

Scene II

(The same evening. The curtains are closed and the room is in darkness. NEVILE stands alone. He crosses to the French windows and opens them to get some air. TREVES enters from the house.)

TREVES. Ah, Nevile.

(He switches on the lights.)

NEVILE. *(Eagerly.)* Did you see Audrey?

TREVES. Yes, I've just left her.

NEVILE. How is she? Has she got everything she wants? I tried to see her this afternoon, but they wouldn't let me.

TREVES. She doesn't wish to see anybody at present.

NEVILE. Poor darling. She must be feeling awful. We've got to get her out of it.

TREVES. I am doing everything that's possible, Nevile.

NEVILE. The whole thing's an appalling mistake. Nobody in their right senses would ever believe that Audrey would be capable of killing anyone like that.

TREVES. *(Warningly.)* The evidence is very strong against her.

NEVILE. I don't care a damn for the evidence.

TREVES. I'm afraid the police are more practical.

NEVILE. You don't believe it, do you? You don't believe –

TREVES. I don't know what to believe. Audrey has always been an enigma.

NEVILE. Oh, nonsense! She's always been sweet and gentle.

TREVES. She has always appeared so, certainly.

NEVILE. Appeared so? She is. Audrey and – and violence of any sort just don't go together. Only a muddle-headed fool like Battle would believe otherwise.

TREVES. Battle is far from being a muddle-headed fool, Nevile. I have always found him particularly shrewd.

NEVILE. Well, he hasn't proved himself very shrewd over this. God, you don't agree with him, do you? You can't believe this utterly stupid and fantastic story that Audrey planned all this to – to get back on me for marrying Kay. It's too absurd.

TREVES. Is it? Love turns to hate very easily, you know, Nevile.

NEVILE. But she had no reason to hate me. That motive was exploded when I told them about – about Adrian.

TREVES. I must confess that that was a surprise to me. I was always under the impression that you had left Audrey.

NEVILE. I let everybody think so, of course. What else could I do? It's always so much worse for the woman. She'd have had to face the whole wretched business alone, with all the gossip and – and mud slinging. I couldn't let her do that.

TREVES. It was very generous of you, Nevile.

NEVILE. Anybody would have done the same. Besides, in a way, it was my fault.

TREVES. Why?

NEVILE. Well, I'd met Kay, you see, while we were at Cannes and I – I admit I was attracted. I flirted with her in a harmless sort of way, and Audrey got annoyed.

TREVES. You mean she was jealous?

NEVILE. Well, yes, I think so.

TREVES. If that was the case, she couldn't have been really in love with Adrian.

NEVILE. I don't think she was.

TREVES. Then she left you for Adrian in a fit of pique because she resented your – er – attentions to Kay?

NEVILE. Something like that.

TREVES. If that was the case, the original motive still holds good.

NEVILE. What do you mean?

TREVES. If Audrey was in love with you – if she only ran away with Adrian in a fit of pique, then she might still have hated you for marrying Kay.

NEVILE. (*Sharply.*) No! She never hated me. She was very understanding about the whole thing.

TREVES. Outwardly perhaps. What was she like underneath?

NEVILE. (*Quietly.*) You believe she did it, don't you? You believe she killed Camilla in that horrible way? It wasn't Audrey. I'll swear it wasn't Audrey. I know her, I tell you. I lived with her for four years – you can't do that and be mistaken in a person. But if you think she's guilty, what hope is there?

TREVES. I'll give you my candid opinion, Nevile. I don't think there is any hope. I shall brief the best possible counsel, of course, but there's very little case for the defence. Except insanity. I doubt if we'll get very far with that.

(*NEVILE buries his face in his hands. He speaks almost inaudibly.*)

NEVILE. Oh, God!

(*MARY enters from the house. She is very quiet and clearly under strain.*)

MARY. Mr. Treves!

(*She sees NEVILE.*)

Er – there are sandwiches in the dining room when anyone wants them.

NEVILE. Sandwiches.

TREVES. (*Mildly.*) Life has to go on, Nevile.

NEVILE. Do you think she did it, Mary?

(*There is a definite pause.*)

MARY. No.

(*She takes NEVILE's hand.*)

NEVILE. Thank God somebody besides me believes in her.

(*KAY enters by the French windows.*)

KAY. Ted's just coming. He's running the car round into the drive. I came up through the garden.

NEVILE. What's Latimer coming here for? Can't he keep away for five minutes?

TREVES. I sent for him, Nevile. Kay very kindly took the message. I also asked Battle to come. I would prefer not to explain in detail. Let us say, Nevile, that I am trying out a last forlorn hope.

NEVILE. To save Audrey?

TREVES. Yes.

KAY. Can't you think of anything else but Audrey?

NEVILE. No, I can't.

(*LATIMER enters by the French windows.*)

LATIMER. I came as quickly as I could, Mr. Treves. Kay didn't say what you wanted me for, only that it was urgent.

KAY. I said what I was told to say. I haven't the faintest idea what it's all about.

MARY. We're all in the dark, Kay. As you heard, Mr. Treves is trying to help Audrey.

KAY. Audrey, Audrey, Audrey. It's always Audrey. I suppose she'll haunt us for the rest of our lives.

NEVILE. That's a beastly thing to say, Kay!

LATIMER. (*Angrily.*) Can't you see that her nerves are all in shreds?

NEVILE. So are everybody's.

(*ROYDE enters from the house.*)

ROYDE. Superintendent Battle is here. He says he's expected.

TREVES. Bring him in.

(*ROYDE beckons and BATTLE enters.*)

BATTLE. Good evening.

TREVES. Thank you for coming, Superintendent. It is good of you to spare the time.

NEVILE. (*Bitterly.*) Especially when you've got your victim.