

Two Many Witnesses.

A one-act play, with a small break.

By

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The event takes place in an imaginary country in an imaginary town. In the town hall an enquiry is under way concerning the brutal murder of a café owner, the person under suspicion is a man who argued and threatened the café owner some time earlier.

CAST:

Arthur/Bernard Wells, witnesses. 35

Frank Horner accused. 34

Laura King his attorney 40

Walter Horner, Frank's father. 65

Birgit Horner, Frank's mother. 63

Briggs, court judge. 45

Noakes, State prosecutor. 38

Nina Fink his girlfriend. Witness,30

Lola Dern, Nina's friend. Witness. 32

Inga Pole, Alex's mother. 58

Harald Pole, Alex's father. 62

Torsten Pole, Alex's brother. 38

Clarke and Nibbs, court orderlies. 50's

Derek, Lola's boyfriend. 36

Gregor Krull Army Lieutenant. Witness.36

Judge Kole. Witness. 52.

(In the case of "Judge Kole, the "small man", he can be replaced by a young boy of 10 -12 who is the Mayor's nephew, home from boarding school for the holidays.)

The term 'law enforcers' is used when referring to the police.

SET

An oblong room. At one end is the entrance (stage left) at the other end is a long table 'the bench' where the judge, prosecutor and clerk sit. Before this table is a smaller oblong one, with several chairs. Against the far wall, facing the audience is a row (or two) of chairs for the public. One third of the way from the entrance is another table, facing the 'bench' and close to the edge of the stage, for the accused and his advocate.

The ante room I leave to the director's discretion.

COURTROOM.

FRANK HORNER, the accused, is wearing blue jeans and a red jacket; he sits next to his lawyer LAURA KING.

FRANK HORNER'S parents, the parents and brother (TORSTEN) of the deceased ALEX POLE are present.

Everybody rises as JUDGE BRIGGS, PROSECUTOR NOAKES and the COURT CLERK, enter.

They take their places behind a long table.

Briggs looks at Frank, seated at another table with his lawyer.

Briggs.

You are Frank Horner, 32 years of age, single and self-employed. You live at 96 Stanley Street in Grosstop, Singletown, is that correct?

Frank nodded.

Frank.

That is correct, sir.

Briggs.

(Reading from notes)

You have been brought before this court in connection with the brutal killing of Alex Pole, and you have already made a statement to the police in the presence of your lawyer, Advocate King.

Allegations have been made against you, that you, Frank Horner, on Friday the 10th of June, 2005 in San Frans Disco, in front of numerous witnesses, did threaten to kill Alex Pole and on Monday the 13th of June it appears that you carried out this threat.

Briggs pauses and regards the pair.

Briggs

This is a preliminary hearing, Mr Horner; do you wish to enter a plea at this stage?

King rises.

King.

No your honour, my client does not wish to enter a plea.

The state prosecutor CHRISTOFF NOAKES rises and reads out the autopsy report.

Noakes.

The autopsy showed massive trauma to the deceased's skull caused by a blunt instrument. The victim was discovered in the yard at the rear of his café; where he had been struck from behind. Due to the severity of the wound, death would have been instantaneous and is estimated at approximately 1615 hours on Monday the 13th of June 2005, the attack occurred moments before.

Noakes sits down.

Biggs

Mr Horner, did you understand everything read out to you?

Frank.

Yes, your honour.

Biggs

Do you understand the accusations, do you wish to say anything, add anything to your statement?

Frank turns to his lawyer and they whisper. She nods her head and Frank looks up at the judge and stands up.

Frank.

I wish to add to my statement that I did not kill Alex Pole even though I may have threatened to do so in the disco; I was very drunk that night and I can hardly remember anything. Only that I was very angry.

Biggs.

You were angry?

Frank.

Yes, your honour.

Biggs.

Would you care to say why you were angry with the deceased?

Frank.

I believe I was angry with the way he treated his girlfriend Nina Fink. He had hit her on several occasions when she refused to take part in his perverted sexual fantasies.

Biggs.

How did you know this, did Nina Fink tell you?

Frank.

No, sir, Lola Dern, her best friend told me.

Biggs.

When did Lola Dern inform you of this?

Frank.

On that Friday, as I gave her a lift to the swimming baths.

Biggs.

Mr Horner, what is your relationship to Nina Fink?

Frank looks down at the floor for a number of seconds before answering.

Frank.

I love her, but I've never had the opportunity to tell her how much. Lola knew how much and she said I should tell Nina as soon as possible.

Mrs Pole stands up and screams.

Mrs Pole.

Instead of that you murdered my son. You should hang for this.

Biggs.

Mrs Pole, another outburst like that, and I will have you removed from the court.

Mrs Pole sits down and her husband comforts her.

Noakes rises and addresses Frank.

Noakes.

Mr Horner, according to witnesses you were seen in Alex Pole's café at 4pm in the afternoon of the 13th of June as you argued with him. Minutes later you were

seen leaving his back yard in a hurry. You were carrying an object in your hand similar to a hammer. Have you anything to say?

Frank stands there open-mouthed at first, and then he speaks, hurriedly.

Frank.

The witnesses are mistaken; I was out delivering the whole afternoon, I didn't return until close on five. When I arrived at Alex's place with his goods I found the alley closed off by the police, so I returned home, as I had been up since 5am.

King rises.

King.

Your honour, I find it extremely difficult to believe that my client would run around carrying a blood-stained hammer after he had supposedly killed someone with it.

Noakes rises.

Noakes.

Your client panicked, Advocate King; he panicked after he brutally murdered Alex Pole.

They both sit down.

Briggs.

Mr Horner, where were you exactly on the 13th of June between four pm and five pm?

Frank.

I was underway with a delivery, your honour, but it was a wasted journey. I arrived at the address in the middle of nowhere, the client's name was Branden Walker, but the building's front was boarded up, it seemed to me that it was closed for the day.

Briggs.

Were you alone on this journey, Mr Horner, did anybody see you?

Frank.

I brought Lola Dern to the rear entrance of Alex Pole's establishment around 4 pm. She'd arranged to meet Nina Fink there, I told her I would be back in an hour with Alex's goods as per usual, after which I continued alone.

Briggs narrows his eyes at Frank.

Briggs.

You say you drove to a building? Where was this building?

Frank.

Yes, I did your honour. A roadside café according to instructions I received over the phone, it's just outside Ringtown on Route 45, I arrived there just before 4.30 pm.

Noakes rises up from his seat and turns to Briggs.

Noakes.

That is pure and total fantasy, your honour. That building has stood empty for six months. It was a funeral parlour, not a roadside café.

King stands up, protesting.

King.

It is not total fantasy, your honour; according to a police report the time for the distance travelled to the address is approximately 27 minutes.

Briggs.

Mr Horner, did you stop anywhere on your journey either to or from your destination, did you speak to anyone?

Frank shakes his head.

Frank.

No your honour, I didn't have cause to.

Briggs.

Prosecutor Noakes, do you wish to question Mr Horner further?

Noakes.

No, your honour.

Briggs.

Mr Horner, you may sit down.

Frank literally collapses onto his chair.

Briggs calls out to a court orderly standing by the courtroom entrance.

Briggs.

Mr Clarke, call witness, MR ARTHUR WELLS, please.

The orderly opens the door and speaks quietly. Arthur Wells enters. He is rather portly; he is wearing black shorts, sandals and socks, a red sweatshirt under an armless jeans jacket and a red baseball cap. He has ginger hair and a moustache and is wearing black-framed glasses with extremely thick lenses. He walks with a limp (left leg) and his left hand is crumpled and tucked in to his side. He takes his place at the witness table where he removes his cap. He has a squint and he wiggles the fingers of his right hand every now and then.

Briggs addresses him as he takes his seat.

Briggs.

You are Arthur Wells, 38 years of age. You live on the Isle of Trask and you are an artist by trade. You are visiting your cousin Bernard Wells and are

staying with him at his home address at 66 Troll Street. And you have been cautioned along with the other witnesses. Is that correct?

He looks at the clock on the wall behind the judge. He speaks with a lisp as he answers.

Arthur.

Yes, sir, that is correct. But I am leaving for the Isle of Trask today, as I have an important appointment at the clinic, my kidneys do not function correctly.

Briggs.

I understand.

Now, Mr Wells, are you related in any way to the accused?

Arthur.

No, your honour.

Briggs.

Tell the court where you were on the 13th of June between four pm and four-thirty pm and what you saw.

Arthur.

Actually, I was taking a walk behind the shops on the back street, when I saw a man run out of a back yard, he was looking very, very wild and he was carrying a lump-hammer in his left hand. He tried to hide his face, but I'd already seen him.

Briggs.

Out of which back yard did he leave?

Wells wiggles his fingers and grins.

Arthur.

He came out of the yard where they found the body. There's a sign on the door: '*A. Pole. Café goods entrance*'.

Arthur then chuckles.

Briggs.

Was the yard door left open, could you see inside?

Arthur.

Yes, sir, it was wide-open and I could see a body there, there was blood on his face and he wasn't moving. I checked for a pulse, but couldn't detect one, so I left the scene and walked towards the main road, where I called for an ambulance on my mobile telephone. I awaited their arrival and I told the law enforcers what I saw when they arrived.

Briggs.

Did you see any other people in the area at that time?

Arthur.

I didn't see anybody until after the ambulance had arrived. There was a car parked near the yard door it must have entered from the other end. I saw a young woman being carried out of the yard on a stretcher. There was another young woman with her; and I think it was their car, but I don't know what they were doing there.

Briggs and Noakes whisper to one another, nodding and gesticulating.

Briggs.

Is the man you saw leaving in a hurry here in this courtroom, Mr Wells?

Arthur nods and turns to Frank and points at him.

Arthur.

The man in the red jacket.

Frank screams.

Frank.

That's wrong, it wasn't me he saw; he's mistaken.

Briggs.

Calm yourself Mr Horner.

Frank's father, WALTER HORNER, stands up and shouts, as both court orderlies hold him back.

Walter.

You liar, that's not true, you are lying, you damned half-wit.

The orderlies bring him back to his seat and force him to sit down.

Briggs.

Mr Horner, another outburst like that and I will have you bound over and you will spend a night in the cells.

He turns to King.

Briggs.

Advocate King, do you wish to question the witness?

King stands up.

King.

Yes, your honour.

She approaches Arthur from the side.

King.

Mr Wells, I see you don't wear a wristwatch, so, how did you know what time it was?

Arthur nods a half-a-dozen times, smiling.

Arthur.

I heard the church bell chime out the quarter hour.

King.

You have fairly thick lenses in your spectacles; I assume you wear them all the time.

Arthur.

I have to wear them all the time, without them I'm blind.

King.

You said the perpetrator hid his face. How could you recognise him?

Arthur.

He covered his face with his right hand, the one nearest to me, and I could see the heart tattoo there, a little red heart, as plain as day.

King looks at Horner's hands. Frank hides them inside his jacket pockets as she returns to her seat.

King.

I have no more questions, your honour.

Briggs.

Mr Wells, you are now released from your duty, and you may start your journey home.

Arthur stands up and limps towards the door, Clarke opens it and closes it behind him.

King approaches the judge.

King.

Your honour, under the circumstances, may I speak to my client alone?

Briggs.

Certainly.

Briggs calls out.

Briggs

The court will adjourn for ten minutes.

King and Frank leave the courtroom and enter an ante-room.

The small break.

ANTE-ROOM.

King and Frank sit next to one another on a sofa.

King.

You heard everything the witness said?

Frank.

Yes, the damn liar. I don't know who put him up to it though.

King.

At the moment things don't look too good for you. If you plead guilty and show remorse, the judge might go easy on you.

He stares at her.

Frank.

Guilty! But I didn't do anything. Either this is a put-up job or Bernard's cousin is terribly mistaken, I mean - look at his glasses. And how many people have tattoos on their hands – hundreds I'll bet.

King.

Do you suspect anyone, somebody who had a score to settle, a grudge, or was jealous of him because of his girl-friend?

Frank.

Alex wasn't a bad person, I don't know of anyone having anything against him. We've known each other for years, we went to school together, and he's put a lot of business my way. I for one had no reason to kill him.

King.

Are you telling me everything, is there something else I should know about?

Frank shakes his head.

King looks at her wristwatch.

King.

Time to go back.

COURTROOM.

They enter just as the judge and the others return and take their places.

Briggs.

The case now continues. The next witness, a Mr Bernard Wells, has called in, he is stuck in traffic.

Call the following witness, Mr Clarke, MISS NINA FINK

Nina enters and sits at the witness table. Her eyes are red-rimmed and she is holding a handkerchief.

Briggs.

You are Nina Fink. You are 23 years-of-age, single and are employed as a hairdresser. You now reside with your parents at 74, Bell street.

You resided earlier with the deceased, Alex Pole, at his apartment on 56, Captain street. Is that correct?

Nina.

Yes, your honour.

She turns and forces a smile at Frank. He nods and smiles in answer.

Briggs

Are you related to the accused in any way?

Nina.

No, your honour.

Briggs nods at Noakes who stands up.

Noakes.

(Reading from his notes)

You were present in SAN FRANS DISCO on Bruck Street, at the time when the accused, Frank Horner, threatened Alex Pole. Is that correct?

Nina.

Yes, sir. Frank was very drunk at the time.

Noakes.

Did you hear what was said?

Nina.

Not exactly, the music was very loud. Frank was annoyed over something and everybody was making fun of him. In fact everybody was drunk.

Noakes.

Did Frank Horner threaten Alex Pole in any way?

Nina.

No, sir.

Noakes.

Was Frank Horner angry maybe because of the way Alex Pole treated you, did he object to your relationship?

Nina.

I, er, don't understand.

Noakes.

You lived with Alex Pole; you were intimate with him weren't you?

Nina.

Yes, sir.

Noakes.

(Looks once more at his notes)

Did Alex Pole ever hit you or force you to have sex with him in a perverse manner, a manner that you objected to?

Nina.

(Quietly)

No, sir.

Briggs leans forward.

Briggs.

Miss Fink. Frank Horner is accused of murdering Alex Pole. He obviously threatened the deceased because of his treatment of you. According to a witness, Alex Pole was known to be aggressive with women, was he aggressive with you? Did he beat you? Please speak loud so that the court can hear you.

Nina starts crying. She dabs her face with her handkerchief. After a number of seconds she ceases and dries her face. She takes a deep breath before she shouts.

Nina.

He was mean to me. He would rip my clothes off and rape me and he would slap me and demand that I struggled and screamed. He told me he couldn't stay aroused if I didn't resist. And he would do this every time we were intimate.

INGA POLE, Alex's mother screams out.

Inga.

She's lying; my Alex would never do such a thing.

Frank springs to his feet.

Frank.

Shut your stupid mouth, she isn't lying.

King pulls Frank back down to his seat.

Briggs.

I will have order in this courtroom; the next outbreak will be dealt with severely.

Noakes.

So, Miss Fink, Alex Pole raped you on many occasions? Why didn't you report him to the LAW ENFORCERS, they would have arrested him, as you know, rape is a capital offence. Didn't you tell anybody at all?

Nina.

I told my best friend, Lola Dern, but I begged her not to tell anyone. I felt sorry for Alex, he didn't have it easy when he was young, his father used to treat his mother the same way and he was forced to watch.

Nina stops to blow her nose.

Harold Pole rises to his feet; his wife Inga pulls him back down before he can speak.

Nina continues.

Nina.

Our relationship was bewildering, crazy. After he had his way with me he would cry like a baby and ask my forgiveness. Afterwards he would take me into town and buy me presents, mostly jewellery.

Noakes.

Did you tell Frank Horner of these incidents?

Nina.

No, sir.

Briggs.

Miss Fink, how was your relationship with the accused, were you close friends or just acquaintances?

Nina.

We were lovers earlier.

Briggs.

You were intimate with him, I assume?

King looks at Frank; he blushes and lowers his head.

Nina.

Yes, sir, we were very intimate.

Briggs.

What happened to this relationship?

Nina.

We were living together, as a pair. He would bring me flowers daily. He was a hard worker and would come home tired. Alex found new customers for him every day so he was rather busy.

But, I saw less and less of him, and at the weekends I hardly saw him at all.

Because of his work, we drifted apart, we would have silly arguments and one morning I left him and moved in with Alex. It was the wrong decision, one that I now regret.

Noakes.

Miss Fink. You know exactly why Frank Horner threatened to kill Alex Pole, don't you?

Nina remains silent.

Noakes.

It was because you yourself described to him, in detail, everything that Alex Pole had done to you.

Nina stares at Noakes in shock.

Noakes.

You were sick and tired of being treated like a sex-slave, you wanted to be rid of Alex Pole, so, you told Frank Horner everything in the hope that he would rid you of him. Do you deny this, Miss Fink?

Briggs leans forward.

Briggs.

Miss Fink, I must warn you not to say anything that would incriminate you, you may ignore the question if you so wish.

Nina.

Thank you, your honour. Of course I was fed up with being treated like dirt, but I didn't tell Frank, I believe my friend Lola Dern may have told him. I haven't asked her if she did, the thought never occurred to me.

Noakes glances at Briggs, nods and resumes his seat.

Briggs.

Advocate King, do you have any questions concerning Miss Fink?

King rises.

King.

Yes, your honour.

Miss Fink, where were you between 4pm and 4.30pm on the day of the crime?

Nina.

I was with my friend Lola Dern; we were driving around in my car.

King.

Where were you exactly?

Fink.

Everywhere and nowhere, we drove through the city centre, stopped off for a coffee and an ice cream, drove around some more and we arrived at the rear of Alex's shop expecting Frank to turn up with his usual delivery, but he wasn't there.

King.

And what time would that be?

Nina.

At exactly 4.30. I heard the clock chimes.

King.

You said you were expecting my client to turn up at that time?

Nina.

Not that early, he was usually there close to five o'clock every day with supplies.

King.

Did you see him at all that day?

Nina.

Not exactly; I missed him earlier on as I arrived to pick up Lola around four, I saw him drive off. I hadn't expected to see him at that time. Lola told me she had arranged it and persuaded me to speak with Frank later on around five when he came with Alex's delivery.

King.

Did you see anyone else there?

Nina.

No, I didn't, I just parked the car and strolled around and I saw the yard door was open.

King.

So, it was you and Lola Dern who discovered the body?

Nina nodded quickly.

King.

It must have been a terrifying experience for you?

Nina.

Yes.

King.

That will be all, thank you.

King sits down.

Noakes rises.

Noakes.

At what time did you leave the rear entrance of Alex Pole's café after you picked up your friend?

Nina.

Shortly after 4pm. I didn't want to meet Alex, as he always comes out into the yard and opens the door five or six minutes after four.

Noakes.

At what time did you return to the café rear entrance?

Nina gives him an eye-roll and sighs.

Nina.

As I said before, at 4.30 pm.

Noakes.

And then what happened, what did you do?

Nina sits in silence.

Briggs.

Miss Fink, answer the question please.

Nina.

The rear door was partly open and...and I took a quick look inside and...and...it was awful, I...I saw Alex lying there in a pool of blood.

Nina stops and covers her face with her hands. After a number of seconds she removes them.

Nina.

Lola opened the door wider and we went inside. I could smell the blood as we came closer – I still can. Lola sought his pulse on his neck. She said, “I think he’s dead” and then I blacked out. I woke up some time later as I lay on an ambulance gurney.

Noakes.

What is your relationship to Frank Horner, now that Alex Pole is no longer with us?

King stands up.

King.

I object to that remark, your honour, prosecutor Noakes is trying to mislead the witness.

Briggs looks at Noakes and then at Nina.

Briggs.

Miss Fink, I must warn you not to say anything that would incriminate you, you may ignore the question if you so wish.

Nina.

Frank Horner is still my friend. I have nothing more to say other than he is a loving and caring person who enjoys life to the full. He and Alex were the best of friends.

Noakes.

I have no further questions your honour.

Briggs.

Miss Fink. You may stand down, but please remain in court in case you are required.

Nina walks to chair well away from the others, near to a young man.

Briggs.

Mr Clarke, call MISS LOLA DERN, please.

Lola enters through the open doorway and walks towards the table as if she is on a fashion show catwalk. She has large breasts and her midriff is fully exposed. She is wearing a pink top that is one size too small for her, and a black mini-rock, white tights and black, calf-length boots. Her hair is pitch-black and spiked in the Goth-Punk tradition, matching her garish makeup.

The public stare in pretended horror at her as she slowly passes them. Noakes moves his head from side to side and rolls his eyes. Briggs watches her without turning a hair. She takes her place at the witness table.

Briggs.

You are Lola Dern, 28 years of age, a hairdresser by trade and live with Torsten Pole, brother of the deceased, at Green Street 89, Tinglepool, is that correct?

Lola.

Yeah, sure, your honour.

Briggs.

Are you related in any way to the accused?

Lola.

No, your honour.

Noakes rises.

Noakes.

According to an earlier statement you made to the local law enforcers, Miss Dern, you were present on the 10th of June in San Fran's disco when an altercation occurred between Alex Pole and Frank Horner, is that correct?

Lola.

Yes, sir

Noakes.

Will you tell the court exactly what happened?

Lola.

There's not much to tell. The music was blaring away. I saw Frank and Alex. Frank had his arm around Alex's shoulder and they were laughing at something. They were both the worse for drink. All of a sudden, Alex pushed Frank away and walked off. Frank followed him, took hold of his T-shirt and spun him round, he raised his finger and just as the music died, I heard Frank say: 'Stop it, or you will regret it'. And Alex said: 'And what if I don't, what will you do, kill me I suppose'. Frank nodded and said: 'If that's the way you want it, yes, I will'. Then four security men separated them and Frank left the disco.

Noakes.

Will you tell the court what it was that Frank Horner wanted Alex Pole to cease with?

Lola.

Alex was perverted; he was aggressive when having sex.

The Pole family mutter angrily amongst themselves. As Briggs glares at them they cease.

Noakes.

Did you see Frank Horner the next day?

Lola.

Yeah, but he couldn't remember a thing, so I told him.

Noakes.

And what was his reaction?

Lola.

He laughed and said: 'The things one says when drunk'.

Noakes flashes a smile at her.

Noakes.

Don't we all.

So, tell the court, how well do you know Frank Horner?

Lola looks at Frank, he turns his head away.

She grins at Noakes.

Lola.

Very well in fact, very well indeed.

Noakes.

Would you care to elaborate?

Lola gives an eye-roll.

Lola.

We were intimate; we were lovers until Nina came along

Noakes.

Do you mean he left you for Miss Fink?

Lola shakes her head softly in disbelief.

Lola.

Yeah, I just said that. But, I didn't mind, he was better for her, he was in love with her, with me it was only sex, companionship. They are still my friends, my best friends in fact.

Noakes.

Can you describe the relationship between Nina Fink and Alex Pole?

Lola shifts in her seat and she pulls on her skirt hem.

Lola.

Stormy, they were always arguing. Alex was a mummy's boy and Nina let him do with her whatever he wanted, he bought her anything she wanted and he treated her like dirt. Alex never wanted for anything; he got the money for his café from his mummy, while his brother Torsten had to work his backside off in his daddy's factory, for peanuts.

Noakes.

Were you ever intimate with Alex Pole?

She gives Noakes another knowing grin.

Lola.

Yeah, sure, I like it rough.

Noakes coughs to clear his throat.

Noakes.

Did Nina Fink know of this intimacy?

Lola.

Of course she did, she was grateful; it meant she had some respite from that perverted swine.

She turns around to Torsten Pole who sits there with his mouth open, and she half-smiles and shrugs.

Noakes.

I take it then that Torsten knew nothing of your intimacies with his brother.

Lola.

No way, he would have beaten me to a pulp if he had found out.

Noakes looks at Briggs and back at Lola.

Noakes.

Why are you telling us that now?

Lola.

Because I have a new boyfriend, he is a professional wrestler and we are emigrating soon. He is sitting with the public.

Derek!

She turns and looks at the young, well-built man, sitting near to Nina Fink. He smiles and nods to her.

Noakes.

How was the relationship between Torsten Pole and Frank Horner?

Lola.

They were pals since they were kids, then one day Frank was called up for military service. When he returned he ditched me, he took up with Nina and started his own business, with the extra money he'd earned as instructor in the army and it was work, work, work. I thought Frank would take Torsten on at weekends. Torsten could do with the money and Frank could have some time off. I even suggested it to Torsten, who I'd started dating, and he said he would if Frank asked him.

Noakes.

Miss Dern, on Friday the 10th of June, the day of the altercation in the disco, did you discuss Nina Fink with Frank Horner?

Lola.

Yeah, we did. We talked about his love for her, and that he should declare it. I said I would arrange to meet her on Monday at 4pm at the rear of Alex's café and he could tell her how much he loved her and when Alex turned up they

could give him the, er, good news. But, when we arrived there, Nina hadn't turned up and Frank, as usual, was in a hurry. So we arranged to meet when he returned at five with Alex's goods.

Noakes.

Didn't you discuss Alex Pole's behaviour towards Miss Fink?

Lola takes a deep breath and glances around at Nina.

Noakes.

Well, Miss Dern?

Lola.

Yeah, in so many words. I told him Alex was treating her roughly and that he was forcing himself upon her and she was unhappy. I said he should tell her of his love for her and take her back and marry and raise a family and...

She shrugs and attempts a smile.

Noakes.

When did you tell Frank Horner this?

Lola.

On the way to the swimming baths, he gave me a lift there.

Noakes.

And how did he react?

Her eyebrows rise up.

Lola.

How did he react! He was shocked, that's what.

Noakes leans forward.

Noakes.

He was angry too, wasn't he?

Lola shakes her head quickly.

Lola.

No, he was saddened, the poor lad was devastated.

Noakes stares at her with barely concealed contempt.

Lola holds his stare and grins.

Noakes shakes his head in disdain and turns away and directs himself to the judge.

Noakes.

Your honour, I believe we have here a conspiracy.

He points to each individual as he speaks their names.

Noakes.

I believe that Nina Fink - Lola Dern - Frank Horner - and Torsten Pole, conspired to murder Alex Pole.

A deathly hush comes over the courtroom.

Noakes narrows his gaze at Briggs.

Noakes.

Your honour, up to now I have heard nothing but lies from every corner, except of course from Mr Arthur Wells.

King stands up.

King.

This is preposterous, your honour, my learned colleague is clutching at straws, and I see no case to answer. Arthur Wells is mistaken in identifying Frank Horner, he is half-blind and he only saw the culprit for a split-second and I have noticed that Torsten Pole, brother of the deceased, also has a red tattoo on the back of his right hand.

Briggs shakes his head then stares at Noakes then looks at King.

Briggs.

Advocate King, you are now adding more confusion to this enquiry. Do you wish to question the witness?

Noakes holds up his hand, Briggs turns to him, his eyebrows raised.

Noakes.

Er, I haven't finished, your honour.

Briggs.

Then, er, carry on.

Noakes turns back to Lola.

Noakes.

I accuse you of conspiring with others to bring about the demise of Alex Pole; do you have anything to say on this matter?

Lola shakes her head.

Lola.

No!

Noakes.

I have no further questions your honour.

Briggs.

Advocate King, your witness.

King rises up and approaches Lola, smiling.

Lola smiles in return.

King.

Miss Dern, did Frank Horner have a key to Alex Pole's back yard door?

Lola.

No, Alex was always there to open it.

King.

I don't know the exact layout, is there a bell-button by the doorway?

Lola.

Yes, on the right-hand side.

King.

So, anybody wishing to enter would have to ring the bell to call Alex Pole to the back door, anybody, a stranger for example, Alex Pole's killer even?

Lola.

Yeah, that's right, but Alex always opened it beforehand when Frank came with his daily delivery.

King.

Which was?

Lola.

Every day around five o'clock.

King.

And not four o'clock?

