

JOHN #1 (w/Christine & Peter)

JOHN. Good evening, Christine. How have you been keeping? Is Selwyn still working you hard? I hope so, because... *(He sees PETER.)* Oh!

CHRISTINE. This is a very good friend of mine – Peter....

PETER. Fletcher.

CHRISTINE. John Douglas.

JOHN. How do you do?

PETER. How are you? Excuse me, I'll just pop off and slip a jacket on.

(PETER goes off through the main door.)

JOHN. Yes... *(To CHRISTINE.)* Where's Selwyn?

CHRISTINE. Mr. Piper had to go out. Something turned up quite suddenly.

JOHN. Will he be back soon?

CHRISTINE. I'm not sure. Mr. Fletcher will know.

JOHN. Will he?

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CHRISTINE. I'm sure he will.

JOHN. I take it he's gone *home* for his jacket?

CHRISTINE. Yes, he has. He lives next door.

JOHN. I see. Have you known him long?

CHRISTINE. A while. Let me get you a drink.

JOHN. Thank you.

CHRISTINE. I'm sure he won't be long.

JOHN. Who? Your very good friend, or Selwyn?

CHRISTINE. Both. It is pink gin, isn't it? With no ice?

JOHN. Yes. I say, I hope Selwyn remembered my appointment. I was beginning to think I got the right time but the wrong author. *(He laughs nervously.)*

CHRISTINE. Actually, it's right author, wrong time.

JOHN. I beg your pardon? Oh, I see what you mean. I'm five minutes late.

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CHRISTINE. Er – how's the golf?

JOHN. The golf? Oh, not too good, I'm afraid. I've been so damn busy lately. The other day someone asked me what my handicap was and I said "work". What was it that turned up?

CHRISTINE. I beg your pardon?

JOHN. You said something had turned up. Quite suddenly. I was wondering what it was.

CHRISTINE. I'm sure you were. I know I am. You see, he didn't tell me.

JOHN. He just left?

CHRISTINE. Yes.

(PETER enters. He has taken off his dressing gown and he carries his tie and his jacket.)

PETER. There. Wasn't long, was I? Excuse me while I put on my tie. I always dress for dinner.

JOHN. Of course. Are you also a very good friend of Selwyn's, Mr...?

PETER. Fletcher. No, I'm more of an admirer. Of his books, you know.

JOHN. As his publisher, I can safely say I do know.

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PETER. Yes. Belton, Gleeson and Douglas. Would you mind?

(He gives JOHN his jacket. JOHN takes it, looking stupefied.)

JOHN. Have you any idea where he's gone?

(A pause while PETER considers the metaphysical implications.)

PETER. No. I don't know him well enough.

JOHN. It really is most important that I see him. There's his new book to discuss and the film rights... *(He takes his drink from CHRISTINE.)* Thank you. Look, there's nothing wrong is there?

PETER. Why? Should they be?

JOHN. No, of course not. But you seem to be... Nothing's happened, has it?

PETER. Excuse me. Is my tie straight?

JOHN. It's about the only thing that is.

JOHN #2 (w/Selwyn)

JOHN. Where's Imogen?

SELWYN. She's through there, laid out on the bed.

JOHN. I'm not surprised. She's been through a hell of a lot in the past hour.

SELWYN. Rather more than you imagine.

JOHN. What?

SELWYN. She's dead.

JOHN. Dead?

SELWYN. I killed her. Poisoned her whiskey. *(He drinks appreciatively.)*

JOHN. My God, Selwyn... !

SELWYN. My dear fellow, you appear shocked. Isn't it what we always intended?

JOHN. You fool! You'll never get away with it.

SELWYN. The question is not whether *I'll* get away with it, but whether *we* will.

JOHN. I had nothing to do with it.

JOHN #2 (w/Selwyn)

SELWYN. Then go to the police and say, "I took part in the first attempt to kill Imogen, which, I'm pleased to say, failed, but I took no part in the second attempt, which, unfortunately succeeded". I can just visualize their constabulary cynicism.

JOHN. But I wasn't even here. I was at Imogen's.

SELWYN. Prove it.

JOHN. How can I?

SELWYN. Do as I tell you and everything will be all right. The plan is exactly the same. She committed suicide. The only thing that's changed is the venue.

JOHN. I refuse to have any part of this.

SELWYN. Very well. I shall tell the police that you killed her. It'll be my word against yours and I'm much more convincing than you are.

JOHN. You bastard! You ... !

SELWYN. That'll do, John. You've no choice. We stick to the same story about my return to life.

JOHN. And where was I when Imogen died?

JOHN #2 (w/Selwyn)

SELWYN. Here.

JOHN. You mean I actually saw her do it?

SELWYN. No. After Christine and Fletcher left, Imogen confessed to my murder. She seemed one degree under, so you suggested she go into the bedroom to lie down. Then I recovered from my faint and, after you'd recovered from the shock, you went into the bedroom to tell Imogen, and found her dead.

(A pause, while John concentrates miserably.)

JOHN. I'll never convince anyone; I've only just learned the first story.

SELWYN. Don't worry, I'll be here, holding your hand.

JOHN. I don't like it.

SELWYN. I was speaking metaphorically. But you don't have to like it. Just do it.

JOHN. But — but how did she take the poison?

SELWYN. In her Scotch, just as before.

JOHN. Add the blanks in the gun? Is that the same story?

JOHN #2 (w/Selwyn)

SELWYN. Just as we rehearsed it. (*Offering the dish of nuts.*) Have a nut?

JOHN. Something's bound to go wrong.

SELWYN. With any luck.

JOHN. What?

SELWYN. I thrive on the unexpected. And there is an unexpected quality about my next-door neighbor.

JOHN. You're mad, Selwyn. Stark, staring, bloody mad.