof. Finn Damned little parasite got all he deserved as far as I can see.

Farmer [*To Countess*] Well I'm sorry Countess but I s'pose I'd better arrest you then.

Annuska Indeed you must. Congratulations Hemlock – you really are very good at this.

Gwendolyn Amazingly so.

Marreau [*loud*] One moment ! [*normal*] As I mentioned, the Countess is part of the Hungarian Trade Mission so I believe, superintendent, that you will find that she has the *immunity diplomatique*, and this I understand will mean you have to hand her over to her embassy – especially as there is no proof of her guilt – is this not true Annuska ?

Annuska I believe that is the case, yes.

Farmer Oh good – well that’s all right then isn’t it – everybody’s happy.

All: [*general murmurs of approval*]

Prof. Finn Very good Marreau – very clever – but have you forgotten that the Trilobite of Rheims is still missing ? Are you going to do anything about that ?

Farmer By ‘eck that’s right – I’d forgotten all about the old woodlouse !

Marreau Missing professor ? Is that not the Trilobite of Rheims sitting ‘appily on its cushion over there ?

Prof. Finn What ? [*dashes over to cushion*][*inspects Trilobite*] Well I’ll be !

Simpson I say ! Well done, Marreau !

Marreau The genuine article, I believe ?

Prof. Finn It certainly is. Well I must say Marreau – I am impressed.

Gwendolyn So am I.

Lewis [*coming to front of stage with Gwendolyn*] So Gwendolyn, is this goodbye or dare I hope ...

Gwendolyn Oh Lewis – you may certainly hope – but one thing I must know

Lewis Oh, what’s that ?

Gwendolyn What’s your P for ?

Lewis I beg your pardon ?

Gwendolyn Your middle name begins with the letter P – what does it stand for ?

Lewis Oh I see ... Percy

Gwendolyn Short for Percival I presume.

Lewis No Gwendolyn – My Percy’s not short ... for anything.

Gwendolyn Good. [*pause*] I like Percy.

Lewis [*slight pause*] I’m very pleased to hear it.

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